PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SIXTH SERIES—VOLUME 110

HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

FOURTH SESSION OF THE FORTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
THIRTY-SIXTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1986-87

COMPRISING PERIOD
9 FEBRUARY—20 FEBRUARY 1987

ISBN 0 10 681110 X

HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT

MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

(FORMED BY THE RT. HON. MARGARET THATCHER, MP, OCTOBER 1986)

PRIME MINISTER, FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY AND MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE—
The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, MP
LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS—The Rt. Hon. Viscount Whitelaw, CH, MC
LORD CHANCELLOR—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Hailsham of St. Marylebone, CH
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS—The Rt. Hon. Sir Geoffrey Howe, QC, MP
CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER—The Rt. Hon. Nigel Lawson, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT—The Rt. Hon. Douglas Hurd, CBE, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR ENERGY—The Rt. Hon. Peter Walker, MBE, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE—The Rt. Hon. George Younger, TD, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WALES—The Rt. Hon. Nicholas Edwards, MP
LORD PRIVY SEAL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—The Rt. Hon. John Biffen, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SOCIAL SERVICES—The Rt. Hon. Norman Fowler, MP
CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER—The Rt. Hon. Norman Tebbit, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND—The Rt. Hon. Tom King, MP
MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD—The Rt. Hon. Michael Jopling, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT—The Rt. Hon. Nicholas Ridley, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EMPLOYMENT—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Young of Graffham
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EDUCATION AND SCIENCE—The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Baker, MP
PAYMASTER GENERAL AND MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT—The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Clarke, QC, MP
CHIEF SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—The Rt. Hon. John MacGregor, OBE, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND—The Rt. Hon. Malcolm Rifkind, QC, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY AND PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE—The Rt. Hon. Paul Channon, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT—The Rt. Hon. John Moore, MP

LAW OFFICERS

ATTORNEY-GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. Sir Michael Havers, QC, MP
LORD ADVOCATE—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Cameron of Lochbroom, QC
SOLICITOR-GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. Sir Patrick Mayhew, QC, MP
SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND—Peter Fraser, Esq, QC, MP

MINISTERS NOT IN THE CABINET

PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—The Rt. Hon. John Wakeham, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE, (MINISTER FOR THE ARTS)—The Rt. Hon. Richard Luce, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE—
The Rt. Hon. The Baroness Young
Mrs. Lynda Chalker, MP
Minister for Overseas Development—Christopher Patten, Esq, MP
Timothy Renton, Esq, MP
FINANCIAL SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—The Rt. Hon. Norman Lamont, MP
ECONOMIC SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—Ian Stewart, Esq, RD, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, TREASURY—The Hon. Peter Brooke, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, HOME OFFICE—
The Rt. Hon. David Waddington, QC, MP
David Mellor, Esq, MP
The Earl of Caithness
MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY—The Rt. Hon. Alick Buchanan-Smith, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, MINISTRY OF DEFENCE—
Minister of State for the Armed Forces—The Rt. Hon. John Stanley, MP
Minister of State for Defence Procurement—The Lord Trefgarne
MINISTERS OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SECURITY—
Minister for Health—Antony Newton, Esq, OBE, MP
Minister for Social Security and the Disabled—John Major, Esq, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE—Nicholas Scott, Esq, MBE, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD—
The Rt. Hon. John Gummer, MP
The Rt. Hon. The Lord Belstead

MINISTERS OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT—
Minister for Local Government—Dr. Rhodes Boyson, MP
Minister for Environment, Countryside and Planning—The Hon. William Waldegrave, MP
Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction—John Patten, Esq, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE—Mrs. Angela Rumbold, CBE, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, SCOTTISH OFFICE—The Lord Glenarthur
MINISTERS OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY—
Minister for Information Technology—The Rt. Hon. Geoffrey Pattie, MP
Minister of State—Giles Shaw, Esq, MP
Minister for Trade—The Hon. Alan Clark, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT—David Mitchell, Esq, MP

DEPARTMENTS OF STATE AND MINISTERS

Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—
MINISTER—The Rt. Hon. Michael Jopling, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
The Rt. Hon. John Gummer, MP
The Rt. Hon. The Lord Belstead
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY—Donald Thompson, Esq, MP

Arts and Libraries, Office of—
MINISTER FOR THE ARTS—The Rt. Hon. Richard Luce, MP

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster—
The Rt. Hon. Norman Tebbit, MP

Defence—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. George Younger, TD, MP
MINISTER OF STATE FOR THE ARMED FORCES—The Rt. Hon. John Stanley, MP
MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT—The Lord Trefgarne
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ARMED FORCES—Roger Freeman, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT—The Hon. Archibald Hamilton, MP

Education and Science—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Baker, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—Mrs. Angela Rumbold, CBE, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Robert Dunn, Esq, MP
George Walden, Esq, MP

Employment—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Young of Graffham
PAYMASTER GENERAL AND MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT—The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Clarke, QC, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
David Trippier, Esq, MP
John Lee, Esq, MP

Energy—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Peter Walker, MBE, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Alick Buchanan-Smith, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Alastair Goodlad, Esq, MP
David Hunt, Esq, MBE, MP

Environment—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Nicholas Ridley, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Local Government—Dr. Rhodes Boyson, MP
Minister for Environment, Countryside and Planning—The Hon. William Waldegrave, MP
Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction—John Patten, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Richard Tracey, Esq, MP
The Lord Skelmersdale
Christopher Chope, Esq, MP

Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Sir Geoffrey Howe, QC, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
The Rt. Hon. The Baroness Young
Mrs. Lynda Chalker, MP
Minister for Overseas Development—Christopher Patten, Esq, MP
Timothy Renton, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Timothy Eggar, Esq, MP

Health and Social Security—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SOCIAL SERVICES—The Rt. Hon. Norman Fowler, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Health—Antony Newton, Esq, OBE, MP
Minister for Social Security and the Disabled—John Major, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
The Baroness Trumpington
Mrs. Edwina Currie, MP
Nicholas Lyell, Esq, QC, MP

Home Office—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT—The Rt. Hon. Douglas Hurd, CBE, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
The Right Hon. David Waddington, QC, MP
David Mellor Esq, MP
The Earl of Caithness
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—
The Hon. Douglas Hogg, MP

Law Officers' Department—
ATTORNEY-GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. Sir Michael Havers, QC, MP
SOLICITOR-GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. Sir Patrick Mayhew, QC, MP

Lord Advocate's Department—
LORD-ADVOCATE—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Cameron of Lochbroom, QC
SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND—Peter Fraser, Esq, QC, MP

Lord Chancellor—
The Rt. Hon. The Lord Hailsham of St. Marylebone, CH-

Management and Personnel Office—
PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE—The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE—The Rt. Hon. Richard Luce, MP

Northern Ireland Office—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND—The Rt. Hon. Tom King, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—Nicholas Scott, Esq, MBE, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
The Lord Lyell
Richard Needham, Esq, MP
Dr. Brian Mawhinney, MP
Peter Viggers, Esq, MP

Paymaster General and Minister for Employment—The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Clarke, QC, MP

Privy Council Office—
LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS—The Rt. Hon. Viscount Whitelaw, CH, MC
LORD PRIVY SEAL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—The Rt. Hon. John Biffen, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Richard Luce, MP

Scottish Office—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND—The Rt. Hon. Malcolm Rifkind, QC, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—The Lord Glenarthur
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
John MacKay, Esq, MP
Michael Ancram, Esq, MP
Ian Lang, Esq, MP

Trade and Industry—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY AND PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE—The Rt. Hon. Paul Channon, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Information Technology—The Rt. Hon. Geoffrey Pattie, MP
Minister of State—Giles Shaw, Esq, MP
Minister for Trade—The Hon. Alan Clark, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
John Butcher, Esq, MP
Lord Lucas of Chilworth
Michael Howard, Esq, QC, MP

Transport—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT—The Rt. Hon. John Moore, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—David Mitchell, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Peter Bottomley, Esq, MP
Michael Spicer, Esq, MP
The Lord Brabazon of Tara

Treasury—

PRIME MINISTER, FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY AND MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE—The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, MP
CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER—The Rt. Hon. Nigel Lawson, MP
CHIEF SECRETARY—The Rt. Hon. John MacGregor, OBE, MP
FINANCIAL SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—The Rt. Hon. Norman Lamont, MP
ECONOMIC SECRETARY—Ian Stewart, Esq, RD, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—The Hon. Peter Brooke, MP
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—The Rt. Hon. John Wakeham, MP
LORDS COMMISSIONERS—
The Hon. Timothy Sainsbury, MP
Michael Neubert, Esq, MP
Tony Durant, Esq, MP
Peter Lloyd, Esq, MP
The Hon. Mark Lennox-Boyd, MP
ASSISTANT WHIPS—
The Hon. Francis Maude, MP
Gerald Malone, Esq, MP
David Lightbown, Esq, MP
Richard Ryder, Esq, OBE, MP
Michael Portillo, Esq, MP

Welsh Office—

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WALES—The Rt. Hon. Nicholas Edwards, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Wyn Roberts, Esq, MP
Mark Robinson, Esq, MP

Her Majesty's Household—

LORD CHAMBERLAIN—The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Airlie, GCVO
LORD STEWARD—The Rt. Hon. The Duke of Northumberland, KG, TD
MASTER OF THE HORSE—The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Westmorland, KCVO
TREASURER—John Cope, Esq, MP
COMPTROLLER—The Hon. Robert Boscawen, MC, MP.
VICE-CHAMBERLAIN—Tristan Garel-Jones, Esq, MP
CAPTAIN OF THE HONOURABLE CORPS OF GENTLEMEN-AT-ARMS—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Denham
CAPTAIN OF THE QUEEN'S BODYGUARD OF THE YEOMEN OF THE GUARD—Viscount Davidson
LORDS IN WAITING—The Viscount Long, The Lord Beaverbrook, The Lord Hesketh, The Earl of Dundee
BARONESS IN WAITING—The Baroness Hooper

SECOND CHURCH ESTATES COMMISSIONER, REPRESENTING CHURCH COMMISSIONERS—Sir William van Straubenzee, MBE, MP

HOUSE OF COMMONS

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

THE SPEAKER—Rt. Hon. Bernard Weatherill, MP

CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Rt. Hon. Harold Walker, MP

FIRST DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Rt. Hon. Ernest Armstrong, MP

SECOND DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Sir Paul Dean, MP

CHAIRMEN'S PANEL

Miss Betty Boothroyd, MP, Ian Campbell, Esq, MP, Donald Coleman, Esq, MP, Patrick Cormack, Esq, MP, David Crouch, Esq, MP, Stan Crowther, Esq, MP, Miss Janet Fookes, MP, Mr. John Forrester, Esq, MP, Sir Philip Holland, MP, John Hunt, Esq, MP, David Knox, Esq, MP, James Lamond, Esq, MP, Ted Leadbitter, Esq, MP, Hugh McCartney, Esq, MP, Albert McQuarrie Esq, MP, Sir Anthony Meyer, MP, Michael Morris, Esq, MP, Sir Michael Shaw, MP, Michael Shersby, Esq, MP, Sir John Wells, MP, Nicholas Winterton, Esq, MP

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION—

Rt. Hon. The Speaker (Chairman), Alan Beith, Esq, MP, Rt. Hon. John Biffen, MP, Miss Betty Boothroyd, MP, Sir Paul Bryan, DSO, MC, MP, Rt. Hon. Peter Shore, MP

SECRETARY TO THE COMMISSION—R. B. Sands

OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

SPEAKER'S SECRETARY—P. J. Kitcatt, CB

SPEAKER'S COUNSEL—H. Knorpel, CB, G. E. Gammie, CB

SPEAKER'S CHAPLAIN—Rev. Canon J. Mansel, KCVO (Acting)

TRAINBEARER (PARLIAMENTARY)—D. J. Lord

DEPUTY TRAINBEARER (ADMINISTRATION)—P. L. Warwick

ASSISTANT TO SPEAKER'S COUNSEL—P. Harvey, CB

OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS

SECRETARY TO THE CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—D. W. Robson

DEPARTMENT OF THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—Sir Kenneth Bradshaw, KCB

CLERK ASSISTANT—C. J. Boulton, CB

CLERK OF COMMITTEES—D. A. M. Pring, CB, MC

PRINCIPAL CLERKS—
J. H. Willcox (Public Bills)
D. W. Limon (Table Office)
H. M. Barclay (Private Bills)
M. T. Ryle (Journal Office)
J. F. Sweetman, TD (Overseas Office)
W. R. McKay (Financial Committees)
C. B. Winnifrith (Select Committees)
J. R. Rose (Standing Committees)
A. J. Hastings (Select Committees)

DEPUTY PRINCIPAL CLERKS — R. J. Willoughby, S. A. L. Panton, R. B. Sands, G. Cubie, M. R. Jack, PhD, D. G. Millar, Mrs. J. Sharpe, Ms. A. Milner-Barry, R. W. G. Wilson, W. A. Proctor, F. A. Cranmer, R. J. Rogers, C. R. M. Ward, PhD, Ms. H. E. Irwin, D. W. N. Doig, A. Sandall, MLitt, E. P. Silk

SENIOR CLERKS — M. H. Cooper, PhD, D. L. Natzler, Mrs. S. A. de Ste. Croix, A. R. Kennon, D. W. Robson, L. C. Laurence Smyth, A. R. Gren, S. J. Patrick, D. J. Gerhold, C. J. Poyser, D. F. Harrison, S. J. Priestley, C. P. R. Bennett, A. H. Doherty, P. A. Evans, R. I. S. Phillips, R. G. James, J. Hallowell (acting), J. B. Ingram (acting), P. D. Austwick (acting), W. T. Deakin (acting)

ASSISTANT CLERKS — Miss E. J. Baker, Miss P. A. Helme, D. R. Lloyd, R. A. Lambert, B. M. Hutton, J. S. Benger, Ms. E. C. Samson, P. A. Hibbert

SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER—E. F. Riddles, K. J. Brown, G. E. Clayton, I. C. Bryan

HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—C. L. Watson, L. L. Kaye, Miss R. J. Challis, A. P. Hubner, Miss S. J. Fox, P. G. Moon, Mrs. P. Fisher, F. McShane, J. D. Whatley, S. D. Barrett, M. Clark, Miss A. M. Loader

SPECIALIST ASSISTANTS—I. S. Orton, Ms. H. C. Beaumont, Miss J. Ward, R. A. Wilkins, P. R. Daley

EDITORIAL SUPERVISOR OF THE VOTE—G. H. Bright, DEPUTY—B. Tidball, ASSISTANTS—Miss B. Balcomb, Miss L. Lewis, J. Puricelli, Mrs. L. M. Nugent, K. B. Wood

EXAMINERS OF PETITIONS FOR PRIVATE BILLS—H. M. Barclay, J. M. Davies

REGISTRAR OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS—A. J. Hastings

TAXING OFFICER—H. M. Barclay

CHIEF OFFICE CLERKS—R. A. Broomfield, Miss S. M. Pritchard, Miss F. L. Allingham

DEPARTMENT OF THE SERJEANT AT ARMS

SERJEANT AT ARMS—Major G. V. S. Le Fanu

DEPUTY SERJEANT AT ARMS—Major P. N. W. Jennings

ASSISTANT SERJEANT AT ARMS—M. J. A. Cummins

DEPUTY ASSISTANT SERJEANTS AT ARMS—P. A. J. Wright, J. F. Collins

CLERK IN CHARGE—Miss M. Frampton, MBE

ASSISTANT CLERK IN CHARGE—D. W. Snell

ADMISSION ORDER OFFICE—E. D. Palfrey, A. Chipperfield, BEM, Mrs. S. J. Warren

PRINCIPAL DOORKEEPER—J. Blood

SECOND PRINCIPAL DOORKEEPER—G. H. Sargeant

SENIOR DOORKEEPERS—H. D. Bloxham, S. E. R. Skinner, R. T. Warboys, R. A. F. Chapman, J. D. Garnett, R. H. Usher

HEAD OFFICE KEEPER—W. H. Hazard, MBE

SENIOR OFFICE KEEPERS—M. Bryant, K. R. Kemp, W. J. Stokes

NURSING SISTER—Miss E. Needham

DEPARTMENT OF THE LIBRARY

LIBRARIAN—D. Menhennet, DPhil

DEPUTY LIBRARIAN—D. J. T. Englefield

LIBRARY AND RESEARCH—

ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS—H. J. Palmer, G. F. Lock

DEPUTY ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS — J. B. Poole, PhD, Miss J. B. Tanfield, S. Z. Young, Mrs. H. R. Coates, Miss P. J. Baines, BLitt, K. G. Cuninghame, Mrs. J. M. Wainwright, FI InfSc, C. C. Pond, Ph.D, Mrs. C. B. Andrews

SENIOR LIBRARY CLERKS—Mrs. J. M. Lourie, Ms. F. Poole, Mrs. J. M. Fiddick, C. R. Barclay, Mrs. C. M. Gillie, Miss C. E. Nield, R. C. Clements, R. J. Ware, DPhil, Ms. D. Gore, PhD, R. J. Twigger, B. K. Winetrobe, T. N. Edmonds, R. J. Cracknell, Miss O. M. Gay, Miss E. M. McInnes, Mrs. G. Allen

ASSISTANT LIBRARY CLERKS—Miss C. J. Gilmour, PhD, Miss M. Baber, C. M. Bowlby, Miss A. J. Saville, A. D. Lyall, Mrs. P. Carling (Temp.)

SENIOR LIBRARY EXECUTIVES — Miss R. Wheatman, ALA, Mrs. S. M. Withers, ALA, Mrs. H. V. Holden, ALA, Miss J. Seaton, FLA, K. N. H. Parry, ALA

EDUCATION OFFICER—Mrs. E. R. Stones,

HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICER—Mrs. P A. Bozdan

HIGHER LIBRARY EXECUTIVES — J. A. Prince, MLS, Mrs. P. V. Wiles, Mrs. D. W. Clark, M. Southgate, Miss C. E. Fretten, ALA, Miss M. H. Fletcher, Miss G. C. Howarth, Ms. V. R. Cattell, Mrs. S. M. Hingley, ALA, Ms. A. Muir, Mrs. P. E. Cook, ALA, Miss I. O. White, ALA, Ms. H. Armstrong, Miss E. J. Jones, ALA

SUPERINTENDING CLERK—J. R. Hutson

LIBRARY EXECUTIVES—Mrs. M. A. Azim, ALA, G. Haig, Mrs. J. A. P. Skipworth, ALA, Miss B. Mee, MIInfSc., Miss G. L. Cooper, Miss S. Holland, LLA, Mrs. F. M. Ward, A. D. Parker, ALA, Miss A. R. Bacon, Mrs. E. H. Riley, ALA, Ms. J. B. Hall

CHIEF OFFICE CLERK—D. J. Plowright, Miss N. Harland

EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—J. F. Youle, P. R. Davis, J. S. Came, S. A. Wise, Mrs. J. MacDonald, Miss B. A. Rowlands, ALA, D. B. Inns, I. M. Duncan, BEM (Head Library Attendant)

VOTE OFFICE—

DELIVERER OF THE VOTE—G. R. Russell

DEPUTY DELIVERER OF THE VOTE—H. C. Foster

ASSISTANT DELIVERER OF THE VOTE—O. B. T. Sweeney

SUPERINTENDING CLERKS—C. J. Montgomery, C. D. Lister

VOTE OFFICE ASSISTANTS—T. E. Aves, T. S. Wilson, Mrs. S. Fuzio, B. G. Underwood

SALE OFFICE—SUPERINTENDING CLERK—C. C. Clarke, MBE

ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT

HEAD OF DEPARTMENT—A. C. J. Poole

FEES OFFICE—

ACCOUNTANT—J. L. G. Dobson

DEPUTY ACCOUNTANT—A. J. Lewis

SENIOR ASSISTANT ACCOUNTANT—G. P. Brown (Temp.)

ASSISTANT ACCOUNTANTS—F. W. Brewer, A. R. Marskell, M. J. Barram, Miss M. M. McColl (Temp.)

SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER—

HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS — K. E. Johnson, R. Gunn, M. J. H. Caswell, Mrs. P. D. Page, Mrs. J. Yexley, Mrs. N. Norman (Temp.), Mrs. G. Crowther (Temp.), D. A. Tucker (Temp.), Mrs. P. M. Lowther

CHIEF OFFICE CLERKS—Miss D. E. Johnson, Miss T. D. Ruewell (Temp.), Mrs. D. K. P. Simons (Temp.), Mrs. D. Hill, Miss P. Hurford (Temp.), Mrs. J. C. Ponting (Temp.), B. W. Palmer (Temp.), Miss J. Bell (Temp.)

ESTABLISHMENTS OFFICE—

HEAD OF OFFICE—G. A. Roberts

DEPUTY HEAD OF OFFICE—J. A. Robb

ASSISTANT HEAD OF OFFICE—

SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Miss R. A. Cole, V. H. Stocker

HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICER—N.P. Crawley

SUPERINTENDING CLERK—P. C. Kingsley

EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—R. S. Harrison, Miss J. Bremner

COMPUTER OFFICE—

COMPUTER OFFICER—R. S. Morgan, FBCS, FIInfSc, ASSISTANT COMPUTER OFFICER—Mrs. G. S. P. Smith

STAFF INSPECTOR—R. C. Collins

INTERNAL AUDITOR—Miss C. D. Stone, FCCA

WELFARE OFFICER—Miss L. Hunt

DEPARTMENT OF THE OFFICIAL REPORT

EDITOR—K. S. Morgan

DEPUTY EDITOR—L. R. Johns

PRINCIPAL ASSISTANT EDITORS—R. V. Hadlow, J. Gourley, F. G. Brotherston, OBE, C. R. G. Watson, OBE

ASSISTANT EDITORS—P. Walker, E. Holland, I. D. Church, J. Withers

COMMITTEE SUB-EDITORS — W. G. Garland, Miss V. Grainger, J. Ledgerwood, D. Crosswell, Miss C. Ritchie, Miss V. A. A. Clarke, Mrs. A. Roberts, Miss H. A. Hales, Miss L. Sutherland, Mrs. E. J. Gregory, S. M. Hutchinson, Miss V. A. Widgery, Miss C. Fogarty

REPORTERS—Miss H. Thompson, Miss M. Babington, Miss A. Harris, L. Gilmore, Ms G. Hardgrave, P. Oglethorpe, P. Hadlow, Miss C. Hanly, Miss J. K. Belcher, Miss J. A. Bradshaw, Miss E. Morris, Miss K. Stewart, Miss J. Beck, M. Watson, Miss J. Brown, Miss J. Goodman, Miss I. McCarthy, Miss L. Sinclair, Miss E. Watt

PRINCIPAL TRANSCRIBER—D. N. Harrington

DEPUTY PRINCIPAL TRANSCRIBERS—Mrs. E. M. Bangay, Mrs. H. Stollery

PRINCIPAL HANSARD ASSISTANT—D. J. Lawler

SENIOR HANSARD ASSISTANT—Miss R. Washington

ANNUNCIATOR SUPERINTENDENT—H. J. Wellings

REFRESHMENT DEPARTMENT

GENERAL MANAGER—W. J. J. Smillie, FHCIMA, FCFA, ACF

DEPUTY GENERAL MANAGER—E. J. Nash, MCFA

PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATOR—Mrs. S. Nicholls

PERSONAL ASSISTANT TO GENERAL MANAGER—Mrs. A. G. Lunn

BANQUETING MANAGER—C. J. Griffiths

CATERING ACCOUNTANT—D. R. W. Wood, FCA

ASSISTANT CATERING ACCOUNTANT—Mrs. B. A. Langley

EXECUTIVE CHEF—I. Gabay

HEAD CELLARMAN—D. Balcombe

HEAD STOREMAN—A. E. Edmond

SHORTHAND WRITER TO THE HOUSE—Mrs. E. M. C. Holland

PARLIAMENTARY WORKS OFFICER (PSA)—W. H. Lewis, OBE

HEAD OF SECURITY—Chief Superintendent I. K. Slessor

COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER—Mrs. J. Garbutt

POSTMASTER—C. E. Tomkins

TRANSPORT MANAGER—Mrs. M. Hannant

THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE FOURTH SESSION OF THE FORTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

THIRTY-SIXTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 110**

SIXTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1986-87

House of Commons

Monday 9 February 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

WALES

Multiple Occupancy

1. **Mr. John** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what further proposals he intends to make to improve safety in houses in multiple occupancy in Wales.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Mark Robinson): I have asked my officials to consult urgently with local authorities and other relevant bodies with a view to stimulating practical initiatives to bring about improved safety and other standards in such accommodation.

Mr. John: The Minister will know the inadequacy of the present law, which was tragically demonstrated by a fire which occurred in one such house in my constituency towards the end of last year. Will he consider three specific suggestions? First, the inspection of the property should be a duty on local authorities and fire authorities rather than merely a power. Secondly, if any of the houses are closed because fire precautions are inadequate, displaced residents should be in the priority categories of homeless people. Thirdly, does the Minister agree that the owners of such houses, some of whom benefit by many thousands of pounds each year, should have strict duties placed upon them to ensure the proper adaptation of the houses and the highest degree of fire safety?

Mr. Robinson: I am aware of the tragic fire that took place in Pontypridd and I extend my sympathy to the relatives of those concerned. With regard to the three points which the hon. Gentleman made, first, we believe that local authorities have adequate powers under existing laws and we urge them to use those powers. Secondly, there are duties in relation to fire safety precautions which local authorities are obliged to carry out. Thirdly, the owners of such homes are under certain statutory obligations and it is for the local authorities to ensure that those statutory obligations are carried out.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Is my hon. Friend aware that not all local authorities would fully accept his contention that their powers are adequate in this respect? Without going so far as the moves proposed by the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson), will my hon. Friend undertake to look very carefully at this again?

Mr. Robinson: I certainly undertake to look at it, but I note that, so far, only two local authorities operate registration schemes—in Cardiff and in Swansea.

Mr. Anderson: The Minister has just said that there are adequate powers under the present laws. Is he aware that the Government survey published on 23 January showed that more than 81 per cent. of houses in multiple occupation are deficient in means of escape from fire and that the present laws cover only an estimated 8 per cent. of them? Will the Minister give an assurance that on Friday the Government will not talk out my Bill, which is designed specifically to deal with this subject? Is he aware that if the Government talk the Bill out they will face a tidal wave of outrage at their lack of concern?

Mr. Robinson: That is not a matter for me. It is a matter for the House on Friday.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Is my hon. Friend satisfied that local councils are making sufficient use of their powers in this regard?

Mr. Robinson: We are not satisfied, and we are taking steps to draw local authorities' attention to the powers that are available to them and which they should be exercising.

Mr. Roy Hughes: Does the Minister recognise that one of the best means of counteracting the hazards of multiple

occupation is to allow local authorities to build up their depleted housing stock, which would have the social benefit of enabling people to live in decent homes and the economic advantage of putting more than 20,000 building workers back to work?

Mr. Robinson: As I am sure the hon. Gentleman is aware, there are no restrictions on local authorities expanding their housing stock. That is a matter for their own priorities.

Special Health Authority

2. **Mr. Raffan** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the membership, staffing, resources, strategy and policy of the special health authority to be set up to deal with health education matters in Wales.

Mr. Mark Robinson: My right hon. Friend announced the remit of the new authority on 16 January and a statement on membership will be made shortly. I am pleased to announce that we shall be making £1·2 million available to the authority in its first year.

Mr. Raffan: I welcome my hon. Friend's announcement, especially about the dramatic increase in resources. Will he take the opportunity offered by these much-strengthened health education arrangements to introduce a distinctly Welsh initiative and put Wales in the vanguard of education on drug misuse?

Mr. Robinson: The Welsh health promotion authority will have wide powers of health promotion and will continue the campaigns already under way, such as Heartbeat Wales and the work of the health advisory committee. The £1·2 million that I have announced is an increase of 50 per cent. on comparable expenditure this year, but it is not the entire budget available for health promotion in Wales, which should amount to a total of £2·2 million for the year in question.

Dr. Roger Thomas: Does the Minister agree that money spent on promoting education on the dangers of tobacco smoking will be wasted if the Government continue to take a pusillanimous attitude to the money spent by tobacco companies on art and other forms of culture?

Mr. Robinson: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is aware of the new agreement reached between the Government and the tobacco companies.

Mr. Best: Notwithstanding the welcome resources being made available by the Government to tackle drug abuse and other health problems in Wales, does my hon. Friend agree that the greatest problem is, has been, and is likely to remain, that of alcohol abuse? What do the Government intend to do, within the terms of the measure that my hon. Friend has announced, to advise people of the dangers of alcohol abuse?

Mr. Robinson: Both drug abuse and alcohol abuse will fall within the remit of the new special health authority.

Mr. D. E. Thomas: Will the Minister give an assurance to the House and to the professionals engaged in health education in Wales that the arrangements will not prejudice the independence of health education from Government? Concern has been expressed that the establishment of the special health authority might mean that those involved in health education could no longer independently criticise Government policy when it is inimical to good health.

Mr. Robinson: The independence that existed before the arrangements were made will remain after they come into force.

Housing (Rhyl)

3. **Sir Anthony Meyer** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions his officials have had with Rhuddlan borough council about grants for housing action in Rhyl.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Our officials have had a number of such discussions with Rhuddlan borough council. The most recent was on 4 February 1987, when the authority's proposals for potential housing action areas and enveloping schemes in Rhyl were discussed.

Sir Anthony Meyer: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Is he aware that although the borough of Rhuddlan as a whole does not have a particularly acute housing problem, in one small part of the Rhyl—the west end—there is quite a severe problem of sharply deteriorating housing conditions? Will my hon. Friend have further discussions with the council to see whether it needs any further help to speed up its programme?

Mr. Robinson: I am aware of the problem to which my hon. Friend refers. I understand that Rhuddlan borough council has underspent in terms of the housing spending power available to it in each of the past five years. I have asked my officials to have further discussions with the council to encourage it to devise a strategy for tackling the real problems which I know exist in Rhyl.

Rates

4. **Sir Raymond Gower** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what average level of rate increases he expects in Wales for the year 1987-88.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Nicholas Edwards): The rate support grant settlement that I intend to make for 1987-88 is a generous one for Wales. As I have told the House, I intend to increase all the main components by more than the forecast rate of inflation. Consequently, if councils spend in line with the settlement, and after allowing for the settlement of the teachers' pay dispute, the average rate increase in Wales should be in low single figures. As I warned the Welsh Grand Committee, some counties seem to be planning expenditure which would produce higher increases than that. I hope that those councils will think again.

Sir Raymond Gower: In view of the forecasts of higher rate increased in some counties, will my right hon. Friend name any factors that he thinks would justify such higher increases?

Mr. Edwards: I do not think there are any such factors. It is within the power of local authorities, spending at about the same level as the general increase in costs this year, or even a little more, to keep rate bills down to low single figures, and in some instances to make reductions. Some of the proposals being considered by some counties bear no relationship to the increase in costs in the economy as a whole or to the requirements and needs of their ratepayers.

Mr. Roy Hughes: Does the Secretary of State realise that for our 37 district councils the year-on-year increase in block grant is only 0.7 per cent. and that with his imposed settlement there is such volatility that it is likely to bring about rate variations of between minus 20 per cent. and plus 30 per cent? Would the right hon. Gentleman expect private enterprise to function successfully with such crazy arithmetic?

Mr. Edwards: It is perfectly true that in this year's settlement we have put the emphasis on the priority areas of education and law and order which, broadly, come under the responsibility of the counties, and that some of the precepts by districts will be relatively high. As the hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well, however, the effect of the district increases on the rates bill paid by the ratepayer is relatively small because the county share is by far the largest proportion.

Mr. Raffan: Will my right hon. Friend impress upon Clwyd county council that the ratepayers of Clwyd, especially those who are also employers, cannot afford such absurdities as, first, a castle and a proposed concert hall on the lines of Sydney opera house, both of which have serious revenue, let alone capital, implications, and secondly, 22,300 surplus primary and secondary school places which cost £3 million per year to keep empty?

Mr. Edwards: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the problem of surplus school places. As my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Wales, the hon. Member for Conwy (Mr. Roberts), told the House when we last answered Welsh questions, there are 150,000 surplus school places in Wales, costing about £18 million a year, which could be used to improve the education service. There is no doubt that if Clwyd pursued sensible policies there could be a low rate increase.

Welsh Language

5. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement outlining his Department's policy and level of per capita support for the promotion of the Welsh language.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Wyn Roberts): My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State outlined the Government's policy in his speech to representatives of Gwynedd county council on 15 April 1980, a copy of which is in the Library. Direct Government expenditure on the Welsh language in 1986-87 for each Welsh-speaking resident aged three years and over is expected to be £6·42. That does not include approximately £14 million spent by local education authorities on Welsh medium and bilingual education or support amounting to some £34 million for S4C.

Mr. Kennedy: I am grateful to the Minister for that detailed reply, and I apologise to Welsh Members for trespassing. My interest is simply this. How much interdepartmental contact do Welsh Office officials dealing with the promotion of the Welsh language and culture have with their opposite numbers in the Scottish Office? I do not know the outturn for those figures in Wales, but there is a strong feeling in Scotland that the Welsh are doing considerably better than the Gaels with regard to expenditure. Any nudges that the Minister's officials could give to the Scottish Office would be appreciated.

Mr. Roberts: With regard to expenditure on the promotion of the Gaelic language, I suggest that the hon. Gentleman addresses a question to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. In the meantime, perhaps he would care to look at the reply given by my right hon. and learned Friend in July last year to the right hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Stewart).

Mr. Forth: Does my hon. Friend agree that, despite all that expenditure, the use of the Welsh language declines inexorably year on year? Does he therefore agree that the use of minority languages, whether Welsh, Gaelic or Gujarati, is a divisive rather than a uniting factor and that any such expenditure should be seriously reviewed?

Mr. Roberts: I am sorry that my hon. Friend takes that view. We do not accept the inexorable decline of the Welsh language. In fact, we are doing everything possible to promote the Welsh language. It is the oldest language still spoken in the United Kingdom, and I think that most hon. Members on both sides of the House will agree with the Government's policy of promoting its survival.

Mr. Wigley: In view of the consultation about a new Welsh language Act which the Minister's Department has launched with a number of bodies in Wales, will he give an assurance that his announcement to the press in the past two weeks about the slowness of the response coming to hand is not a ploy by the Welsh Office to delay the reviewing of that response beyond 31 March? Will he undertake to produce a White Paper on the Government's intentions shortly after the conclusion of the consultation?

Mr. Roberts: The hon. Gentleman is aware that we allowed six months for the consultation period. He is also aware that I was concerned that only 10 per cent. of the bodies to which we sent consultation papers had replied by a week or so ago. Eight weeks remain until the end of the consultation period. That was the purpose of my press announcement. With regard to the hon. Gentleman's request for a White Paper, we must obviously consider the replies that we receive and consult within Government.

Mr. Rogers: Will the Minister repeat the figures of support? Did he say that it was £6·35 per Welsh-speaking person in Wales? If so, what is the significance of relating that amount to Welsh-speaking people? Surely if we are to develop the Welsh language, to which the Minister says he is committed, the amount of money spent in the English-speaking areas must be significant. Will the Minister elaborate on that peculiar relationship?

Mr. Roberts: The amount that I specified as being spent per Welsh-speaking resident aged three years and over was £6·42. Obviously, that is derived from a totality of figures. It will not be beyond the wit of the hon. Gentleman to divide the total spent on the total population of Wales to discover how much is spent by the Government per person in Wales.

Mr. Best: How does my hon. Friend believe that the promotion of the Welsh language will be assisted by the most regrettable decision of Cymdeithas yr Iaith, the Welsh Language Society——

Mr. Wigley: Smear! Smear!

Mr. Best: My hon. Friend the Minister will draw his own conclusions from the fact that the cry of "Smear" came from the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley). How does my hon. Friend believe that it will assist the

Welsh language for Cymdeithas yr Iaith, the Welsh Language Society, to make this most regrettable invitation to Sinn Fein to visit Wales? Surely that should be condemned by everyone.

Mr. Roberts: I do not think that it will help at all. I was glad to hear my hon. Friend's remarks and to read that the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas), as president of Plaid Cymru, has also condemned the visit. With regard to the Gaelic language as spoken in the Republic, it was compulsory in education until 1974, when the compulsion was established. I can only warn members of Cymdeithas yr Iaith that in the words of Swift:

"Ill company is like a dog, who dirts those most whom he loves best".

Mr. Barry Jones: The hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth), caused offence by his ignorant intervention. Is not the consensus in Wales that we all want the language to prosper? Does the Minister believe, as we do, that there should be a new Welsh Language Act.

Mr. Roberts: It is easy to call for a new Welsh Language Act without giving substantial reasons for it. That is why we are consulting the public. We hope to achieve substantive views from the consultation as to whether a change is necessary, and why. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman supports the Welsh language. He will be interested to know that the equivalent figure of support given by the Labour Government in their last year of office was £1·35 per Welsh-speaking person.

Mental Illness

6. **Mr. D. E. Thomas** asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will review his Department's policy towards services for mental illness; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: As my right hon. Friend announced on 24 October 1986, we intend to publish a paper setting out the ways in which services for those suffering from mental illness can be further developed and improved.

Mr. Thomas: Does the Minister accept that those who are engaged in the mental illness service in the social services, the Health Service and the voluntary sector will be disappointed by that reply, as they had hoped that the Minister would be able to announce some progress in this area? Will he ensure that the money available for the development of mental health services in Wales is substantially increased in view of the recent estimate by Clwyd, for example, that its strategy for adult mental illness will cost more than £6 million in revenue funds and £8 million in capital costs? Will he make an announcement soon of the development programme and on increasing the funding?

Mr. Robinson: I assure the hon. Gentleman that we are as anxious as he is to make progress on such matters. It is important to get the consultation right. We shall make our decision and publish the report as soon as we can. In the coming financial year £10 million will be available for mental handicap, and we intend to continue our commitment.

Mr. Harvey: While warmly welcoming the Government's strategy of getting the mentally ill back into the community, may I ask my hon. Friend to consider the devastating impact on the local community of the closure of North Wales hospital? Will he consider providing Welsh Office funding for any viable proposal for the use of the building?

Mr. Robinson: Before we reach that stage, we must carry out the necessary consultation. We have not yet made a final decision.

Loft Insulation

7. **Mr. Gareth Wardell** asked the Secretary of State for Wales how much money was available for loft insulation grants in Wales in 1986-87; and how much will be made available in 1987-88.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Bids by Welsh local authorities for the homes insulation scheme have been met in full. The sums allocated were £2·7 million for 1986-87 and £2·3 million for 1987-88.

Mr. Wardell: Will the Minister join me in pressing the Government to ensure that there will be no cuts in loft insulation grants, which would be a tremendous blow to energy conservation? Will the Minister press the Government to include draughtproofing as well as insulation in the schemes so that elderly people in receipt of supplementary benefit or housing benefit can be protected from the effects of severe cold?

Mr. Robinson: I have already told the hon. Gentleman that bids for 1987-88 have been met in full. I cannot go beyond that. If the Government plan any changes along the lines mentioned by the hon. Gentleman, the announcement will be made in the appropriate place at the appropriate time.

Mr. Terlezki: What precautions is my hon. Friend taking to ensure that companies engaged in loft insulation work paid for by grants are reputable companies and not cowboys who do not do the job properly?

Mr. Robinson: We issue guidance to local authorities and ask them to pass that guidance to people who make inquiries of them.

Mr. Rowlands: When the Minister said that he had given the local authorities everything for which they had asked, was he aware that the Department responsible for such matters in England was planning to withdraw insulation grants from the overwhelming majority of Welsh homes? Is he aware that there will be no grants to improve loft insulation and to bring insulation up to an adequate level for the overwhelming majority of Welsh households?

Mr. Robinson: The hon. Gentleman is referring to the consultation which the Government are undertaking with regard to the better targeting of home insulation schemes. An announcement will be made at the appropriate time.

Agriculture

8. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Secretary of State for Wales when he next hopes to meet leaders of the farmers unions in Wales to discuss the effects of the recent decisions of the European Community Council of Ministers on Welsh agriculture.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I meet the leaders of the farmers unions in Wales regularly and frequently. I met the

chairman of the council of the National Farmers Union in Wales last week and I am attending the annual dinner of the NFU tomorrow evening.

Mr. Wigley: Is the Secretary of State aware of the great consternation among dairy farmers in Wales at the effects of the developments in relation to quota? In south Wales, especially, during the nine months from April last year until January this year, there was a loss of more than 7 million litres in milk quota. In view of that drastic effect —equivalent to the loss of 30 dairy farms in Wales— will the right hon. Gentleman reconsider his decision not to buy milk quotas to form a quota bank and redistribute them to other farms in Wales?

Mr. Edwards: The figure that the hon. Gentleman quotes represents only 0·48 per cent.—less than one half of 1 per cent.—of the total quota, allocated to holdings in Wales. There is a two-way flow of quota, which provides a very necessary flexibility in the administration of the quota scheme. The hon. Gentleman ought to hesitate long and hard before he tries to separate the arrangements for Wales from those for England and Wales, because Wales benefits enormously from participating in the England and Wales arrangements for milk.

Mr. Colvin: When my right hon. Friend meets leaders of farmers unions in Wales tomorrow night, will he tell them how much he welcomes the recent decision by the European Community to make intervention stocks available to provide free food for needy people? Did he see the report in *The Sunday Times* yesterday, which described the scheme as pie in the sky, and the remarks of our right hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer), who said that the scheme is inadequate and ill thought out? Will my right hon. Friend please have early discussions with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to see how the scheme can be improved and how some of the bureaucracy can be removed, and to see that it is better publicised so that people know where to get help through what is, on the whole, a very worthwhile scheme?

Mr. Edwards: A scheme of this kind is no substitute for fundamental reform of the common agricultural policy. This is a European scheme that has been put together rather hastily and it is undoubtedly causing administrative problems. We are distributing food through voluntary organisations that are long established in Britain and well equipped to do the work. We keep in close touch with them about mechanisms for distributing the food.

Mr. Ron Davies: Did the Council of Ministers have any proposals for the release of farmland for housing or monocultural forestry operations? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, following the broad trailing over the weekend of the Government's proposals, there is widespread concern among environmentalists about what the Government are proposing? Is he further aware that anxiety is not confined to environmentalists, as people concerned with future employment prospects in rural areas in Wales appreciate that there can be no employment in, or financial justification for, what the Government are proposing? Is the right hon. Gentleman able to confirm that he is aware of these ALURE proposals, as they are described, and will he say whether, even at this late stage, he will try to exempt Wales from their implications?

Mr. Edwards: It is characteristic of the hon. Gentleman that he rushes to condemn proposals before he knows what they are. I can tell him that my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is answering a question this afternoon, when he will set out the Government's intentions in this respect. We have a scheme on which we shall consult. Full details will be available later today. The scheme is for the development of farm woodlands, some relaxation on present planning arrangements and for measures to encourage further employment in the countryside. Surely the hon. Gentleman supports and welcomes that.

Mr. Geraint Howells: Will the Secretary of State confirm, or deny, reports in the national newspapers during the weekend that the Conservative party intends to take 85 per cent. of agricultural land out of production to build houses or for afforestation?

Mr. Edwards: The speculation is pure and unadulterated nonsense. I also observed that the chairman of the National Farmers Union has described the alliance's agricultural policy as a total disaster for British farming and the greatest catastrophe that it is likely to face this century.

Mr. Harvey: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the deep concern felt on this side of the House at the crisis facing Welsh farming? Will he consider pressing for a devaluation of the green pound, given that the currency is now 20 per cent. out of alignment? Will he also consider scrapping the £90 inspection charge, which is considered absurd by most farmers on whom it is inflicted?

Mr. Edwards: We are consulting on the inspection charge and will make an announcement in due course. My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the green pound discrepancy. It will undoubtedly be one of the matters to be considered in the coming price fixing. He knows that there has already been one alteration in the green currencies. The proper time, however, to deal with the major issue to which my hon. Friend has drawn attention is during the weeks ahead as we approach the major price fixing.

Mr. John: Does the Secretary of State accept that we recognise the importance of what the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will say about land use? By what means will the Minister do so? We would regard it as wholly unsatisfactory if he were to slip his announcement through by written answer.

Mr. Edwards: My right hon. Friend will be answering a parliamentary question today. [HON. MEMBERS: "A written question?"]

Mr. Raffan: Can my right hon. Friend explain why dairy inspections are to be charged for and why they will cost £90 for one visit every two years? My local farmers tell me that an inspector can easily cover eight farms in one day, and even then that inspectors tend to spend 15 minutes inspecting the dairy and 30 minutes having a cup of tea afterwards.

Mr. Edwards: The charges cover, not simply the visits, but the full range of tests and administration of the scheme. My hon. Friend will also know that most well-organised farms will probably need only one visit every two years, and in many cases even less frequent visits than

that. If he looks at almost any commercial organisation's charges for a visit of this type, he will regard these charges as modest.

Hypothermia

9. **Mr. Powell** asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many deaths from hypothermia have been recorded in Wales during the period May 1979 to January 1987.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Between May 1979 and November 1986, the latest month for which information is available, the number of occasions in Wales where hypothermia appeared on a death certificate, irrespective of whether it was recorded as being the underlying cause of death, was 344.

Mr. Powell: I am grateful for that reply. Is it not frightening to think that deaths are increasing as a result of the Government"s policy? Is the Minister aware that although the Government talk about the £5 that they are giving to old-age pensioners, they are continually moving the goal posts for qualifying? Will the Minister look at the leading article on page 7 of the *Western Mail*, which deals with a constituent of mine? It was suggested that if my constituent had an insurance policy with a surrender value of more than £1,500 he would lose his chances of getting the £5 back. May I suggest to the Minister and the Front Bench——

Mr. Speaker: Briefly.

Mr. Powell: I shall not be long, Mr. Speaker. Would it not have been far better for the Government to use their time on Friday 16 January to vote for free television licences for pensioners, instead of voting against them, so that pensioners could use the £58 to provide themselves with heating and extra nourishment? Instead, the Government adopt this beastly attitude.

Mr. Robinson: I am not sure what relevance the last part of that supplementary question had to hypothermia. If the hon. Gentleman looks at the figures for hypothermia during the years of the Labour Government—it is most inadvisable to play politics with these figures—he will see that they increased every year. If I may refer him to a previous parliamentary question on deaths from hypothermia in winter, he will notice that the highest figure was in the last year of the Labour Government. With regard to the specific case in the *Western Mail*, I should point out that it is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services. If the hon. Gentleman writes to my right hon. Friend, I am sure that he will look into the case in depth.

Mr. Barry Jones: Deaths from hypothermia are distressing and should be decreasing. Is not the reason for their rise badly insulated, ill-repaired, housing stock in Wales, where 140,000 homes are deemed unfit for habitation? Are there not 20,000 unemployed construction workers and more than £190 million worth of renovation grants outstanding? Might not action here save lives next winter?

Mr. Robinson: The hon. Gentleman refers to a rise in Wales, but the figures vary from year to year, and the figures for last year were down on the figures for the year before and also on those recorded in the last year of the Labour Government. The Government are doing precisely what the hon. Gentleman is asking us to do. *[Interruption.]* I know that it is painful, but I remind him that under this Government £333 million has been spent renovating the private stock, whereas under the previous Labour Government only £57 million was spent.

Council House Sales

10. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many council houses have been sold to sitting tenants in Wales since May 1979.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Some 49,846 council dwellings were sold to sitting tenants in Wales between May 1979 and 30 September 1986. Taking into account sales by new towns and housing associations, over 55,000 public sector dwellings have been sold since May 1979.

Mr. Knox: What is my hon. Friend doing to draw the attention of the public to the provisions of the Housing and Planning Act 1986? Does he expect that this will have a big effect on the figures in the future?

Mr. Robinson: I expect it to have an effect on figures in the future, because it increases the discount range on flats from 32 to 60 per cent. to 44 to 70 per cent., with discount occurring at twice the previous rate. This will protect purchasers from unexpectedly high service charges. There has been a reduction in discount repayment from five to three years. The Government will shortly mount a publicity campaign to draw the attention of tenants, particularly of flats, to their right to buy and to the changes resulting from the Housing and Planning Act.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

"Faith in the City"

23. **Mr. Chapman** asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, if the commissioners have yet reached a decision on the recommendation of the report "Faith in the City" that the commissioners should contribute £1 million per annum for 10 years to the General Synod's proposed urban fund; and if he will make a statement.

Sir William van Straubenzee (The Second Church Estates Commissioner, Representing Church Commissioners): If legislation currently before the General Synod is approved both by the Synod and Parliament, the commissioners will consider sympathetically the recommendation that they should make available at least £1 million a year.

Mr. Chapman: As clergy stipends and pensions depend so much on the returns made by the Church Commissioners on their capital assets, can my hon. Friend assure the House that the commissioners will not sell off part of their assets to raise this £1 million for each of the next 10 years, if Parliament so wills it, but will encourage a special appeal, to which they will invite churchgoers and others to contribute?

Sir William van Straubenzee: The special appeal is not for me, and is a separate matter. On matters pertaining to the Church Commissioners, I can say that this money will not be raised out of capital, and it is seen as part of a general continuing process of evening out disparities between historic resources of different dioceses.

Mr. Frank Field: As the funds of the Church Commissioners are used primarily for salaries and

pensions, to what extent will salaries and pensions be reduced to meet this sum? To put that question another way, to what extent must the laity increase their giving to make sure that these cuts do not occur?

Sir William van Straubenzee: The hon. Gentleman is right. Any sums that Parliament authorises the commissioners to make, and it will be only when Parliament so authorises that this happens, must, by definition, leave fewer resources available for stipends and pensions. With a prudent investment policy, it will not be necessary for us to be talking about cuts.

Mr. Stokes: Is my hon. Friend aware that I am somewhat puzzled by his reply? Is not the money of the Church Commissioners primarily, if not wholly, to be used for the purpose of the Church? If the Church is to make enormous contributions to all kinds of other schemes, what will be left for the Church itself?

Sir William van Straubenzee: With great respect to my hon. Friend, I point out that it will be for the urban fund to allocate these moneys; not for the Church Commissioners. They will respond to the request if Parliament so authorises and the General Synod so decides.

Mr. Simon Hughes: May I urge, through the hon. Gentleman, that the Church Commissioners should make that decision and contribution as urgently as possible? Will he also urge them to consider ways in which they might, as a matter of urgency, through the urban fund, support the schooling that is provided by the Church in urban areas? The hon. Gentleman may be able to comment on the fact that at this moment there is a growing, weekly crisis in the staffing of Church schools, caused in part by the lack of buildings and also by the lack of incremental and other opportunities. Could that be considered by the Church Commissioners, too?

Sir William van Straubenzee: The pace at which the Church Commissioners can move is dictated, first, by the corporate decision of the General Synod and, secondly, by Parliament. Only then will they lawfully be able to proceed. I am afraid that I cannot assist the hon. Gentleman by referring to individual projects. That is not the concern of the Church Commissioners, nor should it be. It will be the concern of the urban fund.

Assistant Curates

24. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Leicester, East of 8 December, *Official Report*, column 13, what further consideration he has given to means of meeting a higher proportion of the expenses incurred by assistant curates.

Sir William van Straubenzee: It is the parish responsibility to reimburse the expenses incurred by assistant curates. To encourage parishes to meet these responsibilites, the commissioners have issued a newly revised booklet which offers guidelines on all aspects of clergy expenses. This has been sent to all dioceses and parishes.

Mr. Bruinvels: Although I know that my hon. Friend shares the concern that assistant curates are not having all their expenses met in full—indeed, I believe that 16 per cent. of all expenses are not being met—will he reassure me that the "Parochial Expenses of the Clergy" booklet, which is available, is sent to every treasurer of the parochial church councils and that the PCC responsibility is made quite clear? Our assistant curates are having a difficult time at the moment and, because of all the unpaid work that they do, the sooner their expenses are met in full the better.

Sir William van Straubenzee: I think that very vigorous action has been taken along the lines that my hon. Friend has urged, and I am obliged to him for drawing attention to that matter. The truth is that every legitimate expense that is not met means that the stipend is thereby reduced.

Small Businesses

25. **Mr. Greenway** asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, if the commissioners have made any investments in the provision of premises suitable for small businesses in deprived areas.

Sir William van Straubenzee: Yes, Sir. The commissioners have recently completed a workshop and studio development in the London borough of Hackney. This has been specially designed to meet the needs of small businesses, which will be able to rent space on flexible terms. It is very much hoped that this development will help promote new jobs and new business in the area.

Mr. Greenway: I congratulate my hon. Friend, and those whom he represents, on that answer. May I ask him what kind of people will be taking up those premises? Have the Church Commissioners any plans to extend this principle to other parts of the nation, and if so, where?

Sir William van Straubenzee: There is a mix of tenants in this development, including printers, interior designers and photographic firms. I am also glad to say that TOC H, Church Action for the Unemployed and the Bridge Project Trust, which is a Christian organisation helping the unemployed, have taken space in the building. There is no immediate plan for another such development, because each individual case must be looked at very carefully. However, I am encouraged by my hon. Friend's commendation.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I, too, congratulate the Church Commissioners on their initiative, but may I draw the hon. Member's attention to projects that are being considered south of the River Thames by Church Action for the Unemployed and other such organisations, such as Headstart, with the Cambridge University Mission? Perhaps the Church Commissioners would look at those projects as a way of alleviating the problem, through a form of lay ministry, which has been much appreciated when initiatives have been taken.

Sir William van Straubenzee: If the hon. Gentleman wishes to draw my attention at any time to any specific project, I shall be very happy to pass on the details. Meanwhile, I am sure that the House knows, in a different part of the country altogether and on a different scale, of the Metro Centre in Gateshead. That is not a small business. It involves the employment of an additional 6,000 people and is making a major contribution to easing the unemployment problems in that part of the country.

WALES

Labour Statistics

11. **Mr. Barry Jones** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what are the unemployment totals and percentages for *(a)* Wales and *(b)* Clwyd at the latest date for which such figures are available and for May 1979; and if he will give the percentage increase.

14. **Dr. Marek** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what were the unemployment totals and percentages for *(a)* Wales and *(b)* Clwyd at the latest date for which such figures are available and for May 1979; and if he will give the percentage increase.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Nicholas Edwards): I refer to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) on 19 January. No more recent figures are available.

Mr. Jones: The unemployment figures in Wales, and Clwyd in particular, are truly distressing. Against that background, will the right hon. Gentleman back to the hilt the application by British Aerospace for £750 million worth of launch aid over six years for the new family of Airbus A330-A340? I want the right hon. Gentleman to fight his corner in Cabinet. The project needs Government cash and British Aerospace does not want City cash with strings. Does the right hon. Gentleman understand that if British Aerospace withdraws from Airbus Industrie the United Kingdom will lose its capability for civil aircraft production? May I remind the Secretary of State that 4,000 aerospace jobs exist at Broughton in my constituency, where many hundreds of people make the wings of the Airbus. I ask the right hon. Gentleman to say without any shadow of doubt that he will fight his corner in Cabinet for a great industry in Wales.

Mr. Edwards: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will welcome the fact that unemployment in Wales has fallen in eight out of the last nine months. British Aerospace will be amazed at his assertion that it does not want City finance. I think that it will reject that assertion out of hand. I note what he says about the merits of this proposal. The Government will consider all those arguments in the appropriate way and make an announcement at the appropriate time.

Dr. Marek: For once in his life will the Secretary of State answer a question and tell my hon. Friend whether he will fight for Wales in Cabinet? Is the right hon. Gentleman already thinking of his future life in the City after he leaves the House?

Mr. Edwards: I can assure the hon. Gentleman that when I think there is a good case, I fight for it. It is quite clear from the many things that have been said in recent weeks that, whatever criticisms may be made of me, no one has argued that I do not do that.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Admission Orders

26. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Lord Privy Seal how many admission orders were issued for the Strangers Gallery in each of the past three years; of those issued to hon. Members and right hon. Members, what was the percentage take-up; and if there are any plans to change the arrangements for ticket allocation.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): The number of admission orders issued for the Strangers' Gallery over the past three years was 134,160 in 1986, 140,527 in 1985, and 141,868 in 1984. The percentage take-up of those orders issued to hon. Members for the same three years was 52·7 per cent., 48·6 per cent., and 53·5 per cent. respectively. I have no plans for changing the arrangements for the allocation of tickets to hon. Members.

Mr. Bruinvels: Will my right hon. Friend look again at the way in which the allocation of admission orders is undertaken, especially as it appears that 47 per cent. of hon. Members do not take up their orders? May I ask him to consider the possibility of hon. Members who know that it is their allocation day writing in and applying for tickets in order to ensure that there are no empty areas in the Strangers' Gallery? Other hon. Members who are not in the list for that day could apply for the tickets, so that the House is properly supported at all times.

Mr. Biffen: The present system has the merit of being relatively simple and everybody gets a chance to use his ticket if he wishes. Of course many tickets are returned, but they are eventually allocated. Half an hour is allowed before that process takes place and that often gives rise to the impression that the Galleries are far more empty when in fact they are temporarily under-used.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Does it seem right to the Leader of the House that there should be space up there in the Galleries and behind me when there is a queue of people outside waiting to come into the House?

Mr. Biffen: That raises a totally different set of propositions from those put by my hon. Friend. It is Monday afternoon and it would not be wise for me to go down that path so early in the week.

Accommodation

27. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Lord Privy Seal how many offices in the Palace of Westminster are allocated *(a)* to hon. Members, *(b)* to hon. Members' secretaries, *(c)* to parliamentary staff and *(d)* others; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: The current distribution within that part of the Palace of Westminster allocated to the House of Commons is: hon. Members 273 offices, with 55 desks for hon. Members' secretaries on the lower ground floor; parliamentary staff 91 offices, and other organisations 31 offices.

Mr. Greenway: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the offices of some hon. Members are so far away that they have to open their mail in the corridors or while sitting on the floor? That happens sometimes because there are so many people occupying the seats. That is distressing. Does he think that it would be helpful to hon. Members from different parties if their secretaries were not in the same room? Does he think that the secretaries of Members from only one party should occupy a room? Would that be helpful?

Mr. Biffen: As to the first part of the question, that is certainly going down memory lane. That is just what I did

more than 20 years ago and I do not think that my mail suffered thereby. As to my hon. Friend's second point, I believe that the authorities do their utmost to accommodate those hon. Members who want their secretaries to be in rooms occupied only by those of similar party affiliation. Some hon. Members favour a different system. I believe that, on the whole, we cater for the varying tastes in this matter.

Mr. Heffer: Hear, hear. My wife is with two Tories and she is quite happy.

Mr. Biffen: I shall take that as wholly unsolicited testimony to the virtue of Conservative Members.

Mr. Simon Hughes: What is the latest target date for the opening of the next set of offices which are being constructed on the site next to the Palace?

Mr. Biffen: About 30 secretaries are expected to be housed in 1 Cannon Row, which should be available in 1988. As the hon. Gentleman may appreciate, and as has been frequently stated, it is hoped that phase 1 of the Bridge street site, which will provide accommodation for 60 Members of Parliament and 100 secretaries, will be completed in 1990.

Mr. Favell: Is my right hon. Friend able to say how many bedrooms there are in the Palace, the use to which they are put and how often they are used?

Mr. Biffen: I am not able to answer that question without notice. I think that that is a question that merits being considered in its own right.

Recycled Paper

28. **Mr. Janner** asked the Lord Privy Seal what steps are being taken to promote the use of recycled paper in the House of Commons.

Mr. Biffen: The Services Committee decided in February 1982 that available papers containing recycled waste were not acceptable for Members' stationery. Since then HMSO has regularly reviewed the available paper containing waste, but has not yet discovered any of a quality superior to that previously rejected by the Committee.

Mr. Janner: How many trees a year does the right hon. Gentleman consider would be saved if we were to use recycled paper for the mountain of paper that we go through? Should we not be setting an example to the environmentalists?

Mr. Biffen: I cannot answer the first part of the question without a great deal of notice. As to the second part, I guarantee that the complaints of those who believe that we should be corresponding on stationery of the highest quality would far outweigh the voices of those who are promoting environmental considerations.

Mr. Latham: If my right hon. Friend wants to save forests, why does he not start with the Order Paper? Six sides of paper in tomorrow's Order Paper are filled with identical questions to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. Cannot the names be one after the other? In that way, they might all be on one side of paper.

Mr. Biffen: Prime Minister's Question Time is of such great value to the Conservative party, particularly during the pre-election period, that I would wish to do nothing that would minimise its success.

Mr. Stokes: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, far from using recycled paper, a return to parchment might save us all from having to endure a vast weight of paper?

Mr. Biffen: That is the most socially constructive question that I have heard this afternoon.

Mr. Fairbairn: Whether it be parchment or recycled paper, will my right hon. Friend ensure that none is used in the bedrooms in the Palace?

Mr. Biffen: I take note of that thoughtful and well-directed question.

WALES

Rail Operations

12. **Mr. Anderson** asked the Secretary of State for Wales when he intends next to meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss rail operations in Wales.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Wyn Roberts): My right hon. Friend met the chairman on 25 November and has no further plans to do so at present.

Mr. Anderson: The Secretary of State will know from his personal experience of the reduction in services to west Wales, such as the ending of the sleeper service. Will he ensure that west Wales is not marginalised in the railway network and that, for example, the Swansea to Cardiff line is not downgraded by British Rail?

Mr. Roberts: These are operational matters for British Rail. British Rail is to make an announcement shortly about InterCity services. British Rail is to improve the Red Dragon executive service from Swansea from May. I understand that, in BR's opinion, there is no market for late evening services after 6.30 pm from Swansea.

Sir Raymond Gower: Would it not boost railway operations in Wales if the Margam pit were now to be built? Does my hon. Friend think that the intervention of the National Union of Mineworkers' president is rather regrettable, hasty and should have been assessed by the Welsh miners?

Mr. Roberts: All industrial developments in Wales will be helpful to British Rail because they will involve increased passenger traffic and freight. I should not like to comment on the attitude of the NUM, but I notice that there is a difference between what Mr. Scargill said and what was said by the local NUM leader in south Wales about that project.

Blood Bank, Gloucester

3.31 pm

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the launching today of a private blood bank in Gloucester."

It is clearly a specific matter, because two property developers, who have no experience of or expertise in the health field, are setting up a private blood bank on the third floor of a warehouse in Gloucester docks. However amateurish the outfit, those concerned are certainly specific about their charges, which are an initial fee of £400 for storing up to six pints of frozen blood per client and a subsequent charge of £160 a year.

It is a vital issue because the operation and efficiency of the National Blood Transfusion Service could be damaged, because a private blood bank will offer a second-class service to clients and will merely exploit and cash in on the present bandwagon of AIDS fears.

It is important, because this private firm is seeking to convey a false impression of guaranteed safety, when there are major problems involved in the long-term storage of frozen blood and its reconstitution, and when six pints are wholly inadequate for major operations, long-term treatment or following major accidents. It is important that patients are made aware of the huge and perhaps insuperable problems of the rapid transport of their own blood supplies if accidents occur hundreds of miles away. The delay could do far more damage than any conceivable risk from using blood supplies from the regional blood transfusion centre.

The matter is urgent because this private venture is starting today, it has not gained planning permission, it is wholly unregulated, so that contaminated blood could slip through, and it can offer no guarantee of safety. This might exacerbate our problems with AIDS rather than solve them.

For all those reasons, Mr. Speaker, I earnestly request that you find time for a debate on this crucial matter of public health at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the launching today of a private blood bank in Gloucester."

I do not underestimate the importance of what the hon. Gentleman has said. The decision that I have to take is whether to give this matter precedence over the business set down for today or tomorrow. I regret that I do not consider the matter that he has raised as appropriate for debate under Standing Order No. 20, and therefore I cannot submit his application to the House.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall take first the point of order from Mr. Campbell-Savours. He gave me notice of it.

Comptroller and Auditor General

3.34 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am seeking your ruling, which I believe will be a precedent, on the position of the Comptroller and Auditor General, Sir Gordon Downey, as the recipient of information in his role as an Officer of Parliament and your responsibility in protecting his rights as an Officer of the House.

Under the National Audit Act 1983, the Comptroller and Auditor General was made an Officer of the House and has the same status in our proceedings as the Clerk of the House, Sir Kenneth Bradshaw. However, he has a special role, because he straddles Parliament and the Executive, having been given, under section 8 of the 1983 Act, a statutory right of access to Government Departments for the purposes of certification and audit and for value-for-money examinations. Apart from the Parliamentary Commissioner—the ombudsman—he is the only Officer of Parliament with a statutory right of access.

The Comptroller and Auditor General's statutory right of access allows his access even to the most secret areas of Government expenditure, such as every area of the major defence projects statement, including defence projects of the highest possible classification of national security. The only area to which he is denied access is expenditure covered by the secret Vote of about £80 million annually.

On 23 January Duncan Campbell wrote an article in the *New Statesman* headlined "Parliamentary bypass operation." His case was that Parliament was not informed of major expenditure on the Zircon project and that rules on notification to Public Accounts Committee Chairmen of major defence projects——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not go into too much detail. I should like a point of order on which I can rule. I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman is raising an important matter, but what is the point of order for me?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I am being as brief as I can in laying out exactly the points on which the point of order is based.

The article suggested that the rules on the notification to PAC Chairmen of major defence projects of a national security nature where potential costs exceed £250 million had been broken.

The allegation was immediately denied by the right hon. Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann), the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission, who said:

"I am told that the matter is still at a preliminary stage and that nothing like the sums that were referred to have been incurred."—[*Official Report*, 19 January 1987; Vol. 108, c. 594.]

The allegation was also denied by the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, who said in a debate on the security services that no programme expenditure had been committed and that only expenditure on project definition had been committed. The allegation has also been repeatedly denied by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Mr. Speaker: Order. What is the point of order for me in these matters? The hon. Gentleman is raising matters of debate.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I am deliberating not doing that. I have to set out exactly what is happening. I am not expressing any view or opinion, but am simply saying what is on the record as I build my case.

The Comptroller and Auditor General said in a National Audit Office statement on 22 January that the NAO had been monitoring the Ministry of Defence project throughout its preliminary stages and that, as yet, there was no commitment to a major project by defence standards.

You will appreciate, Mr. Speaker, that if those statements were incorrect, the Comptroller and Auditor General had been misled, in which case the Ministry of Defence would be in default of its statutory obligations to Parliament, as it would be replying to an Officer of the House, the Comptroller and Auditor General having asked questions. That would be a grave and unprecedented development. It would be different from what happened with Chevaline, because at that time, before the National Audit Act, the Comptroller and Auditor General was not an Officer of Parliament.

The question is whether the Comptroller and Auditor General was misled as an Officer of Parliament and whether Parliament itself was, therefore, misled. Mr. Campbell says that Zircon's costs were about £500 million, and he says that he will give me an affidavit supporting that statement. Mr. Roger Stanyard, who edits the "Interspace" newsletter, says that he was told in the autumn of 1984 that the project cost was £500 million.

Mr. Speaker: Order. These are matters which the hon. Gentleman could raise in a debate. He must put a point of order that I can answer. Will he come to it now, please?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I am almost precisely there. Mr. Stanyard said that the cost was £500 million and that he had been told that the costs were hidden within the Ministry of Defence's defence procurement budget. Messrs. Freeman, Leppard and Davis of *The Sunday Times* also——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that the hon. Gentleman is abusing his point of order. I ask him now to come immediately to his point of order. I remind him that this is a private Members' day, and he is taking up the time of other Back Benchers.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: You might say, Mr. Speaker, that Ministers' answers to hon. Members are not a matter for you. I put it to you that when Ministers provide documentary evidence to the Comptroller and Auditor General to enable him to carry out audit certification and value for money examinations, Ministers' replies to him are a matter for you, because he is an Officer of the House of Commons — *[Interruption.]* I put it to you, Mr. Speaker, that the reply that Ministers give to the Comptroller and Auditor General are matters for you because he is an Officer of the House.

There is a divergence of opinion. The Ministry of Defence says that the project has not incurred a large amount of money, but three people outside the House say they have been told by Ministry of Defence officials that the project incurred several hundred million pounds. The Comptroller and Auditor General supports the Government's position at this stage. I believe that it is incumbent upon you, Mr. Speaker, to satisfy yourself— defending the interests of Parliament — that the Comptroller and Auditor General is being correctly informed about the amount of money that the Government have spent on the project. My point of order is to ask you whether you will do precisely that.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that I can give the hon. Gentleman a one word answer—yes, I will. Well, that is three words.

Parliamentary Procedure

3.41 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I realise that there is a problem about the use of prime time and that this is seen by many as an abuse of the emergency procedure. I understand that, but the problem is that we have no form of emergency questioning under which we can ask a Minister such as the Lord Advocate exactly why he did not go along with the law of Scotland and consult the feelings of the victim. The victim in this case is a major Government Department—the Foreign Office. Why did the Lord Advocate not listen—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must raise a point of order which I can answer. I think that I can help him at this point by saying that he will have that opportunity on Wednesday this week when the Solicitor-General for Scotland will be answering questions.

Ministerial Statements

3.42 pm

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This afternoon during Welsh Question Time I asked the Secretary of State for Wales a supplementary question about weekend press reports that the Government intend to relax control over agricultural land. The issue received wide publicity at the weekend and in this morning's press. The reports indicate clearly that the Government intend to release agricultural land for housing and afforestation. You will recall, Mr. Speaker, that the Secretary of State, in his reply to me, refused to answer my question on the ground that his right hon. Friend——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This matter was raised last Thursday as a continuation of Question Time. I heard what the Secretary of State for Wales said, and I read what was said in the newspapers. It is not a matter for me. It is a matter not of order, but of argument.

Mr. Ron Davies: I think, Mr. Speaker, that I have a valid point of order. The Secretary of State for Wales refused to answer my question on the ground that his right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food was to reply to a parliamentary question. The Minister is in his place today.

My point of order is that the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has arranged a press conference for 4 o'clock today. He has also arranged a planted written question to leak details of the Government's proposals. Would it not be more appropriate for you to make this facility available for the Minister to come to the House today to make his views known?

Mr. Speaker: Order. These are patently not matters for me. Questions to the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will be taken on 19 February, when these matters can be raised.

Mr. Brynmor John (Pontypridd): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: It must be a point of order and it must be related directly to my responsibilities.

Mr. John: It is inconceivable that so important a matter as a new Government land use policy should be slipped through by means of a written answer, with a press conference hearing of it before any hon. Member of this House has been provided with the information. Has the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food given any sign that he wishes to make an oral statement? If he cannot make it now because it is a private Member's day, will he say whether he will make it at 7 o'clock?

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Michael Jopling): I have heard the points made by the hon. Members for Pontypridd (Mr. John) and for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies). I have heard also what you said, Mr. Speaker, about the need to keep within the confines of your responsibilities. It is true that it was my intention to answer a question this afternoon on a package of measures for alternative land use and the rural economy, but I was especially aware that today was private Member's time, and I remember from a previous incarnation how unpopular Ministers are when they intrude upon it.

I am in the hands of the House. If you, Mr. Speaker, within your responsibilities, can find an opportunity for

me to give the answer now which I would have given later, I shall be happy to take it. I am happy to do that now. If, alternatively, you think that it might be more helpful to have a discussion through what I believe are called the usual channels, I would be happy for that to be done, or for you to find me a facility to answer the question. I am perfectly happy to make my answer available to the House at any time.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is not a matter for me to find time for the right hon. Member. If he wishes to make a statement, no doubt he will have an opportunity to do so tomorrow afternoon.

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretary of State for the Environment are issuing statements today without even giving hon. Members written answers. Is it in order, Mr. Speaker, for the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to give a written answer to the House when there is not a written question on the Order Paper?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not an innovation. There is a question on the Order Paper. It has been done before. I repeat that if the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food wishes to make a statement, no doubt that should be arranged through the usual channels. That is the best way of dealing with the matter.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I cannot say more than I have done.

Mr. Williams: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This really is an abnormal position. Your role, Mr. Speaker, as you well appreciate, is to protect the interests of Back-Bench Members. It must be virtually unprecedented for a Minister to refuse to answer an oral question, which always has priority in this House, because an answer will be given later in the day to a pursuant question which is not even on the Order Paper. If the Minister is trying to slide his answer through the House, surely the least that he can do is come to the House at 7 o'clock tonight, not tomorrow, and make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Nicholas Edwards): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) was not in the House when I was on my feet. It is untrue that I refused to answer the question. I answered the question, but said that an answer would also be given by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food later.

Mr. Ron Davies: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot deal with the matter any more. The hon. Gentleman is a Back-Bench Member, and he will understand that I have a duty to protect the interests of Back-Benchers. This is patently a private Members' day.

Mr. Davies *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. There is nothing more that I can say. This is a matter of argument and I have no doubt that it will be discussed through the usual channels and resolved tomorrow.

Mr. Davies: On a point of order Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I shall take it only if it is a matter on which I can rule, and not a continuation of the discussion.

Mr. Davies: We have now had the unprecedented spectacle of the Minister of Agriculture Fisheries and Food in effect making a statement but denying that he was doing so. As I understand it, the rules of the House are such that if a Minister comes to the Dispatch Box to make a statement, hon. Members have the opportunity of questioning him. The Minister has in effect made a statement and I am submitting to you, Mr. Speaker, that hon. Members now have the right to question him.

Mr. Speaker: The best way of resolving the issue on a private Members' day is for the matter to be discussed through the usual channels. I have no doubt that that will lead to a resolution of the difficulty.

Mr. James Callaghan (Cardiff, South and Penarth): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am on my feet.

Mr. Callaghan: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the draft Plugs and Sockets etc. (Safety) Regulations 1987 be referred to a Standing committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

Ministerial Statements

Mr. James Callaghan (Cardiff, South and Penarth): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I regret to say that my point of order relates to the matter that was previously before the House, which you said was one of argument. Would you not consider it to be a matter of propriety as well as one of argument, Mr. Speaker? Do you think that the House should be subjected to a procedure that means that no statement is made to it when a press conference is to be held at 4 o'clock? Is such a practice not to be deprecated?

Mr. Speaker: What the right hon. Gentleman says—he has great experience in this place—may be correct, but it is not a matter of order on which I can rule. The best way for the House to proceed is to allow the matter to be discussed through the usual channels. I am certain that that will lead to a resolution.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I raised this specific issue when a previous Government did exactly the same thing.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): A Labour Government?

Mr. Janner: No. It was done by a previous Conservative Government. Your predecessor, Mr. Speaker, ruled that, though he was not able to say that the practice was contrary to the rules of order, he thought that it was a thoroughly unworthy practice that the House should be treated in a way that meant that a press conference was held prior to the making of a statement in the House. In these circumstances, Mr. Speaker, will you repeat the deprecation now? It is surely monstrous that the Government should continue to behave in this way.

Mr. Speaker: The House knows that Ministers frequently give information to the House by way of written answers to questions. There is a new feature today, because the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and food has offered to make a statement at a different time, and I hope that that will happen.

Nuclear Waste

3.52 pm

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): I beg to move,

That this House welcomes the report prepared for the County Councils of Humberside, Lincolnshire and Bedfordshire regarding the disposal of low level nuclear waste; notes the coalition's view based on an international comparative study that; (i) there are better technical alternatives than those presented by UK Nirex for the disposal of such wastes which may also be used for intermediate level waste; (ii) the overall cost of alternatives may be greater than for a shallow repository but would be less than one per cent. of the costs of nuclear electricity generation; and (iii) if public acceptance is to be gained a truly convincing solution to the disposal of low and intermediate level nuclear waste must be found; and urges Her Majesty's Government to give full consideration to this report before final decisions are taken regarding the disposal of nuclear waste.

I have been a Member of this place for the past eight years and it was something of a surprise for me, having gone through the automatic, routine mechanism of signing a ballot paper on just about every available occasion during the past eight years, to find that I had drawn No. 1 position in the ballot for today's private Members' motions. Probably few Members on either side of the House were surprised when I decided to give the House the opportunity of debating nuclear waste disposal.

In February 1986 my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), who is now the Secretary of State for Education and Science and who was then Secretary of State for the Environment, announced his intention to select four sites for test drilling for the disposal of low and, at that stage, intermediate-level waste. We had a short debate that arose on the Easter Adjournment thanks to the initiative of my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), who is now the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department. There was a second debate which lasted for about three hours, which was a short time for the many who wanted to contribute to it, when a special development order was placed before the House. This is the first major opportunity that the House has had to have what I hope will be a constructive and leisurely debate.

I am delighted to see my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham, my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire (Mr. Eyell), the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, and my right hon. Friend the Patronage Secretary here today. From my knowledge of their efforts, they have been as vigorous in their representations on behalf of their constitutents as I have on behalf of mine. The fact that they are members of the Government has not inhibited them in any way in their efforts to press for the best interests of their constituents. I am delighted to see them.

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): Is the hon. Gentleman, like his hon. Friends whom he mentioned, in favour of the generation of electricity by nuclear power? If so, his arguments against dumping are, to put it mildly, completely untenable.

Mr. Brown: That is a fair challenge. If the right hon. Gentleman had been watching Yorkshire Television last Monday, he would have seen me conducting an interview with Mr. Arthur Scargill, when we discussed that very question. I said that the case for further nuclear power generation had not yet been proven, and that until the Government had received a mandate at the next general election I felt that it would be prudent for them not to proceed with further installation of new nuclear power stations. I said that the Government should not do so until the electorate had at least had the opportunity of confirming that decision.

I am concerned not only about the proposals that NIREX has made for the South Killingholme site in my constituency but about the situation at Fulbeck, Elstow and Bradwell. My right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), who cannot be with us for the debate because he has duties in America, has represented those in the county of Essex who are concerned about the selection of Bradwell as a site. He has also made representations on behalf of my right hon Friend the Patronage Secretary. I should like to draw the attention of my hon. Friend the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Planning to the letter written to him on 4 February by my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point, who was kind enough to send me a copy. He asked whether I would draw to my hon. Friend's attention the fact that

"the geological conditions which exist at Bradwell do not begin to meet Nirex's own criteria. We are in no doubt that the testing now going on will confirm this. That is why we did not object to the testing taking place. This . . . is quite apart from the fact that the area has been subjected to flooding and earthquakes."

Secondly, my right hon. Friend draws attention to the fact that

"the road and rail communications do not satisfy the criteria laid down by Nirex. The transport links are totally inadequate for the purpose of transporting waste to the site."

This also applies to South Killingholme. My right hon. Friend draws attention to the fact that there are large centres of population in the Bradwell area. Surely it must be utterly wrong to site a nuclear waste disposal facility in an area that has large centres of population.

I concur absolutely with the representations of my right hon. Friend, who was speaking also on behalf of my right hon. Friend the Patronage Secretary. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will take note of those representations when he replies to that letter.

I should welcome it very much if Essex county council joined the coalition of Humberside, Lincolnshire and Bedfordshire because the council would then have at its disposal the advantage of professional consultants who produced an excellent report, a copy of which has been sent to all hon. Members. The report is entitled "The Disposal of Radioactive Waste". It draws on the experiences of those three county councils when they recently visited Sweden, West Germany and France. The report was prepared for the coalition of county councils by Environmental Resources Limited, under the guidance of Mr. Peter Floyd. It is an outstanding report. I think that Essex county council would agree with its conclusions. I hope that it will be encouraged to join the other three county councils.

I want first to skim through the report in the hope that other hon. Members who will take part in the debate will also have had the opportunity of reading the report and will be able to refer to it. I want to outline the background of the report and the conclusions reached by the county councils. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, South and Maldon (Mr. Wakeham), my

hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire and my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham will support those conclusions.

My hon. Friend the Member for Grantham was kind enough to join us for the press launch of the document just two weeks ago and I am delighted to welcome him to the debate today. He was present at the press conference when the document was launched on 21 January alongside members of Lincolnshire, Humberside and Bedfordshire county councils.

The coalition formed by the three county councils decided, on the basis of the evidence that they had studied from the report of the all-party Select Committee on the Environment relating to nuclear waste last year, that they should go to Sweden, West Germany and France to study how other nations were tackling the problem. They were encouraged to do that because the Select Committee report claimed that the technology for nuclear waste disposal in the United Kingdom was a long way behind the experience and expertise in the subject in other countries. My right hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Jenkin), the former Secretary of State for the Environment who originally announced the policy, also acknowledged that technology and study in this country was far behind that of other European countries.

The foreword of the report states:

"The Coalition was most impressed with the committed and far-sighted view which the Swedish people take of radioactive waste disposal. The Swedes have spared neither effort nor expense in coming to terms with the problem. Everyone in the delegation was deeply impressed by the sheer size and vision of the Forsmark undertaking. It is clear that the Swedish authorities have decided to pay the greatest attention to deep-seated public concern and have come up with a demonstrably acceptable and safe solution."

The foreword goes on to draw attention to the coalition's findings in West Germany. It states:

"In West Germany, too, it was apparent that the anxieties of the people were taken very seriously. The West German authorities see it as their task to accept and allay these fears —not to dismiss them with contempt."

Those are two examples from Europe which we should follow. The foreword continues:

"The French method of disposal was considered the least impressive of the three seen by the delegation and could not be recommended for the UK. In fact, although the UK Government has suggested that the Coalition should see this method as an example of what was proposed by NIREX, it was so demonstrably different that no comparison could be made."

The foreword concludes:

"The Coalition delegation learned salutary and important lessons from their tour of Europe. They returned convinced that the British Government has not yet addressed itself seriously to the problems of radioactive waste disposal. There has been no proper evaluation of the alternative methods of disposing of low level radioactive waste. The method adopted, shallow burial, has been rejected in other countries. Public opinion is seen as something to be overcome in the UK, rather than as the basis for policy formulation.

The Government now has an absolute duty to respond to these concerns."

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): My hon. Friend has referred to the example set by various countries on the continent. If NIREX was to follow the examples that he has listed, would he withdraw all his objections to a low-level disposal site in this country?

Mr. Brown: If Her Majesty's Government can say through my hon. Friend the Minister during the course of the debate that the experience at Forsmark had convinced them that that was the best way of disposing not only of intermediate-level waste but also of low and very low-level nuclear waste, I would accept that the problem of public opinion would have been dealt with, that the concern of public opinion would have been substantially allayed and I would be very much more inclined to accept such a proposal.

I do not believe that there is a great difference in the costs involved. A figure of £125 million has been quoted as the cost of the Forsmark system. When we consider all the costs—and NIREX has not been able to give the total cost of its proposal—I do not believe that the cost of £125 million, the equivalent cost of Forsmark, is a price that we cannot afford to pay. If that kind of expenditure was able to convince hon. Members, myself and my constituents — who at present are deeply concerned about the method of disposal — I believe that that money would be well worth spending. If the Government can announce a change of policy recognising, as I of course recognise, that low-level waste arises and must be disposed of, that may satisfy me. If the Labour party gains office on the basis of a policy involving decommissioning nuclear power stations, there would be even more nuclear waste for disposal. I do not deny that the problem exists. Nuclear waste exists and must be disposed of. No one disagrees with that.

Sir Patrick Wall (Beverley): My hon. Friend has referred to additional costs. Would not the sterilisation of industrial land, certainly at South Killingholme and probably in the other areas, cost less than the amount required to follow the German or the Swedish system?

Mr. Brown: That is a very fair point. If we include the cost — to which my hon. Friend the Member for Beverley (Sir P. Wall) has referred—of losing industrial development on prime industrial land, land required by the county of Humberside for industrial purposes to provide jobs, the opportunity cost is even greater. My hon. Friend the Member for Beverley has reminded me that Humberside county council commissioned a report recently which has now been published. It was undertaken by Coopers and Lybrand. The report suggested that the alternative uses for the South Killingholme site were very important because it is such prime industrial land. Indeed, Nissan considered the site for its car factory a few years ago. The site is surrounded by industrial and chemical factories and oil refineries which are job-creating organisations. If that land is sterilised it will kill the prospect of future jobs. There is no doubt that the opportunity cost of not using that land and making it a nuclear waste dump would be tremendous.

The Swedish experience outlined in the county council coalition report shows a much better way of disposal. It ensures that nuclear waste is not disposed of in centres of population. I am aware that the site proposed in the constituency of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire is surrounded by an area in which many people live. Bedfordshire is a very densely populated county. It is absolutely wrong that nuclear waste dumps should be sited in areas of high population.

The problem of disposal is one that we will have to face. However, we do not have to face it immediately. The Flowers commission stated 10 years ago that there is no urgency at the moment. Although Drigg is unsatisfactory, that site will be available for some years yet. It is important

[Mr. Brown]

to use this time to get the right ideas and to draw on the experiences abroad. We must consider the experience in the United States where there have been shallow burial facilities which the United States Government are now closing because those facilities do not meet the Government's criteria.

We are out of line. As other countries do their best to allay public fears and meet public objections, our Government are intent simply on saying that they will try to meet public opinion if they can, but if they cannot, too bad.

I have not yet persuaded my hon. Friend the Minister to change his policy, but I have not given up hope. I am grateful for the way in which he responded to detailed questions asked by me, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, my right hon. Friend the Patronage Secretary and my hon. and learned Friend the Member of Mid-Bedfordshire. We put to him a range of detailed points on which we need undertakings. I make it plain to my hon. Friend the Minister that I recognise that he is unlikely to change his policy as a result of this debate alone, but all those affected by this terrible problem want him eventually to change his policy.

We have now reached the stage where NIREX is at all four sites. Last year we had the problems with court injunctions, which was the most heavy-handed way of treating my constituents and those of my right hon. and hon. Friends. Those people have lost confidence in Parliament and believe that it does not listen to them. Although I do not like people protesting and do not condone people breaking the law, I believe that those people thought that Parliament had let them down. NIREX was running all over the place, throwing injunctions towards my innocent constituents and those of the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) in a most unfortunate way. I hope that that will not happen again and that if NIREX is intent on mending its ways in terms of public relations, it will not run to the courts to support its efforts.

Can my hon. Friend the Minister tell the House what the likely completion date will be? How long will NIREX take to evaluate its findings and when will the blight be lifted from at least three of the four sites? A great many people in four counties are desperately worried, so can my hon. Friend tell us what progress has been made and the likely time scale? When will he tell the House who has drawn the unlucky short straw? Whoever draws that short straw, I shall continue to try to change Government policy. Whether I and my constituents are lucky or unlucky, I will not let the issue go away.

My hon. Friend and other Ministers at the Department of the Environment have said that NIREX will submit one or two proposed sites—I want some clarification on whether it will be one or two—to a public inquiry. If only one site is chosen, I presume that there will be only one inquiry, but if NIREX seeks planning permission for two sites, will there be public inquiries in respect of both?

Most importantly, what will be the scope of the public inquiry? Last year, my hon. Friend the Minister explained to my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham that the inspector would have powers to call evidence on whatever aspect he wished to investigate, but I want the Minister's undertaking that he will ask the inspector to consider not just the planning aspect but evidence relating to safety and to alternative methods that might be better. The scope of the inquiry is one of the most important safeguards and reassurances that he could give to those who live in the constituency that will draw the short straw. My hon. Friend the Member for Grantham has asked me to invite the Minister to consider the scope of the inquiry, and we believe that it is essential to have a formal commitment that, in the event of the inspector not being satisfied on safety grounds, the Government will not proceed with this method of disposal.

My hon. Friend and I also believe that compensation should be made available now for those who cannot sell their houses. NIREX has announced the circumstances in which it will pay compensation to those who are affected because they live in the site nominated by NIREX after it has completed its test drilling. I draw my hon. Friend's attention to letters that I have received from constituents who cannot sell their houses for the amount which they would have received about 12 months ago. I have already shown the correspondence to my hon. Friend, and I hope that he can say something about it.

I received a letter dated 4 December from Mr. T. A. Pollard, who said:

"Dear Mr. Brown, I am writing to you as my 'sitting' Member of Parliament to ask your help in registering my protest with NIREX and the appropriate agencies. Because of the NIREX operation and subsequent adverse publicity I have found my house has not been only difficult to sell, but appears to have declined in value. Please find enclosed a copy of my letter concerning this problem which I have sent to NIREX, and to the Prime Minister . . . I would be very grateful for any help, aid, or even advice which you may be able to give at this time. As I have pointed out to NIREX these things may be very small and even insignificant matters to them, but to the ordinary family they can have a very considerable effect. I will point out that I have agreed to sell at the figure of £17,500 . . . in order to move away from a potential menace which may blight the lives of many more people in the future, but I should still be a member of your constituency."

I wrote to NIREX asking, "What about this?", and the managing directore replied, in a curt letter dated 5 January, as follows:

"Dear Mr. Brown, I have your letter of 17 December regarding Mr. Pollard, and enclose a copy of a letter which has been sent to Mr. Pollard. As you can gather from that letter the property market in South Humberside, which even before any indication of NIREX's presence was not very healthy, has not substantially changed since our announcement in February 1986. Mr. Brooke-Taylor's letter"—

that is the letter from NIREX to my constitutent—

"sets out the two sets of circumstances under which NIREX will compensate people. We believe that further involvement in the property market would only cause problems, rather than resolve them."

A few days later, I received a letter from another constituent, Mr. D. Humberstone. He said:

"Dear Mr. Brown, After 15 years with the same employer I was forced onto the unemployment register by an industrial accident. Following an operation I was advised not to return to work. I decided to start a business of my own and put in an offer on a club and restaurant. I remortgaged my bungalow"—

which is in South Killingholme, as was Mr. Pollard's home—

"as security against the business. My bungalow was valued at £45,950 in 1983 . . . I estimated to the bank that my bungalow was worth in the region of £47,000 to £48,000 so suitable overdraft facilities and a loan was duly arranged. To my and the bank's horror the valuation was £37,500 (see enclosed valuation)."

We should remember that NIREX said in its letter to me of 5 January that there was no sign that its presence had changed the position substantially since February 1986.

We also have the report from Whitegates estate agency, a reputable firm in my constituency and that of the hon. Member for Great Grimsby. Under the heading "Situation and Amenities", it states:

"Are there any adverse features which might limit marketability? Property values in South Killingholme have recently been adversely affected by the possibility of a low level nuclear waste dump site being developed close to South Killingholme. The plans to develop the site have not yet been approved but its proposal has adversely affected property value levels and the length of time houses for sale remain on the market."

I cannot think that we need clearer evidence that Mr. Pollard and Mr. Humberstone cannot sell their houses because of the presence of NIREX contractors. NIREX denies that, but I do not think that we need more evidence than the estate agent's report. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham, my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire and my right hon. Friend the Patronage Secretary have constituents in the same circumstances.

In a parliamentary question I asked my hon. Friend the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government

"if he will introduce a compensation scheme for those householders in the South Killingholme area"—

that could equally apply to Elstow, Fulbeck or Bradwell—

"who cannot now sell their houses at normal valuation prices in cases where the decline in value can now be directly attributed"—

as the surveyors' report that I have quoted shows—

"to the presence of contractor test drilling for the suitability of a nuclear waste dump and where surveyors' reports on such properties indicate that the test drilling has contributed to a fall in market value; and if he will make a statement."

I said earlier that my hon. Friend has, within the limits of a policy with which I disagree, tried to be as helpful as he can. His reply was not unhelpful. It said:

"Compensation policy, both in the areas of the four potential disposal sites and at any site which might eventually be selected, is primarily a matter for UK NIREX Ltd. The company has already announced measures which are intended to maintain the level of house prices locally. NIREX is also considering the possibility of further measures, which it is discussing with my right hon. Friend." — [*Official Report*, 26 January 1987; Vol. 109, c. *43-44*.]

It may not be possible for my hon. Friend to expand on that answer today, but I invite him to consider whether there is any prospect that NIREX's discussions with the Secretary of State will be fruitful. The examples that I have given show that people are suffering. I and my right hon. and hon. Friends are looking, first and foremost, for a change of policy but, in the meantime, constituents who have all of their life savings tied up in property are unable to sell their homes.

NIREX says that there may be compensation arrangements when one site has been selected and there is planning blight. At the moment, there are no compensation arrangements and groups of constituents such as mine are being adversely affected. They have the right to some redress. I invite my hon. Friend the Minister to be as helpful as he can.

We would like an assurance that the public inquiry will be able to consider all factors, including safety and other methods of disposal. What are those other methods? I have mentioned those used in Sweden and West Germany, but there are companies in Britain which have done a tremendous amount of work on methods of disposal. Last year's Environment Select Committee report on nuclear waste disposal mentioned the ENSEC method. Mr. Alex Copson, the managing director of the ENSEC company, has devised an excellent method which disposes of low and intermediate-level waste under the sea, similar to a method used by the Swedish Government. We also have the power system of nuclear waste disposal which has been pioneered by Dr. Wheeler.

My hon. Friends at the Department of the Environment constantly say that NIREX is prepared to consider other methods of disposal, but I have the feeling that it has its head down and wants to go ahead only with shallow burial disposal. It may pay lip service to other methods, but that is the system for which it wants to go. The Department of the Environment should tell NIREX that it should consider methods, which have been identified by the County Councils Coalition, as seriously as the four sites which are already being investigated.

The County Councils Coalition is a model of lobbying and how a problem has been taken out of four communities and brought to the attention of the nation. Humberside county council is a hung council. I understand that the same is true of Bedfordshire and that there is a Conservative majority in Lincolnshire. The politicians in each have set aside the party political divide and worked together wonderfully.

I should like to pay tribute to Humberside county councillors Margaret Crampton, Hugh Lewis and John Bryant. They are from three different political parties and on a host of other issues engage in the rough and tumble of political debate. With their advisers, however, and the organisation that has produced the coalition report, added to similar experience in Lincolnshire and Bedfordshire, we have a recipe for good homework and first-rate research.

I should like to pay tribute to the leader of Glanford borough council, councillor Terry Atherton, and to its chief executive, David Cameron. Glanford borough council covers the South Killingholme area. They have worked night and day with the county council for many years, often with the encouragement of the Department of Trade and Industry. The Department constantly tells the council that South Killingholme is one of the most important areas for industrial development in the United Kingdom, that the Humber estuary is the last undeveloped estuary, that it wants the council to bring in new jobs and industry, and that the South Killingholme area should be in the vanguard of industrial development.

Nobody would believe it, but when the industrial development map was redrawn a couple of years ago an intermediate area boundary included Immingham but stopped short of South Killingholme. It might be thought that South Killingholme cannot be important because it does not have intermediate area status, but the Government made it a development area. It has full grant aid for industrial development. Here, however, through its agency, NIREX, the Department of the Environment is blighting the objectives of Glanford borough council, Humberside county council and the Department of Trade and Industry.

The area needs new jobs and serves the working population in the area represented by the hon. Member for Great Grimsby. It is extraordinary that South

[Mr. Brown]

Killingholme should be the boundary between intermediate and full development status. The site will be in an area covered by full development status.

The Department of Trade and Industry wants borough councils, the hon. Member for Great Grimsby, me, my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Hickmet) and my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) to pitch in and ensure that industry goes to the area. We all want the same, but there are signs, according to what the borough council has told me, that its hard work and that being done by the county council to get industry to the area is being set at nought because the asset of land in the South Killingholme area is being frozen.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I know exactly what I would do, but if the hon. Gentleman were to draw the short straw, what should be done about low-level waste?

Mr. Brown: I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman was present when I was asked that question by the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Stewart), the leader of the Scottish National party. The debate arises from the County Councils Coalition report, which points to alternative methods of nuclear waste disposal. I have always accepted that low-level nuclear waste will occur and must be disposed of. The report alludes to the Swedish solution and a copy of it has been sent to every hon. Member. Indeed, the hon. Gentleman will find one in his post.

Mr. Dalyell: I have the report with me.

Mr. Brown: If the hon. Gentleman turns to the conclusions, he will read about the Swedish experience. The Swedish method is acceptable and allays the fears of the public. Therefore, my blunt answer to the hon. Gentleman's fair question is that I would adopt the Swedish method of disposal. That is what I want to see the Government do. If they cannot do it today, I shall continue lobbying and making representations until they do.

We have a full debate today. I know that other hon. Members wish to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I hope that they will be successful. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham, my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire and my right hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, South and Maldon. I wish to thank my hon. Friends the Members for Gainsborough and Horncastle and for Glanford and Scunthorpe and the hon. Member for Great Grimsby for all the work that they have done. I am also most grateful to the County Councils Coalition.

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): Will my hon. Friend make perfectly clear to the House whether he is confining all his remarks to low-level nuclear waste and not including in them short-lived intermediate-level waste?

Mr. Brown: The problem of low-level nuclear waste has been occupying my mind for the most part this afternoon. Last year the Government made it clear—I hope that the Minister will reiterate this—that they intended to include intermediate-level nuclear waste for study. But, just before the special development order was laid before the House, in response to representations from me, the county councils and others, a decision was taken not to include intermediate-level nuclear waste. Therefore, today we shall address our minds to the problem of low-level nuclear waste, although it will be relevant to raise aspects of intermediate-level nuclear waste within the terms of the motion.

I am aware that my hon. Friend the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Planning has not been well recently and I apologise to him. It was unfortunate for all of us that today's business was private Members' motions. I hope that he can respond reasonably well, but I know that a few days ago he was suffering from a temperature of over 100 deg F. I am most grateful to him for coming and I hope that he can stay the course of the debate.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): At least 12 hon. Members, apart from the two Front Bench spokesmen, are anxious to catch my eye before 7 o'clock, so I appeal for restraint from those who are called.

4.33 pm

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): The disposal of nuclear waste is one of the key issues of our time. Future generations on these islands will pay a heavy price if we fail to dispose of radioactive waste as safely as possible. Not only will we be harshly judged by them, with great justification, but we shall put at risk both human and animal health, destroy our ecology and effectively sterilise our environment. Our forefathers did not leave us that sort of legacy, nor should we mortgage our children's future in such a way.

Many of us would prefer it if there were no nuclear waste to dispose of. Long before Chernobyl my party was opposed to nuclear generation because so many risks were involved. Today we are talking about low-level waste, but intermediate-level waste should also be considered. Our main objective, then and now, is to ask why we should produce a dangerous waste product which cannot as yet be effectively disposed of. That is highly irresponsible and cannot be defended when so many sources of energy are available.

Our resources provide us with alternative sources of energy and we could become a world leader in new technology for wind, water and solar power. Because of our wealth in coal and oil we have a breathing space which other countries have not. We cannot immediately prevent the creation of nuclear waste because at present we have a continuing programme, so nuclear waste is here and will be with us for a long time. We call for a pause so that we can dispose of the waste that we have and do some research to find out how the problem can be better tackled.

NIREX has chosen four sites in the United Kingdom for shallow grave disposal of low-level waste. The County Councils Coalition, of Humberside, Lincolnshire and Bedfordshire, has shown the way in its report, evaluating methods of disposal of radioactive waste in Sweden, West Germany and France. The report is far-sighted and I congratulate the coalition on being involved in such a constructive report, and the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) on drawing the attention of the House to it.

The Government and NIREX must learn from the conclusions of the report. If they do not heed them, I fear that the United Kingdom will become a nuclear dustbin.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): The hon. Gentleman's speech is interesting, but could he

explain why the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton), who is a Liberal party spokesman, concurred with paragraph 99 of the Environment Select Committee's report, which stated:

"Near surface disposal facilities are . . . acceptable for short-lived low-level wastes"?

Mr. Livsey: I do not know the circumstances of that and, obviously, I shall question my hon. Friend about it after the debate.

The NIREX proposals for shallow grave disposal are fatally flawed. When the sites are examined, the limitations of the influence of the water table, in particular in clay soils, must not be ruled out. What point is there in putting nuclear waste in trenches if water can permeate through?

The two sites at Killingholme and Elstow are geologically unsound and can probably be ruled out immediately. The sites have been chosen only because they are already in public ownership, and to apply elsewhere would provoke such a public outcry that it could not be done.

The technical disadvantages of the NIREX proposals are compelling. There is evidence that they are suspect technically. The shallow trench proposals are known to be unsafe in the sites where they are proposed because of the high water table. The concrete cartons, in which it is proposed to put the waste, have already been proved unsuitable at the French Centre de la Manche, where the cartons are already cracking. The geology of the sites is suspect and at no site in the United Kingdom will the water permeation and radioactive contamination in the water be monitored, as it is at the French site. Indeed, I understand that the shallow trenches on the French site are above the water table, so are not comparable with NIREX's proposals for the United Kingdom.

The options considered by the coalition are much safer and more practical than the NIREX proposals. Even the French site at Centre de la Manche would monitor contamination of water and keep this water separate. They at least had the wit to put the site above the water table, even though the concrete cartons are cracking.

The West German option, using an old mine, is certainly one of interest, but the fears in the area around Teesside when proposals were put forward for the storage of nuclear waste in the mine at Billingham show that this does not seem to be a practicable option for the United Kingdom. As one would expect, by far the best proposal comes from the Swedes, and this has been evaluated by the County Councils Coalition. If the objective is to put the nuclear waste away safely, for at least 500 years, which is what the Swedes are talking about, then NIREX, in the interests of the public, must adopt the Swedish system.

This system consists of a tunnel under the sea, 500m deep and 1,000m long. It contains multiple barriers, which prevent the waste from escaping. There is double protection in steel and concrete drums and these are put into a bunker, which is back filled with concrete. The chamber itself is located in granite. These are more than double safe mechanisms, and the Swedes have taken a responsible attitude to the disposal of nuclear waste. The site is not yet in use, but it is ready for the future.

Undoubtedly, deep sites are the best, and we are talking about heavily populated countries where the rainfall is high and there is the problem of seepage. The cost of the Swedish construction is virtually the same as that for NIREX's proposal for shallow graves. This makes it attractive from an expenditure point of view.

There are massive technical objections to the NIREX shallow grave proposal, and there is no doubt that the United Kingdom has been found by the County Councils Coalition to be far behind in the technology of disposal of nuclear waste. The measures must have political acceptance — this is important. Clearly, planning procedures must apply, with democratically elected planning authorities involved in planning the sites for disposal, as they are answerable to the electors of the area.

Special development orders from the Government do not respond to the democratic wishes of the people living in the area. They are undemocratic and insensitive to local needs, when one considers the lack of responsiveness from the Government in comparison to that of locally elected members. A public inquiry, at which county councils can be called to give evidence, does not replace the need for proper planning procedures on a local basis.

The syndrome of "Not in my back yard" has been apparent from the reaction of hon. Members representing the proposed sites. No hon. Member could welcome the dumping of nuclear waste in his constituency. That is the acid test. No hon. Member is prepared to welcome nuclear waste in his constituency, and I would not welcome it in mine.

The Minister for Environment, Countryside and Planning (Mr. William Waldegrave): At least one hon. Member has had the courage to go on record as saying that he would welcome it, and that is the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie). I hope that I would have the same courage in similar circumstances.

Mr. Dalyell: It depends on the optimum geological conditions. The Patronage Secretary and the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) have to say whether they are in favour of their Government's policy, and support their Ministers.

Mr. Livsey: I am glad to hear that there are hon. Members who have the courage to welcome nuclear waste dumping in their constituencies. I shall watch the debate with interest to see how many hon. Members will say that today. There is growing public pressure on this matter. The great British public are wise in their judgment. They know that the proposals are not safe, and the maxim of "trust the people" is sound. One should not underestimate the knowledge and probing of the British public, who are well informed about the risks of shallow storage of low-level nuclear waste.

We must go for the safest option—disposal under the sea — and we must instruct NIREX to act on the County Councils Coalition report and put its proposals into action.

4.46 pm

Sir Hugh Rossi (Hornsey and Wood Green): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) on selecting for debate a subject that is of fundamental concern not only to his constituents and the constituents of many of my right hon. and hon. Friends, but to the country as a whole.

My hon. Friend referred on a number of occasions to the first report of the Select Committee on the Environment for 1985-86, which was quoted extensively in the other report to which he referred, the report of the County Councils Coalition. The coalition followed the path beaten by my Committee in conducting its inquiry,

[Sir Hugh Rossi]

although the conclusions that it reached are in some respects different. That is understandable, because it represents the localities that will possibly be at the receiving end of something that would be unwelcome to anybody.

I wish to redress something of the balance of argument, because too much was attributed in the County Councils Coalition report to my Committee, which was not there or found to be there only by a series of selective quotations. I want also to take the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) to task. I remind him that the Select Committee on the Environment report was an all-party report, and that his Chief Whip was a member of the Committee and fully endorsed all the recommendations of that Committee, which the hon. Gentleman now seeks to criticise.

As to the official Opposition, two members of the Committee — one is now their Whip and one a spokesman on the environment — endorsed all the recommendations of the Committee.

I have now put the political aspect into perspective and can get down to the facts. Two years ago, at the start of my Committee's inquiry into radioactive waste, virtually all low-level waste went into Drigg in Cumbria. I shall refer to low-level waste because that is the only issue before us. We hope that there will be another debate on my Committee's report, when all the other matters can be dealt with. At the moment we are concerned only with low-level waste.

We found the arrangements there more than unsatisfactory. It would not be unfair to say that primitive is an accurate description of what we found. Wastes were unsorted. They were not packed, labelled or compacted and were simply tipped into clay trenches and covered with earth. Water drained unchecked through the clay and out into the local stream. That arrangement may have been fine in the light of scientific knowledge and technology as understood 40 years ago, when Drigg was first started.

However, it immediately became clear to us that the practice on low-level waste disposal in the United Kingdom fell far behind that of countries such as Sweden, Germany and France. We made very strong recommendations in our report that were aimed at improving the practice at Drigg. I am glad to say that in their reply to us the Government agreed that Drigg should not be the model for any future disposal site. I am also glad that measures are now in hand to cap the Drigg trenches and to compact and containerise the waste, wherever possible.

While these measures go a long way towards meeting the concerns and recommendations of my Committee, they do not go the whole way. We should like there to be more identification and monitoring of the type of waste that goes into Drigg to ensure that it is only short-lived, low-level waste.

That brings me to the second point that I wish to make — whether near-surface burial sites are suitable for the disposal of short-lived, low-level waste. After studying the evidence, both in this country and in Europe, the United States and Canada, my all-party Committee came to the conclusion that near-surface disposal facilities are acceptable for such waste, provided that they are fully engineered on a complete containment basis. If that were done, it would not be inappropriate to dispose of low-level waste in near-surface burial sites. In parenthesis, I am gratified that the Government accepted our recommendation that such disposal sites should not be used for intermediate-level waste. That is a great advance on their previous policy, and I acknowledge the fact that again the Government accepted the recommendations of the Select Committee on the Environment.

It has been suggested both elsewhere and during this debate that all radioactive waste, even low-level waste, would be best disposed of by deep burial and that no waste at all should be put into near-surface facilities. I have already mentioned that that is not the view to which my Committee came, although some low-level waste, as has been mentioned, is disposed of in Sweden and Germany by deep burial. The problem is volume. The volume of waste is an inevitable consideration here.

While low-level wastes are produced in the United Kingdom in their current great quantities, especially if we continue with Sellafield and reprocessing, it seems highly unlikely that deep burial, or the prolonged storage of low-level wastes, can be regarded as a practical solution. I say that notwithstanding the fact that the Committee gave urgent consideration to the point and made the strong recommendation that there should be more exploration and more research into the question of deep burial and beneath the seabed burial of wastes. However, we considered that those methods relate more sensibly to intermediate-level and high-level wastes.

That brings me to my third point, the highly sensitive issue of site selection for the disposal of low-level waste and the way in which it is beng handled by NIREX and the Government. At the start of our inquiry two years ago, the situation was very different. Originally, there was only one site under consideration as a successor to Drigg. That was at Elstow in Bedfordshire. It seemed to us that no criteria had been laid down as to why or how that site should be used. Also, we felt that insufficient research and insufficient geological exploration had been carried out in this country, by contrast with the work that we saw being done abroad in the countries that we visited. Therefore, the fact that the Government and NIREX are now looking at four alternative sites where the primary indication is that the geology might be suitable for near-surface burial follows the thinking of the Select Committee, that more exploration and more testing of sites should be carried out in this country.

Even if we closed down every nuclear power station in this country tomorrow, we cannot escape the fact that we should be left with the problem of the disposal of very large quantities of low-level waste that Drigg cannot conceivably handle. Therefore, somewhere else must be found and it would be sensible to carry out exploration up and down the country to find out where is the best and safest geology for this kind of disposal.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Will my hon. Friend remind the House that not just nuclear power stations but hospitals and industry use nuclear particles for many experimental purposes? Those who consider that this is just a nuclear power station problem do not understand the nature of the problem and are emotively misled in their consideration of it.

Sir Hugh Rossi: As usual, my hon. Friend is absolutely right. When we are speaking of low-level waste we are speaking not only of nuclear power station products but of the products of hospitals, including X-ray equipment,

and industry and of the research that is done in our universities. They create low-level waste for which a home ultimately has to be found. The question is, where?

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): But that is only a minor problem.

Sir Hugh Rossi: That brings me to the question of how to overcome what the Committee identified as the NIMBY —the "not in my backyard"—syndrome. No community can face with equanimity the prospect of its life being suddenly disturbed by the proposal to put a waste disposal dump in its locality. That is true not only of low-level radioactive waste that has certain emotive connotations, but also of toxic wastes which can be much more dangerous. For example, chemical toxic wastes can be much more dangerous than short-lived, low-level wastes. A community would look askance at such a proposal. I remember that some years ago, when I was an Opposition spokesman, I was asked to go down to Chipping Norton and support the local community against the proposal to use an old quarry for the disposal of GLC household refuse. The community was up in arms about it and asked, "Why should we have somebody else's rubbish in our backyard?" It was a natural reaction. The question is how to overcome it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes referred to compensation. I am a great believer in compensation. The Committee came to the conclusion that the compensation must be generous, because we are talking about a community being requested to disadvantage itself for the benefit of the nation as a whole. If a community and individuals are asked to receive waste that nobody else wants and to make a sacrifice for the public good, I believe that the public as a whole should make sure that they are not badly off, or worse off, because of it—certainly insofar as the value of their property is concerned.

That is not a new concept. In the late 1960s when the Opposition were in government and introduced what they called a betterment levy, which meant that anybody who was developing land had to pay a levy because he was benefiting from planning permission, I remember that I and some of my hon. Friends tried to put forward the concept of "worsenment" compensation — the reverse side of the coin. However, that concept was not accepted and it was voted down. I doubt very much whether the railways of this country would ever have been built if the Victorians had not been prepared to pay 10 per cent. over and above the going market price for property that was affected by the building of the railways.

When it comes to nuclear power, the French are very practical and pragmatic. They meet with very little resistance and opposition. They make sure that local communities and individuals are compensated for any disadvantage that they may suffer because the country as a whole requires those communities or individuals to give up something in the national interest.

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): Was my hon. Friend's Committee satisfied with the NIREX proposals for disposal in areas where compensation might be required and where there are large numbers of people? Was his Committee satisfied that NIREX does not have alternative areas where there are not high populations and where geologically correct land is available? Have we thoroughly explored those areas of Britain which do not have substantial problems about population?

Sir Hugh Rossi: As my hon. Friend rightly says, this is essentially a matter of geology. The sites in question have the geological advantage, but do not have advantages for the inhabitants who have the misfortune to live there. In geological terms they have impervious clay. Water is the greatest enemy in seeking to deal with the containment of radioactive materials. When we went to Canada we saw that they were looking for methods of deep disposal and burrowing down into the heart of granite to see whether chambers could be created half a mile below the surface and away from communities. But the granite was fractured and water was able to percolate. The radioactive waste could not be put there because of the danger that over hundreds of years the radioactivity could find its way into the human environment.

This is a matter of finding sites that stand up to scientific tests. One of the criticisms of the Committee was that until recently nobody had tried to lay down the scientific criteria, the sine qua non, for the selection of a site. That is the most important thing to be done, and when that has been done exploration takes place. Sites are found where the geology is suitable and safe, and if there is a community there, the people are to be compensated for what they have to suffer in consequence of living on top of the geology that is right for this kind of activity.

I know that many other hon. Members wish to speak, but I hope that my speech has restored a certain amount of balance to the debate, because there was a tendency to be slightly unfair and probably over-emotive when dealing with the disposal of low-level nuclear waste. That waste is containable and short-lived. Nevertheless, it causes apprehension in the minds of the public who come across the concept for the first time.

5.3 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): I congratulate the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) on winning the ballot and on bringing this motion before us. He has fought a good fight on behalf of his constituents, but he has not exactly made life hell for the Department of the Environment in the way that he said he would. Life in the Department of the Environment is probably hell anyway, and the hon. Gentleman has certainly given the Department something of a hard time.

In bringing the motion before the House the hon. Gentleman has done a service for the nuclear industry generally because he has forced it to think about something that it would rather fob off. He has also done a service for the Department by pointing it towards fulfilling its responsibilities for the environment and the people, especially the people in our area. Up to now the Department has been the political arm of NIREX, acting in dumb acquiescence to what the nuclear industry and NIREX want. We would not have to say to the Minister, "Hang on and think about this, let us have a second look at it", if the Department had not rushed on in a wilful and headstrong way and largely ignored the recommendations of the Select Committee. That Committee urged wider consultation, fuller research and a Rolls-Royce solution, but the Minister fobbed off the Committee with specious arguments which, frankly, were unworthy of a congratulated first and were at about the level of a

[Mr. Austin Mitchell]

commiserated Epsilon. That was the calibre of the arguments that were put forward against the Select Committee's recommendations.

I do not agree with some of the glosses that the Chairman put on his Committee's report. He spoke about the acceptability of shallow trench disposal of nuclear waste. I wonder whether he was accurately reflecting the views of his Committee. At paragraph 99 the report says:

"Near surface disposal facilities are only acceptable for short-lived low-level wastes and must be fully engineered on a complete containment basis."

That is not what NIREX proposes. Water will go through, so it is not a complete containment. It will drain off into the water table and our areas have aquifers underneath the clay into which that water will drain. Therefore, that is not an acceptable definition of complete containment. The report went on to say:

"Considerably greater emphasis must be given in research, development and policy to sea-bed options, especially to the use of tunnels under the sea-bed from land."

Therefore, the report urged another look at other methods at which the Department has not looked.

Sir Hugh Rossi: The hon. Gentleman accuses me of putting a gloss on my Committee's report. However, the extracts that he has just read are almost word for word the words that I used to address the House. I do not follow the point that the hon. Gentleman seeks to make. Of course I accept that if the sites selected by NIREX do not live up to the recommendations of the report, the Committee will not support NIREX. The whole idea of site testing and exploration is to find out whether or not the sites will comply with our recommendations.

Mr. Mitchell: That was part of the gloss, because I cannot see how drilling exploration holes at four sites lives up to the requirement of further research into methods of making Britain up to date in its study of methods of disposal. The Committee said that we were not up to date in such a study.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): Is not the point being emphasised in the quotations from the report contained in the phrase "complete containment"? The point that my hon. Friend is making is that the proposals so far advanced by NIREX for these purposes do not afford complete containment.

Mr. Mitchell: My hon. Friend is right. The essence of my point is that drilling on four sites does not constitute research into methods of disposal. Complete containment is the matter in question and we are not getting it. NIREX has avowed that we are not getting it, yet the Committee says that it is essential. How can the Chairman accept the possibility of shallow trench disposal on any of those four sites by a method which his Committee did not accept?

Sir Trevor Skeet: The hon. Gentleman has quoted paragraph 99 of the report. Surely a public inquiry follows to find out whether containment is complete. If, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) says, it is not complete, disposal would not go ahead. Surely that is the whole purpose of a public inquiry, to evaluate the evidence. Sizewell was a general public inquiry and lasted two years.

Mr. Mitchell: Perhaps the hon. Member has been fobbing off his own constituents with the claim that this will be the subject of a full inquiry. If the hon. Gentleman contends that after going through this protracted farce of two years of exploratory drilling at huge cost and fixing on one site the whole thing is not prejudged by that and the work will start all over again if the inquiry rules against the site, he has given me a most unlikely proposition. His constituents will also regard it as unlikely.

My simple point is that this has been rushed through by the Department of the Environment. It certainly rushed the special development order through the House before consultations and representations from the people in the areas concerned were completed. Unmannerly would be one way to describe it, but dictatorial would be another. It was steamrollered over local opinion and NIREX and its thugs were then turned loose on the area. That is what it amounted to. I was there and I saw the methods that were used. The Minister of Environment, Countryside and Planning frowns at that. I had great hopes for him. He is a highly intelligent, sensitive, likeable Minister—I hope that I am not harming his career in the Government by saying that—but on this issue he has behaved with an insensitivity and displayed a dictatorial instinct that bode ill for concern about the environment. Having created this situation, the hon. Gentleman effectively washed his hands of the whole business, like a gutless wonder hiding behind NIREX and its bullying tactics. He encouraged NIREX to get on with what he called its "duty" while poncing up and down the country proclaiming his concern for an environment that has been despoiled 10 miles from Grimsby and well within reach of other areas.

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman always gets carried away in his attacks. I have never seen him at any meeting ever trying to put forward views rationally against the wishes of many impassioned people, as I did in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown). I hope that the hon. Gentleman would have the guts to do that, but I doubt it.

Mr. Mitchell: In that instance, the Minister played a doubtful role. He pretended to listen to those people, but his mind was made up. A deputation from Grimsby went to one of the junior Ministers in the Department of the Environment, but the very next night the special development order was moved, after promises that the views of those people would be taken into account. The Minister rushed the measure through in a wholly unacceptable way. That is why I am being so harsh towards him. There was no need for that urgency or for that premature decision in favour of shallow trench disposal. The facilities at Drigg, with compacting, will be able to take all the future low-level waste until 2010. Why, therefore, rush into that decision? Why throw the whole weight of NIREX loose on our areas? Why employ the bullying tactics of injunctions against many people? One of the people involved in the area did not even exist. An injunction was taken out against another for singing "All Things Bright and Beautiful" on the site. Another was asked to deliver the injunction to his friends because the people serving the injunction could not find them. All that legal bullying was employed in a dubious cause which was decided prematurely without proper consideration and without proper thought.

Dr. Michael Clark: I am somewhat confused. Does the hon. Gentleman think that public inquiries should take

place before test drilling? If so, does he not realise that test drilling is an opportunity to eliminate a site before a public inquiry has to take place?

Mr. Mitchell: My contention is simply that the Government have a responsibility to inquire fully into the best, safest and most acceptable method. If they had done that, local opinion might well be more amenable to influence, although there would still be resistance. People would be satisfied that the Government had done their best and had inquired.

Mr. Michael Brown: I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the statement by my right hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Jenkin), then Secretary of State for the Environment, at 4.13 pm on 25 October 1983, when he said that there would be public inquiries into the two facilities at Elstow and Billingham before a test drilling took place. That was the original intention. I have the statement here.

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman is perfectly right. But my concern is about the speed of action. The Government did not review the position and consider it as fully as was needed if people were to be convinced that they were going for the best practicable option — the Rolls-Royce option—that was safe. If the Government had weighed everything up and had consulted fully, there would have been a different argument, but they did not do so. Instead, they steamrollered the decision through and imposed it on areas that did not want it.

The shallow trench disposal method means that waste has to be carted across the country and dumped on areas that have nothing to do with it. That decision was made prematurely, without research and in defiance of overseas practice. It should not be up to county councils to prepare a report. The Department of the Environment should have investigated. The decision was made in defiance of French practice, which is better than the practice that NIREX intends to impose on the site chosen. In the United States, where shallow trench disposal has been used, the sites are being abandoned because they are not contained and are decaying and disintegrating.

In my constituency at South Killingholme and at other sites, people are asked to accept the effect of such a disposal site on house prices and development. Department of Trade and Industry officials in Leeds said as much, until they were shut up. Manifestly, the possibility that a nuclear dump will be constructed in an area cannot be to that area's benefit. No amount of NIREX talk, soft soap by the Minister or dressing the project up with Angela Rippon and Ray Buckton will help. Two tonnes of Angela Rippon would not make this acceptable to the area. I wrote to Angela Rippon to say that I did not like her practice of hiring herself out for £4,000 a year—which is more than a governor of the BBC gets—to become the acceptable face of NIREX. She wrote back and accused me of being sulky because I had lost on "Masterteam". If that is the level of persuasive argument to be used, it bodes ill for the future.

I conclude with four points. First, the waste problem should have been fully considered by Layfield before any decision was taken on new nuclear power stations. Layfield said that he could not get satisfactory estimates of the cost of waste disposal. Those costs should be high if there is to be an effective and trusted method of waste disposal. They should be taken into account in deciding the costings of the whole nuclear programme and new stations as they are proposed.

Secondly, since Layfield and since this decision was taken, there has been a steady development of new methods of disposal, including methods used by the oil industry, such as the POWER method of undersea disposal. That method has been actively propagated by Dr. Wheeler and his organisation Warrior Resources. It is curious that experts from Japan, the Soviet Union and other countries are coming to Britain to look at that method of disposal of nuclear waste, yet NIREX is not rushing to look at it and the Government are cool on the whole business.

Mr. Dalyell: Does my hon. Friend accept that some of us are very concerned about undersea disposal because it cannot be monitored?

Mr. Mitchell: My point is that it is essential to look at other methods. There will be controversy about any method, but it is important that full research is undertaken to ensure that the best method is chosen.

Thirdly, I commend the County Councils Coalition. I shall not read out its conclusions as the report has been available to hon. Members but it casts enormous doubt on the case put forward by the Government and by NIREX and shows that this method is not in accord with the best overseas practice.

Fourthly, I express my pleasure about the last Labour party conference which resolved by an overwhelming majority against shallow trench disposal, commended the resisters and committed the party as a matter of party policy to the proposition that there will be no commissioning of new sites, including any site arising from this study, without a full geological study and full study of alternative methods of disposal That is all I ask.

The decision has been made prematurely. The county council, the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes and I argue that the project should be stopped because the Government are wrong. The Government should admit that they are wrong, stop the development and not persevere in their sullen obstinacy with a decision that was wrong and a method that is outdated.

5.19 pm

Mr. Norman Miscampbell (Blackpool, North): I am well aware that many hon. Members want to speak in the debate. If my intervention is the shortest in the debate, I shall be well pleased at the end of the evening.

During the nine months since our last debate and the nomination of the four sites I have had a chance to see each one. I shall not comment on them save to say that on a superficial look the Elstow site, which was the site chosen by the Government to start with before the others were announced, was one of the most unattractive, in view of the population size, with Bedford nearby.

Equally, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi)—the Chairman of the Select Committee—made clear, there is no difficulty. As I said in the House nine months ago, I have no doubt that technically any one of these sites—properly engineered, with proper compaction, proper concrete or metal containers and with all the facilities that we saw being used abroad in the modern context — would do. However, that does not seem to be the question. It is not the technicalities but the public perception that matters.

[Mr. Norman Miscampbell]

Equally important is the fact that the Government took a very wise, sensible and acceptable step when they said that they will not include intermediate waste in low-level disposal. However, that leaves the question of what they will do with the intermediate waste. The Government cannot say that some form of shallow disposition is adequate. If that is the position, we must see whether we can begin to do the same as the Swedes, who are burying their low-level and intermediate waste in the same facility, but making it safe for the level of intermediate waste.

I agree with the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), who is not very happy about putting waste under the sea. One of the most important factors about the French experience is their capacity to monitor every container for decades and centuries to come, which is important. We have salt beds which would be eminently suitable for moderately deep entrenchment. They would not be hideously expensive to develop. The salt there indicates that there has not been water there for millions of years.

Instead of saying that we shall go down the road of shallow burial, which no doubt is technically acceptable, but having regard to Chernobyl, and in view of the attack that the industry is under—an industry which I want to defend — it would be better to spend a few tens of millions of pounds more to obtain a facility which is more acceptable. If that were being investigated as well as the present sites, I should be more content than I am today.

5.23 pm

Mr. David Clark (South Shields): I congratulate the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown), who has done the House and the nation a service by enabling us to debate the motion.

When I looked at the record I was surprised to see the number of debates that we have had on the subject, which is only right, because, as the hon. and learned Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Miscampbell) said, the key to the issue is public perception. The more that we discuss the issue, the more likely we are to increase public understanding of it.

I have participated in a number of these debates and it is a matter of regret that most have been initiated by various means by, and at the instigation of Back Benchers. I pay credit to those Back Benchers, but I regret that the Government have not seen fit to bring forward a motion which we could debate.

We have had one debate instigated by the Government, but it did not seek to extend public perceptions or the public debate but sought to inhibit them. That was when the Government were successful in persuading the House to pass a special development order, which stopped the local people and the local democratically elected councils participating and taking a decision under the normal planning lines for the exploratory work at the four sites. We made it plain then, and I make it plain again, that the Government have done a disservice to the whole issue by trying to hush it up.

That raises a serious point. Many people are worried about the Government's obsession with secrecy. I warn the Minister—I think that he shares this viewpoint—that it is of no service to the industry to discuss everything behind closed doors. There must be a full and frank debate if we are to get across the problems involved. There are problems, as has been pointed out to the House, and as I have said on many occasions. We are not only talking about nuclear waste; we are talking about radioactive waste. As the hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) has reminded us already, that waste is produced at more than 5,000 establishments and in every hospital in Britain. The problem is there and has to be faced. Let us face up to that debate in public.

Dr. Michael Clark: When the hon. Gentleman says that we have to face up to the fact that it is radioactive, nuclear waste, will he agree that when a decision was made nearly two years ago to remove from consideration intermediate-level waste from the sites now being discussed, 99 per cent. of the potential radioactivity on those sites went with that decision?

Dr. David Clark: Statistically, the hon. Gentleman is right, but those shallow sites, at which the Government are proposing to deposit low-level waste, are still highly radioactive. They will be radioactive for up to 30 years at full-life and a further 300 years of half-life. Admittedly, in the last 270 years there will be a tailing-off of radioactivity. However, they are still radioactive and while one welcomes the Government's conversion to the view that short-lived intermediate waste should not be dealt with in that way, it is wrong to confuse the issue and imply that that low-level waste is not dangerous and not highly radioactive.

Sir Trevor Skeet: We were told in the House the other day about radon gas and natural radiation, which comes from the environment. Will the hon. Gentleman agree that what is likely to come from low-level waste is a minute fraction of what comes from the environment and radon gas?

Dr. David Clark: The hon. Gentleman is right in the sense that there is a lot of background radiation. The measurements along the stones and pebbles on a Cornish beach are high. But the point is that this is cumulative, and if one accumulates and disposes of a concentration of radioactive material one is increasing the danger. If we follow the logic of the hon. Gentleman's intervention, there would be no problem—we would just leave waste in open dustbins. However, we are not proposing to do that, because everyone accepts that it is an additional level of high radiation.

I return to the Government's obsession with secrecy, because it is the kernel of the argument against them. That view is shared—perhaps not as openly in some quarters as others — widely in the House. We have seen an example of it today, where a proposal to change the whole countryside planning of Britain was announced in a written answer to a question which was not even on today's Order Paper. That is reprehensible, and the message ought to go out from the House to the Government that in all these things there should be much more openness. I say to the Minister that if there is more openness we will get more consensus. The Minister shakes his head.

Mr. Waldegrave: I agree with the point that the hon. Member is making, I shook my head only because I am not so optimistic as he is. I am not sure that, however open I had been about, for example, the Billingham anhydrite mine, I could have persuaded his hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) that that was a good idea.

Dr. Clark: There was a consensus in that case. My hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) persuaded the Minister that it was not a good idea, so we reached a solution.

When we are dealing with long-term problems it will benefit all sides if we can reach a consensus. The Government's obsession with secrecy does no good. There are other examples of that obsession. I understand that a report dealing with research findings about the incidence of leukaemia among people living near nuclear power stations is to be withheld by the Government until after the House takes a decision on the Sizewell B power station. That is pertinent to our debate and it should be considered by the House when we make up our minds whether to approve the Sizewell B project.

If we go ahead with nuclear technology without solving the problems of nuclear waste we shall get into further difficulties. That point has been faced squarely by the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes and all hon. Members must face up to it. We must examine the consequences of going ahead with nuclear generation before we have found ways of solving the waste problem.

As usual, the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) made a worthwhile contribution. Under his chairmanship, the Select Committee on the Environment produced an excellent report on radioactive waste, which has been widely welcomed throughout the country. In May last year the then Secretary of State told the House that there would be a full-day debate on that report. I ask the Minister to look into that matter and to come back and tell us that we shall have a full-day debate on that important report very soon.

Sir Hugh Rossi: My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House has promised me that we shall have a debate in the near future.

Dr. Clark: I am pleased to hear that and I hope that the "near future" will be sooner rather than later.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am sorry to have hesitated before intervening, but I wanted to be quite sure that I was able to make the statement that I now wish to make. The hon. Gentleman referred to a press report that one of the studies coming out of the post-Black report work was being deliberately delayed. I assure him that there is no truth in that report. Publication is expected in late March.

Dr. Clark: I am pleased to hear that, but late March will be after the Sizewell debate, which I undestand is to take place before the end of February. If even a summary of the report could be made available before the Sizewell debate it would help hon. Members to come to a decision about Sizewell. It is not good enough to say that the report will be published in March.

I add my tributes to the excellent report from Environmental Resources Ltd on behalf of the County Councils Coalition. One of its key conclusions is that we should examine the possibility of deep disposal of all radioactive waste. The organisation visited Sweden, Germany and—most important– France before coming that conclusion.

Having studied the arguments advanced by Ministers in our previous debates, I begin to perceive a confusion in their philosophical approach. I am not sure that, when they talk about near-surface disposal, they are certain what they mean. My hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) made that point.

There are two approaches to the problem of waste disposal — containment, or dilute and disperse. They involve two conflicting engineering concepts and it is not clear which one the Government favour. The Select Committee examines the matter from paragraph 47 onwards and rejects the concept of dilute and disperse because of the problem of hot spots. That important problem must lead us to reject dilute and disperse, whether into the atmosphere, the marine environment or into the sub-strata of the earth.

Therefore, we must go for containment. The Government argue against that policy and cite the French example with their facility at the Centre de la Manche as an example of dilute and disperse. However, as the report of the County Councils Coalition points out, that is a false analogy, because the French facility is aimed at a containment philosophy. Its structure is based above the watershed and any water coming through is collected and monitored. The French are trying to get a double insurance policy on the cheap. That is made plain on page 31 of the coalition's report which argues that the French example is "fundamentally different" from the NIREX design.

The fundamental contradiction between the alternative philosophies causes us some difficulties when we try to solve the problem. That became clear to me when the *Daily Mirror* ran a report last September saying that drums containing radioactive waste had leaked at Bradwell. I am sorry that the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) is not present. He is an assiduous attender at these debates. Indeed, I believe that he has been present at all the debates that I have attended and I know that there is a good reason for his absence. When I read the report in the *Daily Mirror* I wrote to the Minister and the Department of the Environment replied. It confirmed the story and said that the low-level waste storage facility at Bradwell had been approved by the Department since the early 1970s.

The low-level waste is stored in steel drums in the void cells below the circulation halls at Bradwell nuclear power station. Following an inspection towards the end of 1984, some water penetration into the storage cells was discovered and a small percentage of the drums were found to be corroded. I do not suggest that there was any danger in that instance. The nuclear industry inspectorate looked into the matter and required the CEGB to put things right by encasing the drums in polythene, removing the water and building small walls round the contaminated area.

However, an obvious point arises. We were assured by experts in the 1970s that the storage of low-level nuclear waste in steel drums beneath a power station was a safe and adequate way to store radioactive material. Years later, we see that it was not safe; drums have corroded. Fortunately, we were able to put matters right at Bradwell because the material was retrievable. If it had not been, the situation would have been difficult and dangerous. I am worried because the engineering facilities proposed by NIREX at its four exploration sites do not allow that retrievability and therefore must be rejected.

Dr. Michael Clark: As the only Essex Member in the the House with a constituency immediately adjacent to the Bradwell site, perhaps I might comment. I am disturbed by what the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) has told us. Is he aware that the engineered disposal

[Dr. Michael Clark]

repositories proposed can be created only in suitable ground conditions with heavy clay and where the ground movement is less than 1m per 100 years? So, even in the event of the corrosion of metal containers — which I hope will not happen—the water movement will be only 1m per 100 years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I appeal again for brevity. I remind the House that interventions prevent hon. Members with a strong constituency interest from taking part in the debate. I appeal for restraint but I understand how strongly hon. Members feel about the issue.

Dr. David Clark: I take your point, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I emphasise that the experts told us in the 1970s that this was a safe method and they now tell us that clay subsoil is safe. We can accept a disposal system only if it is monitorable and retrievable. That is fundamental to any solution.

There has not been sufficient public discussion or research. Massive cuts have been made in research personnel. We need exactly the opposite. We need open debate and more research, both in connection with short-lived radioactive material and with high-level radioactive material.

In addition to the complex current problems of nuclear waste disposal, the decommissioning of power stations will present considerable further long-term problems. We need a carefully researched programme to deal with nuclear waste well into the future. It is essential that such a programme be compiled without secrecy. It is impossible to operate an effective strategy for dealing with the physical, locational and scientific issues without the understanding and involvement of the general public. I wish that the Government would learn that lesson.

5.43 pm

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): I follow the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) in an unusual way, but with a certain confidence. I am chairman of the science and technology committee of the North Atlantic Assembly. As recently as last autumn, we passed resolutions about nuclear problems — including nuclear waste disposal — and I am delighted to say that the hon. Gentleman and his party were unanimous supporters of the resolutions that I put to the assembly.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown), who made an admirable constituency speech which I hope will do him well in his constituency. Nevertheless, it was a constituency speech and did not take into account all the scientific aspects of the disposal of nuclear waste. One of the problems is that so few people understand the difficulties. All too frequently, people are influenced by emotional factors so that the issue becomes emotive and goes way beyond proper consideration.

The problem is international. Nuclear waste is of concern to 27 nations which are all considering the same problem. They include Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, the Central African Republic, China, Finland, France, Gabon, the German Federal Republic, India, Italy, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Pakistan, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United States and USSR. I list those countries to emphasise that this is not a constituency issue but one of international importance.

All nations within NATO meet a proportion of their energy needs by nuclear reactors and, as a result, they have a variety of procedures for dealing with nuclear waste. The disposal of nuclear waste is more than a technical issue. It becomes emotive when people argue against nuclear power because of the problems caused by the disposal of nuclear waste. Many industries produce potentially dangerous waste which can be a hazard to human health and cause environmental damage. Many industries and processes can be extremely hazardous when they go wrong without having anything to do with nuclear industry. There is no better example than that of Bhopal, where 2,000 people died. That incident had greater consequences than anything that anyone envisaged.

Industries which are prone to such risks are subject to regulations and safeguards to protect human life and the environment. I can say without fear of contradiction that the nuclear industry is no exception. It is subject to exceptionally strict controls. As a Minister I was once responsible for that aspect of industry. I come to the House today wearing the tie given to me at Dounreay where the fast breeder overcomes many of the problems by disposing of much of the nuclear waste. I have often wanted to form a society for developing fast breeder reactors. The issues are complicated and the debate is confused. It is confused because not enough knowledge has been conveyed, and the Government may be open to some criticism in that respect. There must be a greater understanding of the subject.

Most of today's debate has been about the disposal of low level nuclear waste, but there are three categories of nuclear waste, each of which has relatively distinctive characteristics. The first, which has hardly been mentioned today, is high level waste consisting of spent reactor fuel, which is a solid waste, and some of the products, which are liquid, arising from reprocessing spent reactor fuel. High level waste is stored to allow thermal and radioactive decay of some of the most active constituents, which in some cases takes up to 50 years, by which time activity will have declined sufficiently for the waste to be prepared for permanent disposal rather than for assessed storage.

Some nations do not process spent nuclear fuel to reclaim nuclear material; others, including ourselves, prefer to do so. Whether or not it is processed, high level nuclear waste remains radioactive for millions of years. It continues to be dangerous for at least several thousand years, even though the radioactivity declines sharply over the decades, as the hon. Member for South Shields said. Such waste constitutes less than 1 per cent. of all the nuclear waste in the world. At present, 17 nations are investigating potential sites for underground repositories and 10 nations are operating, constructing or designing verification plants to deal with this problem. Although high level waste poses the most difficult problem, nations throughout the world are coping with it.

The second category of nuclear waste is intermediate level waste, which normally consists of the cladding from nuclear reactor fuel rods, contaminated equipment and some parts of decommissioned reactors. The third category is low level waste. This consists of contaminated paper, plastic, clothing and building debris and is produced by research facilities.

The disposal of low level waste is relatively straightforward. It is important to distinguish low level waste from the other two types, because, as its name suggests, its radioactivity level is low. Disposal practices among the 27 nations that I have mentioned differ. Some nations bury their waste in shallow trenches or in natural or man-made rock cavities. More contaminated waste is placed in trenches or buried deep underground and then usually covered in concrete. Some sea dumping takes place. The waste is placed in containers and the radioactivity generally declines before the container erodes due to the action of the ocean. I accept that that is a much more difficult method to monitor than any of the others, but it is widely regarded as acceptable.

As I have tried to emphasise, this is not just a national but an international problem. My committee of the North Atlantic Assembly is trying to bring in standards that we would like to see accepted everywhere, not just by the Vienna committee of the International Atomic Energy Agency, which was set up by the United Nations. That body seems to proceed at the speed of the lowest common denominator, and Russia and other countries are members of it. If the North Atlantic Assembly could come up with recommendations that were accepted by all 16 member Governments, that would be a major step forward. My hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes could then propose to his constituents a solution that was acceptable not only in this country but internationally.

Will my hon. Friend the Minister do everything in his power to co-operate with the science and technology committee of the North Atlantic Assembly in its work? Will he ensure that the substantial body of scientific and technical evidence from past and ongoing studies and from research and development activities is made available internationally? Will he ensure that research and development continue to be sponsored and backed by the Government so that remaining gaps for particle options can be filled, specific data on sites collected and safety studies refined? Will he ensure that there is periodic reassessment of waste disposal practices and that new policies taking account of our evolving knowledge are formulated? Lastly, will he ensure that there is quality control at all stages — an essential nuclear safety requirement—and that such control is applied through the whole chain of nuclear waste management in this country? If the Minister can give the House those reassurances, it will be much easier for my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes to reassure his constituents that the Government's proposals are, as I believe, reasonable. So long as those proposals are properly monitored, I should be quite happy for them to be carried out in my constituency, and it will be easier for the British public to understand and back the stance that the Government are adopting.

5.56 pm

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): I commend the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) for giving the House an opportunity to discuss this subject again. I also commend the County Councils Coalition for taking the initiative on the work that has gone into the report, with many of whose conclusions I agree.

I must register my disagreement with my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), who castigated the Minister for the manner in which he dealt with these issues. My experience of the Minister's attention to the subject, when I led the Billingham against nuclear dumping campaign, leads me to record my utmost respect for the way in which he listened to our representations and handled the affair. He listened so well that the proposals in question were withdrawn; and if he ever tries to reintroduce them he will have an even more bitter battle on his hands. I advise him not to try it.

Mr. Michael Brown: I share the hon. Gentleman's experience. My hon. Friend the Minister and I disagree on the policy but he has always received me courteously and listened to our deputations. Therefore, I wish to associate myself with the hon. Gentleman's remarks.

Mr. Cook: I thank the hon. Gentleman, but we must not do this too often.

What is the value of nuclear waste? Lord Marshall told me two and a half years ago that most of the waste that was destined for disposal at Billingham — the motion refers to intermediate-level waste — contained rare elements which, by the turn of the century, would prove valuable to industry. We would therefore regret disposing of it in such a non-retrievable way.

What is the value of nuclear waste? Some suggest that its value lies in jobs. The estimates given at the time of the Billingham proposals suggested that 18 jobs would have been created — 18 jobs in an area where more than 14,500 people are unemployed.

At the last nuclear forum I was approached by a senior member of staff who told me that there would come a time when I would crawl back to NIREX imploring it to return to Billingham to dispose of its nuclear waste in the disused anhydrite mines because that would bring employment to the area. He also said that if we had been prepared to accept the proposals we could have claimed much of the engineering work that the nuclear industry pushes out to fabricators and designers. That was a despicable attempt either at being humorous — if so, it was singularly unfunny—or at being serious. If the latter, the remark was so sinister that I suggest the Minister looks into it.

The nuclear industry is unique in two respects. One is the nature of the risk with which it faces society. Here I must dispute to some extent what was said by the hon. Member for Honiton, (Sir P. Emery). That risk not only faces the present generation but is a threat to generations to come, unless we handle it correctly now. We have heard about poisons and the toxicity of radioactive waste but that is a threat similar to that posed by cigarette smoking. It is a threat to the generation that lives with and absorbs the poison, and there is a degree of volition in it. Radiation, however, is much more insidious and much harder to detect. As such, it threatens child-bearing age groups and, therefore, generations yet to come.

The other unique aspect of the nuclear industry is that it handles its waste unlike any other industry. It makes a bigger problem of its waste than it had in the first place. The initial difficulty lies in the containment of it, not in its handling. The industry compounds its problem by its so-called processing, which increases the volume by many times. We have already heard the comments of the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi), the Chairman of the Select Committee on the Environment, who freely concedes that a major aspect of the matter is that very problem—the volume.

The problem of containment is magnified. The industry makes more of its garbage to be contained than it did

[Mr. Cook]

originally. The processing of spent magnox rods is particularly expensive, time-consuming and hazardous. Most of all, it is unnecessary. Such rods may be stored in engineered dry storage, where they can be monitored constantly and retrieved for further attention if necessary. Such treatment would ensure that the minimum space is occupied and that the maximum security is assured.

If that is so, why should we go on making more of the stuff? The justification trotted out is that we now have contractual commitments with other nations to treat their waste in the same nonsensical way in which we treat our own. The industry seeks to absolve itself from stupidity —or should I say culpability?—by pointing frantically to clauses in its contracts which permit it to return recycled waste to the point of origin. I have yet to see any evidence, or even hear any claim, that that has yet been done. In fact, I suspect that if British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. was even to suggest implementing that option our overseas clients would withdraw from any arrangements that they have made.

The situation borders on the farcical. It would be laughable were it not so serious. As it is so serious, what should we do, bearing in mind that we already have the stuff and, having it, must do something with it? First, I suggest that we stop processing other people's. Our communities deserve better than to be condemned to the job of turnkey for the world's worst waste. Secondly, we should stop recycling our own waste. I say "recycling" specifically. There is no justification for it, either as a means of making more fuel or as a means of managing its disposal.

Thirdly, we should reduce the output of such rubbish to a level that is absolutely necessary. First, we should introduce controls on the overuse in the medical profession of radiography. Should anyone wish to question that, I can tell the House that serious assessments have been made which indicate that 1,400 cancers per year in this country are generated by the overuse of X-rays. Secondly, we must maintain our absolute ban on the use of irradiation as a means of treating food. It has been proposed that we should broaden that kind of approach. I say that we should maintain the ban.

Hon. Members will notice that I do not say that we should stop nuclear production altogether. I merely suggest that we should reduce it. I realise that to eliminate such production is impossible. It may be appropriate at this point for me to place on record that I am not anti-nuclear, as the nuclear industry would assert, any more than I am what I am accused of being by the anti-anything and anti-everything brigade — a paid agent of the nuclear industry. I am not anti-nuclear at all; in fact, I am distinctly pro-nuclear, in the safe sense. In other words, I am pro-safe nuclear and very anti-unsafe nuclear. To continue accusing me of being anti-nuclear is like accusing me of being anti-food when I say that I am anti-food poisoning.

I have already commended the motion on the Order Paper for its sensible approach. It seeks to ensure that there are better technical alternatives to the proposals that have been advanced so far, and to put forward overall cost alternatives. It also seeks to further public acceptance if a truly convincing solution can be found. That job has already been entrusted to NIREX.

Let me quote from NIREX's articles of association. I shall not quote them at length, because they are numerous and legalistic, but I ask the House to pay close attention to them. They enable NIREX to do almost anything and everything with anyone and everyone. In obtaining equipment, it can collude with whoever it chooses, in whatever way it chooses. I suggest that hon. Members seek a copy of the articles and read them at their leisure, as they give sufficient ground for concern. But let me now read to the House, word for word, page 3 clause (L) of the objectives. It states that NIREX is empowered

"To make loans or donations to such persons and in such cases (and in the case of loans either of cash or of other assets) as the Company may think directly or indirectly conducive to any of its objects or otherwise expedient."

That is only one of the many clauses that give NIREX carte blanche to conduct its affairs in almost any way that it sees fit. Let us compare that with the manner in which our communities have had to beg and borrow resources with which to prevent an alternative view. NIREX has unrestrained permission to bribe, bludgeon and blackmail, and unlimited finances with which to fund such nefarious activities.

I commend the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes for his clear denial of the NIMBY syndrome, to which other hon. Members have referred, the "not in my backyard syndrome". He has learnt that and good for him. I remind the House of the time when I was the lone voice opposing such proposals in this Chamber. On those occasions many hon. Members, especially Conservative Members, appeared mildly amused by my protestations. Some sniggers were also heard from Labour Members. At that time I said that smiles would not be so wide once other communities came under similar threat. It gives me no satisfaction today to say "I told you so."

The Government will be compelled by public pressure to re-examine their stance on these issues. They will be forced to rethink their whole approach, and rightly so. While they are doing that I ask them to think about what I have said. First, do not recycle foreign waste. Secondly, do not recycle our own. Thirdly, do not make so much of it in the first place. Those are all negative points. Let me put on record what should be the positive side. While I am doing that, I ask the House to remember that I have thought long and often on those issues. The positive side is, put it where it is well isolated from inhabited communities. It is lunatic to do otherwise. Put it in engineered storage where it is well maintained, well managed and well monitored. It is lunatic to do otherwise. Put it into stores from which it can readily be retrieved and redeemed if things go wrong.

I must admit that to implement all those three suggestions of course makes the process more expensive. However, we cannot afford to sell the safety of tomorrow for the sake of saving a few bob today.

6.11 pm

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): You enjoined, Mr. Speaker, that we should make brief speeches. I will comply with that. My hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, South-West (Mrs. Madel) is present, and he may have a chance to catch your eye.

I shall take up the last remark of the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook). Of course we must be clear about the disposal of nuclear waste where a large population is involved. A large population must be remote

from such a site. Of the four sites, that consideration would rule out as unsuitable Elstow and Killingholme. However, the two sites which should be carefully scrutinised as possible locations are Bradwell and Fulbeck. Ultimately the site should be decided on the basis of geological surveys, hydrology and a full public inquiry.

One matter has not been raised today which Sir Frank Layfield dealt with in the Sizewell report. In chapter 2, paragraph 112, volume 3, he stated:

"The CEGB's conclusion that the safe disposal of all types of radioactive waste was technically feasible was not disputed . . . Storage space on the site would be provided for up to one year's waste."

That is at Sizewell. The report continued:

"If necessary the storage capacity could be increased to hold waste for the whole life of Sizewell."

The cost of storing 40 years of low-level waste and intermediate-level waste, which does not arise in this particular case, was estimated to be about £10 million.

It is interesting that a man who has examined the matter of nuclear waste carefully for a number of years has come to the conclusion that it can safely be stored at power stations for some time. Another proposition that he made was that the radiological effect of solid wastes on the public near the site was assessed by the CEGB in chapter 32, paragraph 29 of the report to be "effectively zero".

His final conclusion after he had posed nine questions and then set out his answer to them in chapter 47, paragraph 66, was:

"There are no safety problems caused indirectly by the operation of Sizewell B, such as radioactive waste management, that could give rise to intolerable risks."

I make that point because one of the sites involved is Bradwell, which has a power station. Today we learnt that it has been storing nuclear waste for some time. There is no reason why it should not be considered as a storage facility for some years hence.

The hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy on 15 December 1986 about the CEGB and the SSEB and was given the answer:

"The CEGB and SSEB have agreed to analyse the technical and economic aspects of backfitting dry stores to Magnox stations."—[*Official Report*, 15 December 1986; Vol. 107, c. *383*.]

They are also considering the position of AGRs in this country. Therefore, if the Opposition believe that nuclear waste could be stored at power stations above ground within the United Kingdom, and if backfitting is proceeding, this should be explored much more realistically.

I shall discuss rapidly another point that I have in mind. I am in favour of the shallow burial repository, as is my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) who chaired the Select Committee on the Environment. Shallow burial, properly engineered, has the backing of the experts who produced the "Assessment of the Best Practical Environmental Options" report, those who produced the Sizewell B report, and those on the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee, who advise the Minister. Others, including the Government, are in favour of a shallow burial repository and have implemented it, through a policy which has operated over several years from 1982 in the publication of the White Paper Cmnd. 8607. The Government's response to the Environment Select Committee report has shown perfectly clearly that their policy is consistent.

Mr. Frank Cook: Will the hon. Gentleman ponder the fact that many of the references that he has just made are simply a number of aliases for the same incestuous crowd?

Sir Trevor Skeet: I shall make it perfectly clear that I must not be led away by certain arguments which I should like to enter into on another occasion. I have been asked to speak briefly, and I shall. The built-in error of the argument that we have heard today is that the ERL report forgets that low-level waste only is being considered and that intermediate-level waste has now been excluded. Disposal of low-level waste does not involve such expensive treatment as has been laid down in Sweden, which incidentally uses shallow land cavities for low-level waste. The waste consists of clothing, paper towels, air filters and resins and things of that description. Even in Sweden there are at least three sites that I know of where low-level waste is disposed of in cavities and not at deep level. Surface disposal of waste is also used in Canada, the United States of America, and France and plans are being considered in Belgium and Japan.

I appreciate that I must bring all my points together rapidly to allow other hon. Members to speak, but in conclusion I would say that Elstow is unsuitable for a number of reasons, especially on the ground of the nearness of the population to it. Bedford is only 3 miles away. The two other major sites which I have recommended are between 7½ and 10 miles away from any significant population centres. That is one of the prime reasons for the exclusion of Elstow. I hope that at the public inquiry all the arguments which are being used in this Chamber today will be fully and firmly ventilated before experts and critically examined.

6.20 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I shall speak for about three minutes, and my speech will consist of a number of questions. First, I shall address myself to Sweden. The three counties' report states:

"In radiological terms there is merit in the claimed desire to limit exposures from a NIREX repository to 0·1 milliSievert per year. Sweden has a design limit 100 times lower of 0·001 milliSievert a year."

The NIREX response welcomed the coalition's recognition of the stringent safety standards but commented:

"However, it is incorrect to imply that the Swedish safety limit is 100 times more restrictive than the UK target."

It added:

"It is also likely that the NIREX safety case will be better than 0·1 milliSievert a year, but it shall not exceed this figure. This is substantially less than the variations in natural background radiation in the UK."

It is of great importance that we should hear the Government's view on which body is right, the coalition or NIREX.

Secondly, I take up the remarks of the hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) in asking about international matters. I am of the belief that it is of overwhelming importance that in reprocessing we do the very best job as human beings rather than as a nationality. If we British, as I believe, are better at reprocessing than anyone else on the face of the planet, it is better for humanity that we should do it. I believe also that our engineering expertise merits that, quite apart from employment considerations.

Thirdly, as the Minister intervened at an early stage of the debate to say, I have indeed said that if the geological conditions were right I would hope to have the guts to

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

argue that the Linlithgow constituency should be used as a site. Since I said that, however, there has been a great deal of distortion. I realise that such a statement can bring a hornets' nest around one's ears, and I understand the hornets' nests to be found at Killingholme and elsewhere. I do not retract from what I said previously, but my statement was linked to another matter. When I made it, it was suggested that there was a problem with the submarine nuclear reactors. It was felt that the submarines would have to be decommissioned and that there would therefore have to be a coastal site.

Why should we have an inland site at all? Is there not an argument for having a coastal site? I am friendly with NIREX and many of those who work within it, but I do not understand why it is necessary to bring a hornets' nest to bear and create a great deal of fuss. If the material is as safe as it is claimed to be, why does it have to be deposited in areas of considerable population in certain forms of clay? If it is as safe as those at NIREX say, it could be placed in depopulated areas. There is great confidence in Dounreay on the north coast of Scotland as well as in the Atomic Energy Authority. I wish to emphasise that I am strongly against any sort of under-sea burial, which means that the material cannot be monitored or retrieved.

What about the obligations to the Ministry of Defence when it comes to the decommissioning of submarines? Why cannot the material be concentrated in one coastal site? As others with constituency interests wish to contribute to the debate, I shall now resume my place.

6.23 pm

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): I join all those who have congratulated my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) on his good fortune in the ballot and on initiating the debate. I congratulate also the three county councils which produced the report that gave rise to the debate.

I think that I am the only hon. Member to have participated in the debate so far who has a constituency near the Fulbeck area, but I shall come to that later. I do not think that the Government or NIREX have gone about matters in the best way if they want to bring public opinion along behind them. They had the advantage of the Select Committee on the Environment's report, the Committee on which I had the honour to serve, in which there was clear guidance on how NIREX and the Government should proceed with the placing of a site.

Having proposed a nuclear site on my doorstep, as it were—the site is technically in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, who has been in his place throughout the debate and who for reasons of elevation to higher things has had to bear an uncharacteristic Trappist silence—the realities of public anxiety and fear are brought home. In effect, that is what the debate is all about. It reflects a perception that things nuclear are something of which we should be afraid.

Mr. Frank Cook: The hon. Gentleman takes issue with NIREX for not heeding the contents of the report of the Select Committee on the Environment, which he rightly accepts is eminently sensible. Will he bear in mind that that is hardly surprising when we recall that the Secretary of State for Energy rubbished it the moment it was published?

Mr. Alexander: I do not share the hon. Gentleman's view of my right hon. Friend's comments on the report. It was clear that he had his reservations, but I do not think it can be said that he rubbished the report.

We should not be debating matters nuclear in general; instead, we should focus on low-level waste disposal. I fear that the way in which we have gone about disposal so far has brought into the anti-nuclear lobby many who have not previously been anti-nuclear which is a great shame. The anti-nuclear lobby has been swollen gratuitously by those who are concerned about the safe disposal of nuclear waste, especially low-level waste.

The Select Committee on the Environment tried to show how the public could be brought behind the industry, not alienated from it. It recommended that it should be accepted that people's fears are genuine and that disposal must be in the form of what it described as a "Rolls-Royce solution." It recommended that we should follow the French example and compensate communities and individuals more than generously, put waste in areas where there is not a high population and keep the stuff away from areas where water can penetrate over hundreds and perhaps thousands of years hence.

Instead NIREX produced proposals which had several common denominators, hardly any of which, so far as I could tell, bore any relation to the safeguards sought by the Select Committee. The common denominators seemed to be that the sites should be placed in areas where the ownership is in the public domain, that they should be in areas of quite high population, that they should be placed in areas where there is a high water table, and that the sites should be in areas of known geological disturbance.

We cannot blame NIREX entirely. I have taken issue on previous occasions with my hon. Friend the Minister and the Department of the Environment generally, but I have been given to understand that NIREX was told that it should not even consider Scotland or Wales. It appears that it was told to confine itself to the part of the United Kingdom that is England. I find that restriction of NIREX's ability to find sites astonishing, bearing in mind that within Scotland and Wales there are areas where the considerations that I have mentioned would be of little concern to the public.

That which the Government and NIREX are proposing is not the "Rolls-Royce" solution. The shallow burial proposals are considered by the experts to be safe, and I have no personal scientific knowledge on which to base an argument that they are not, save to say that the only countries using the method are those that have dry ground and dry climates. In parts of the United States where that method has been used, I understand that it has been abandoned because of the incidence of water in the area. Those examples do not augur well for public confidence.

So the county councils went to see for themselves, and in the countries that they visited—Sweden, France and West Germany—they found that hardly any of them were willing to risk shallow trench disposal such as we propose. They found that all those countries were going for what we call the Rolls-Royce solution. In Sweden, the councils found that it was proposed to spend about £125 million on deep underground and deep sea disposal facilities.

In a useful and interesting briefing that NIREX gave to many hon. Members this weekend, NIREX says that if one were to adopt the deep sea disposal method it would cost £500 million. I suggest that the difference between the amount of money that we are proposing to spend and what it would cost to use the deep sea method is minimal when one takes into account the amount spent in our nuclear industry. Thus, we should go for that solution and abide by it. We should take note of the findings in that excellent report and of what was said by the county councillors who went abroad.

In deference to your injunction, Mr. Speaker, I propose to be brief. In conclusion, it is totally wrong that cost and convenience should be the determinant factors in this case. Unless we adopt the Swedish system, more people will believe that cost and convenience are the determinant factors. The Government cannot stand back and say, "So what. Our experts say that it is safe. We must follow what we are told now." Experts over the centuries have been wrong, and they may well be wrong again. The public must be reassured. If they are not behind the nuclear industry in all its aspects, we are building up problems for ourselves for many years to come. The public need reassurance. The county councils' report showed how that reassurance could be achieved. My constituents and those of my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham urge that the report be accepted. I believe that nothing less will now reassure them.

6.32 pm

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): I thank you for calling me, Mr. Speaker. Time is pressing on, so I shall condense my speech considerably and make just a few points.

I, too, congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) on his motion. I am the only Member representing an Essex constituency in the House this afternoon. My constituency is adjacent to Bradwell, which has been referred to several times, particularly by my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet), who pointed his finger towards Bradwell as a suitable site. I dare say that we are all pointing fingers at one another's locations and saying that that is the most suitable site, so I should like to defend Bradwell. I speak as a friend of the nuclear industry. I am not in any way against it, or, indeed, the proposals for dumping low level waste. While we have a nuclear industry it has to be done, and we must find a site for it somewhere.

I am not opposed to the site being at Bradwell on safety grounds. Indeed, I have every confidence in NIREX and in the nuclear installations inspectorate, but I do not believe that Bradwell is a suitable site. The NIREX report says that it has to find a site where the geology is suitable and where there is a low level of water movement in the ground. We know that in the past Bradwell has suffered earthquakes, so there will be movement of the geological formation. Water will be moving more than we want for the site of a nuclear repository. NIREX has also said voluntarily that it wants its sites to be away from high densities of population, so Bradwell, which is close to the whole of south-east Essex with its half million population, hardly seems to qualify on those grounds.

Conservation is another of NIREX's criteria. Bradwell is an ancient site. It has early Christian connections, with a little church that was built there. Also, accessibility to the Bradwell site is poor. There is only one road to the site, and it is not suitable to take the several lorries that would be required every day. I also object to the site being at Bradwell because south-east Essex has already taken a large amount of rubbish from London and southern England. My objection is on the same grounds as those mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) and others, including the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey). The question has been asked: would anyone volunteer for the site to be in his constituency? I would not volunteer for it to be in my constituency or anywhere near it, not because I think that it is unsafe or because there may be some radioactive danger, but because it is yet one more waste tip, and Essex has plenty already, both in my constituency and in that of my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess). On those grounds, I object strongly to the site being at Bradwell.

I congratulate the County Councils Coalition and its report. The councils have done a workmanlike job in making their proposals and recommendations. They have been critical of NIREX and full of praise for institutions abroad, but they have not come up with a firm alternative proposal. They say that the NIREX proposals are not good enough and they concede — certainly in private conversation — that there must be a nuclear dump site somewhere, but they do not come up with the engineered site that they want, where it should be or how it should be instituted.

There is no doubt that we must have a site somewhere in this country, where it will be safe. During the autumn, for medical reasons, I had to undergo 12 X-rays. I made inquiries and found out that those X-rays gave me as much radioactivity as if I had been sitting on the edge of a low level nuclear repository for 20 to 30 years. One would have to sit there for every hour of every day for 20 or 30 years to get as much radioactivity as I had in my 12 X-rays.

Therefore, the sites are not dangerous. We must be cautious. I take the point made by the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook). We are pro-nuclear industry as long as it is a safe nuclear industry, but we must make sure that the sites that are selected are proper. Those of us who have had enough rubbish in our constituencies one way and another do not want this site added to them.

6.38 pm

The Minister for Environment, Countryside and Planning (Mr. William Waldegrave): It will have been apparent to the faithful Members of the House who have sat through the debate that I am not in the best of health. I hope that the fact that I had to shoot out of the Chamber from time to time during hon. Members' speeches will be recognised for what it was — the need for reinforcement of cough mixture. On one occasion, a lurid pink pill was given to me by my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, who is in charge of such matters. It has made me feel very peculiar indeed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) has done the House a service by giving us the chance to have a relatively relaxed debate on the subject in which, if not all at least the majority of those who wished to speak have spoken. I congratulate my hon. Friend on that and on his motion, which is level-headed and sensible. I want to make one or two points in response to my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes and, although the other speeches were important, in one

[Mr. William Waldegrave]

sense this is my hon. Friend's day. I accept the points that my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes made so eloquently about compensation. I have nothing to announce to the House today with regard to that. However, he is aware that NIREX has been considering the possibility of further compensation. I hope that it will be possible for NIREX to announce further measures soon. I am sure that NIREX will take account of the comments made by my hon. Friend today and the correspondence he referred to from two of his constituents.

It is difficult to assess what in particular has affected property values in a specific area. An estate agent may take one view. I have consulted the district valuer who said that he believes that the village of South Killingholme is affected primarily by factors other than the proposed nuclear waste dump. However, these views must, to some extent, be subjective. We must carefully examine what compensation is available to a community which may have to take a facility. I say "may" because we must always remember that it is possible that the inquiry will find that none of the sites is satisfactory. However, if any of the communities had to take the facility, it would be fair to ensure that there was no individual damage to people in terms of property values.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes and hon. Members who have spoken representing constituencies in affected counties have drawn our attention to the county councils' report. I am in some difficulty with regard to the report. I have great respect for Environmental Resources Ltd. which my Department uses frequently. The founder of that company is one of the most distinguished environmentalists in the country. I am sure that the company could have produced a very eloquent report if we had been considering the Swedish solution which has been referred to today—and that is not exactly a deep mine, rather a shallow burial site under the sea—and there may well have been a coalition of seaside towns which might have commissioned ERL. The company would have produced first-rate scientists who were willing to sign the report claiming that the Government were not only crazy but extravagant and absurd to consider that option. They would claim that we had the best clay in western Europe for such a scheme. The scientists would want to know what we were doing fiddling around with permeable stone just below the seabed when we have a more Rolls-Royce type solution in the clay in this country. It is that crescent of clay which is, above all, the determinant of why the four sites have been chosen for investigation.

As the recipient of so many different protests on these issues, I am aware that powerful arguments can be made against any specific proposal. However, if we had gone down the road and spent what my hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander) described as "only" £500 million, there would have been powerful scientific voices attached to persuasive arguments in the House from those communities claiming that we should be doing the obvious thing.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes referred to consensus. I do not believe that we would have secured consensus—and the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) made this point—even if we followed the Swedish solution. I visited Canada and saw the investigations being carried out at Whiteshell. Whiteshell is miles from anywhere and I stress that spaces are rather bigger in Canada than they are here. However, in Canada they had to tell the local communities that the investigations were only temporary because there was still opposition. I asked the Canadians, "How wide is a back yard in Canada?" I was told that it was at least 150 miles. These matters are somewhat objective.

I was grateful to the county councils for commissioning the report which is very useful. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), who has made this point to me frequently in the past, will be aware that that is the kind of submission that, once it is greatly fleshed out with further work, will be submissible to the public inquiry on this matter if one or two of the sites are brought forward to a public inquiry.

I stress to my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham and those of my hon. Friends from Bedfordshire who are by convention allowed to speak so eloquently and those who, by convention, are not allowed to speak but are on the Front Bench to listen to their spokesmen—and I have been interested to discover how easy it has been for silent constituency Members to find eloquence for their views in these matters—that there is no easy way of achieving consensus on this matter. I fear that any proposal will find opposition. One of the satisfactory points about the debate is that we have had a good debate in the Chamber and this point has not run across party lines. Most of my hon. Friends would have taken it for granted that there would have been two views expressed from the Liberal Benches and that is perhaps standard practice. I know that the hon. Member for South Shields is aware that his hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) is on record as saying that there is nothing inherent in the method of disposal to which the Labour party in the House is opposed, although there may be others outside who take a different view.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) made an important and powerful speech. It must have been agonisingly difficult for an all-party Committee to come to what is potentially an unpopular decision. For once they were not going to say that the Government were completely crazy, wrong and loopy on the matter. I have been a member of a Select Committee and I know that there is always a temptation to make up a different policy and claim that the Government should follow the Committee's recommendation. My hon. Friend's Select Committee had the discipline to state that, with one very important proviso about intermediate waste which the Government immediately met, they did not think that the method was necessarily out of court. However, any specific proposal must be tested against the safety criteria.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) characteristically covered much of the important ground in three short points. I want to clarify one or two of his points. The apparent dichotomy on the Swedish safety levels is explained as follows. The Swedish safety level laid down by the regulatory authority is very comparable to that which we are laying down. However, the facility, because of its design, will be 100 times safer than that. We have laid down a safety standard for NIREX. It is very likely, especially after listening to the comments made by hon. Members tonight, that NIREX will engineer a facility which exceeds the one in a million chance that we have laid down. NIREX will want to demonstrate that if it comes

forward to an inquiry. NIREX will show that the system is well below the accepted safety limit, like the Swedish system.

Mr. David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West): On this question of NIREX and what it might propose, is my hon. Friend able to say after some months of test drilling in Elstow—and, as my hon. Friend will know, Elstow was the first site to be named—whether NIREX is anywhere near any conclusions after all this test drilling?

Mr. Waldegrave: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for enabling me to make a few comments on that important point. No, NIREX is not yet at the stage when it can announce preliminary results on the test drilling. Test drilling has been continuing since October, as access was obtained only in September. I have been advised that this is the most comprehensive programme of geological investigation work ever undertaken in this country for any purpose. NIREX is not yet able to make preliminary conclusions about the results. After the 12 months and more of drilling, NIREX will need at least another six months of intensive investigation before any final conclusions can be reached. I believe that the consultants employed by the various county councils will confirm that — as the relations between the geologists and the consultants have been warm and close — that a very thorough investigation of the geology is being carried out.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) made a point which was echoed in a powerful letter from my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), who is in America today, on behalf of my right hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, South and Maldon (Mr. Wakeham), the Chief Whip. My hon. Friend the Member for Rochford recounted the arguments about the unsuitability of the geology. The investigations will set out to test those points. NIREX has sensibly said that if, early on, it was to find something surprising which showed that a site was a wash-out, it would drop consideration of that site in order not to prolong any anxiety in the community.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow mentioned submarines. We thought it important to make that change in response to public pressure, which was led by my hon and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire (Mr. Lyell), who said that we must have the widest comparison of sites before a public inquiry. As two types of solution are available—seaside and inland sites—it would be fair to consider both alongside each other. If an inland site was chosen, the Ministry of Defence would have to find another site for its submarine waste. But nothing would go into those sites except low-level waste, so the reactor cores of submarines are not part of this discussion. They would have to be disposed of as intermediate and high-level waste at some time in the future.

Mr. Dalyell: At another British coastal site?

Mr. Waldegrave: That is possible.

So many points were made in the debate that I may have to search *Hansard* to make sure that I have taken them all on board. The point that my hon. Friends have been repeating is that they want to assure their constituents that the inquiry will be serious and that no secret decision has been taken in advance to fix the entire matter. I give them that assurance. It is not penny-pinching to say that, with Britain's geology, clay is the best solution. We do not have the large salt mines that the Germans have, nor the remote sites of Sweden, but we have some of the best clay in Europe and, for a variety of chemical and engineering reasons, clay is extremely helpful in this area.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green was kind enough to say that the Government had listened to several important points made by the Select Committee, as we listened when deciding to go for the special development order. I should tell the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) that the purpose of the SDO was somewhat to diminish the period of blight that might lie over a community. If there were two large inquiries, one after the other, it would place intolerable pressure on those communities. After listening to representations, especially from Bedfordshire, we decided on that approach.

My hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) made an important point about international standards and research. We are extremely closely in touch with the Commission of the European Community and other international organisations, and I will ask my officials to consider carefully having closer contacts with the science and technology committee of NATO. That would seem to be a sensible solution.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) made a characteristically learned and robust speech. He has a deep knowledge of the industry. He said that the principal independent advisory organisations have all said that this method of disposal should be safe if it is done properly. The question whether it is done properly must be examined at the public inquiry with the specific proposal and site in mind.

I repeat that an important change that we made after reading the Select Committee's report was our undertaking not to include intermediate level waste, which greatly increased the inherent safety margins. That was an important watershed. I urge hon. Members to be a little chary of the argument that it does not matter what we spend, but we must buy public acceptability and consensus. I have come to the conclusion that there will be no consensus. Even in Canada, when the sites were miles away from anywhere, anxieties remained. If we were proposing the Swedish method, we would not be having a very different debate in the House today. Different hon. Members would have taken part, but the debate would have been the same. The Rolls-Royce solution in British terms may—we must test this at the inquiry—involve clay. It is the sensible way of absorbing radiation and retarding water.

The hon. Member for Great Grimsby and I clashed a little over personalities, but, apart from that, we have avoided clashes in this debate, which I welcome. I was touched by the joint succour that was offered to me by the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) and by my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes—an unusual combination on any subject other than this. But they united in this instance against the hon. Member for Great Grimsby, and I was grateful to them for that.

The Government have listened and will continue to listen. We shall scan the *Hansard* report of the debate carefully, because I am conscious that I may not have had time to answer all the points. I congratulate my hon. Friend on introducing the debate so carefully and in such a scholarly way.

6.55 pm

Mr. Michael Brown: With the leave of the House, Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. Friend the Minister for his speech. He listened to every speech made during the debate, and I am only sorry that he was unable to hear speeches from my hon. Friends the Members for Bedfordshire, South-West (Mr. Madel) and for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh). They were both here throughout the debate and have taken an interest in the sites in Bedfordshire and in Fulbeck, Lincolnshire, for several years. I am grateful to them and to others for attending the debate. It shows how right I was to select this subject. Although we have been short of time, we have not been short of contributors.

I should tell my hon. Friend the Minister that I agree with much of what the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) says about these matters because he has taken on the Department of the Environment and won the battle on behalf of his constituents. He has been a doughty fighter for them and I hope that I can learn from his experience. What he has achieved for his constituents is what I, my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), my right hon. Friend the Patronage Secretary and my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire (Mr. Lyell) wish to achieve for our constituents. We can all follow his example.

I welcome the speech of the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey). However, as my hon. Friends told him, it does not accord with the actions of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton), who supported the recommendation of the Select Committee. I am grateful for the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi), who is Chairman of the Select Committee. I disagree with his assessment, but his interpretation of the Select Committee report was correct. I was most grateful for what he said about the need for compensation. Although I recognise that my hon. Friend the Minister can go no further than the representations that I have already made to him—I am glad that he acknowledged them today—I hope that he will be swayed by the arguments of my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green.

I was grateful for the contribution of the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark). He did not depart from the statement made by the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) in answer to me last year. I draw the attention of the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) to the fact that, whatever the Labour party may have decided outside the House, the hon. Member for South Shields, in a measured speech, did not dissociate himself from the comments made by the hon. Member for Copeland in May last year.

This has been a useful debate and I am grateful to all those hon. Members who took the trouble to speak about an issue that is important to us all. From what my hon. Friend the Minister has said, I understand that we shall return to the subject in the near future. It looks as though we shall soon have a debate on the report from the Select Committee on the Environment and that we shall have a debate on Sizewell B. I remind my hon. Friend the Minister that I still want him to change his policy and that I shall continue to fight to that end, but I am grateful for what he has said.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House welcomes the report prepared for the County Councils of Humberside, Lincolnshire and Bedfordshire regarding the disposal of low level nuclear waste; notes the coalition's view based on an international comparative study that: (i) there are better technical alternatives than those presented by UK Nirex for the disposal of such wastes which may also be used for intermediate level waste; (ii) the overall cost of alternatives may be greater than for a shallow repository but would be less than one per cent. of the costs of nuclear electricity generation; and (iii) if public acceptance is to be gained a truly convincing solution to the disposal of low and intermediate level nuclear waste must be found; and urges Her Majesty's Government to give full consideration to this report before final decisions are taken regarding the disposal of nuclear waste.

Hospital Closures (Lancashire)

6.59 pm

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): I beg to move,

That this House is concerned at all the hospital closures now under consideration in the Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale Health Authority area; is particularly concerned at the possible closure of Victoria Hospital, Burnley which celebrated its centenary in 1986; recognises that the Health Authority is having to consider these closures as a result of unacceptable financial revenue restraints; accepts the need for improved health service provision in the area as identified in the District Medical Officer's Annual Report; and believes that additional financial resources should be made available fully to meet the needs of the community in the area and to ensure that all the existing hospitals remain open.

I do not have time to start to develop my argument, but Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale have a very strong case for additional Health Service resources and we deeply deplore the proposed closures.

It being Seven o'clock, the proceedings lapsed, pursuant to Standing Order No. 13 (Arrangement of public business).

Alternative Land Use

7 pm

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Michael Jopling): With permission, Mr. Speaker, and following the exchanges which took place in your presence in the House earlier this afternoon, I am happy to make a statement.

The Government have been considering very carefully the consequences for agriculture and for the rural economy of changes in the common agricultural policy. We have concluded that, given the scale of agricultural surpluses now facing us, a new balance of policies is needed. This will entail less support for expanding production, more attention to the demands of the market, more encouragement for alternative uses of land, more response to the claims of the environment, and more diversity on farms and in the rural economy. To assist the process of change, I am announcing a number of new policy initiatives. Details are set out in a written answer today, but I shall briefly describe what is planned.

First, a new scheme will be introduced to encourage the development of farm woodlands which will take some land out of agricultural production. The detailed arrangements will be the subject of consultation with interested parties prior to the introduction of appropriate legislation, but the scheme will incorporate provisions for the protection and enhancement of the environment.

Secondly, the Government propose an expansion of the forestry programme, with particular emphasis on the private sector and with due regard to environmental considerations. The planting of a higher proportion of trees on low ground of better quality will also be encouraged.

Thirdly, the Government will be designating further environmentally sensitive areas under section 18 of the Agriculture Act 1986. We have already designated nine areas and our intention is to extend the coverage of this scheme and to double the funding from early in 1988.

Fourthly, diversification of enterprise on farms will be encouraged by the introduction of a scheme under section 22 of the Agriculture Act 1986, providing for the grant-aiding of ancillary businesses on or adjacent to farms. There will also be extra help for marketing of the products of diversified businesses.

Fifthly, within my budget for research, development and advice I shall be placing more emphasis on the possibilities for novel crops and livestock and on the socio-economic and environmental implications of the changing farming scene.

Sixthly, my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Wales have today put out for consultation a draft circular containing guidance on the future planning regime for agricultural land. It will include more encouragement to local authorities to take a positive attitude to diversification and to the conversion of redundant farm buildings.

In addition, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and Northern Ireland and I plan to publish next month a document describing how the Government's policies towards farming are being adjusted to reflect the changing scene and potential in the rural economy as a whole. I shall of course make this available to the House. It will make clear that the

[Mr. Michael Jopling]

Government's overall objective is to facilitate the conditions which encourage a healthy rural economy based on enterprise, adaptability and fair competition.

Mr. Brynmor John (Pontypridd): If nothing concentrates the mind so wonderfully as being hanged in the morning I must conclude that, for the Government, the same is true of votes of censure at the National Farmers Union annual meeting. How else is one to explain this proposal, belated and inadequate as it is, to try to address the ever-mounting surpluses in European Economic Community regimes? We can all agree that the statement goes nowhere towards meeting that problem, and we get here no clear idea of what the Government think the country should grow, how much it should grow or what quality it should be.

Is this really the Government's great set-aside scheme, which has been trailed for so many months? I must therefore ask the right hon. Gentleman by how much he thinks what he has proposed will reduce our surpluses, what crops will be reduced and when will the reductions start. To many people this appears not to be a serious attempt to solve the problem.

I received the answer to the question asked by the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), so I am rather better informed than the House was by the right hon. Gentleman's statement. Even if all the land that is proposed in the forestry scheme is taken out of production —15,000 hectares a year for the next three years—it is less than one quarter of 1 per cent. of all agricultural land in the country.

The statement does not go any way to meet the size of the problem. Rather, it is a series of governmental lollipops or pilot schemes. It will cost £25 million a year, which is less than the cost of running the intervention board and much less than the £650 million that it costs taxpayers to subsidise the sale of EEC butter stocks to Russia.

What is the status of this paper? We heard from the Minister of State earlier this year of the structures programme which it was proposed would be agreed on an EEC basis. This is clearly a national programme, involving national money. Does that mean that the EEC programme has still to be agreed, or has it been abandoned?

We read in the press colourful items about golf courses and houses, but they were not mentioned in the statement. Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that, by saying that the draft circular will go out for consultation, he means that he intends to build more homes and golf courses on agricultural land? If so, does that apply to Scotland? How will it solve the problems of remote hill farming areas? Will it not merely add to pressure for housing where it is already great?

Perhaps I might press the right hon. Gentleman on the time scale. Normally, there is consultation before proposals are made. Here we have a proposal to consult afterwards. How long will consultations take? Are the proposals open to change? When will legislation be introduced? Debate about these matters has raged for some time. The Government have been absent from that debate, which is perhaps why the statement is so short. It is difficult to resist the conclusion that the mountain has laboured and brought forth a mouse.

Mr. Jopling: The hon. Gentleman has asked a great many questions and I detect a good deal of sour grapes in his comments. He just wishes that his party could have come out with such an imaginative scheme.

The hon. Gentleman said that the statement goes nowhere towards saying what should be grown on farms. That is not its purpose. It tries to suggest schemes for alternative arrangements on farms to deal with the difficulties which all farmers will face as a result of bringing agricultural production back closer to the level of consumption.

The hon. Gentleman said that 15,000 hectares of extra forestry is not enough. I have heard that some environmentalists are saying that it is too much. If he is saying one thing and others are saying another, I think that we have probably got it just about right.

When the scheme starts to operate properly it will cost £25 million in a full year. The hon. Gentleman must remember that it is assistance to farmers who want to set up alternative enterprises and is in the form of pump priming to allow them to find new, alternative enterprises which they have not previously undertaken.

The hon. Gentleman asked where the role of set-aside was in all this and he will have studied the proposals that I made last summer on diverting land from cereals production. Forestry within these proposals is entirely separate. Our proposals on growing trees are not likely to appeal to people who are growing grain. That is another scheme altogether. The growing of trees under these proposals will be much more attractive to people in the marginal areas who are producing beef and sheepmeat.

The hon. Gentleman said that he envisaged these proposals as a national programme—that is right—and asked what was happening to the Community's socio-structural package and whether it had gone out of the window. Of course, it has not. It is being debated in Brussels today and tomorrow and my right hon. Friend the Minister of State is involved in those discussions. I hope that the Council of Ministers will come to a conclusion on it during this meeting. We tried to reach an agreement on it in December, and I hope that we shall soon get that scheme.

That scheme brings within the Community schemes such as our national scheme for environmentally sensitive areas, which the hon. Gentleman has applauded and welcomed in the past. While at present we are doubling the size of those schemes, the Community is hoping for the first time to make financial assistance available to environmentally sensitive areas. That means that it is following us in the initiatives that we have taken.

I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the scheme applies to Scotland. We shall be consulting on certain parts of the scheme, particularly on farm forestry, and we shall discuss that with regard to payments, the size of plantations and the length of time for which these income supports will be available. That consultation will start soon.

Sir Peter Mills (Torridge and Devon, West): I welcome and congratulate my right hon. Friend on this initiative. Obviously, this is the start and we must build on it, as a tremendous amount must be done in rural areas. Does my right hon. Friend agree that all those who live in rural areas must help and encourage rural industries to flourish? Does he further agree that it is important to remember that

we cannot live on fresh air and a view? Indeed, in this area he needs to give strong guidance to planning and assistance, otherwise there could be genuine difficulties.

Mr. Jopling: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his kind words. I agree that it is extremely important for people living in rural areas to encourage the expansion of the rural economy. I remind him of the encouragement that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has given to planning authorities to support proposals to put old farm buildings to new uses. I hope that in future planners in rural areas will pay more attention to the need to expand the rural economy, whether on-farm or off-farm.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Does the Minister realise that this statement will be bitterly disappointing to farmers, whose incomes have suffered a real decline since the Government came to office and which will be unchecked by anything that he has said today? Does he recognise that all those who are anxious to see the diversification of the rural economy will be equally disappointed that he has found not a single additional pound of public expenditure to achieve this? Does he recognise that the modest £25 million of redistributed public funds set beside the cut in institutional prices of £571 million this year, the cut of £47 million in the Government's structural spending and the cut of £3 million on research and advice will seem more like an insult than assistance?

How can the Minister believe that anyone will be induced to plant under the woodland scheme, which he has announced in advance the Government will review in three years' time, no doubt with further cuts in public spending on it and the forestry project? Does he not realise that in 1980 the Government announced a proposed planting programme of 30,000 hectares a year and that they have failed to achieve that by 7,000 hectares a year? Why should we believe that there is anything more in this than an attempt to stave off justified criticisms from farmers at the annual general meeting of the National Farmers Union tomorrow?

Mr. Jopling: The hon. Gentleman is suffering from the same overdose of sour grapes as the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John). It seems that the only way he can criticise the package is to say that he would have liked it better if it had been bigger. That is not constructive. The hon. Gentleman began by saying that he was disappointed, but I do not believe that farmers will be disappointed with the scheme. If any of them should be mildly disappointed, they will not be half as disappointed as they all were at the disastrous speech that the Leader of the SDP made in Cirencester recently, which would have sold British agriculture all the way down the river.

With regard to the financing of the scheme, we are not robbing Peter to pay Paul. These are firm decisions which stand by themselves. We are moving towards a lower level of CAP support, which will mean substantive savings in public expenditure.

The hon. Gentleman asked a constructive question at the end about how it might be possible to increase the level of traditional forestry. That will happen because we intend to make available more land further down the hill, which does not offend environmentalists so much as does traditional planting on hillsides, where traditional forestry is more productive and profitable, and trees grow better.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that the statement was not wholly expected. I ask for brief questions, as we have other important business before us this evening.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Will my right hon. Friend accept the welcome and thanks of Conservative Members for the statement? Will he confirm that this is a serious attempt to sustain the income of those who live in rural areas, including farmers and other persons? Furthermore, will he confirm that but for the appalling White Papers produced by the Labour Government in 1979 and 1975 we would by now have a policy which was relevant to the requirements of the rural economy? Will he confirm that the rating proposals of both the Labour and alliance parties will inevitably lead to a serious reduction in the opportunities for farmers to sustain their incomes?

Mr. Jopling: I thank my hon. Friend for drawing the attention of the House to the policies which are trickling out from the various Opposition parties, whether on land nationalisation, rating, or the utterly catastrophic proposals of the leader of the SDP for a two-tier price system.

Miss Joan Maynard (Sheffield, Brightside): Will not taking controls off all agricultural land except grade 1 mean more intensive farming of the land that is still left in agriculture, and more damage to the environment? What proposals does the Minister have to deal with such problems as the pollution of our water by nitrates? Should he not be encouraging less intensive chemical farming and more low input, environmentally sound and labour-intensive farming, instead of introducing these disgraceful proposals?

Mr. Jopling: With respect, the hon. Lady would have been better occupied if she had carefully read what we have announced. There is no question of removing planning proposals on all land except grade 1, as she suggested. That is a million miles from the truth. What is proposed is that, because since the war we have had a system within our planning arrangements for agricultural considerations which were given birth to in the period of food shortages and are still applied at a time when we have serious food surpluses it makes no sense to apply agricultural reservations on less good land which is being proposed for development. When planning committees, which will continue to operate in exactly the same way as before, are considering any proposals for the less good land, it must be sensible, in this day of food surpluses, for them no longer to have to go through the rigmarole of asking about the agricultural implications of developing such land.

The hon. Lady went on to talk about the need for lower input farming. I draw her attention to the proposals for doubling the spending on environmentally sensitive areas, which is doing what she is asking us to do.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I welcome this important extension of the rural economy, which must be complementary to profitable agriculture. Will my right hon. Friend accept that those interested in conservation of the scenic beauty of the heritage will warmly welcome his constructive proposals, particularly those for environmentally sensitive areas? Will the Government bring home

[Sir Hector Monro]

to planning authorities that they must be more flexible about building in areas of less significance if we are to make any progress?

Mr. Jopling: I am grateful for what my hon. Friend has said, and, particularly because of his experience as a member of the Nature Conservancy Council, for his welcome to our proposals on increasing the environmentally sensitive areas. I am glad that he drew our attention to the necessity to tell planners of the need to be flexible, to bear in mind the requirements of the rural economy and to encourage that activity. I am sure that he will be aware of the recent circular from the Department of the Environment, to which I referred earlier, which gives encouragement to planning committees to do their utmost to support and grant permission to applications to make use of redundant farm buildings.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Is it not the case that the increase in surpluses and the ever-growing cost of the CAP have been accompanied by a disastrous collapse in employment in rural areas? Therefore, will the Minister accept that all those who are concerned with the stability of the rural economy will welcome the forward-looking proposals produced by my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) and his colleagues? Anybody who compares that with these proposals will come to the conclusion that, as usual, the right hon. Gentleman has botched and bungled it.

Mr. Jopling: It seems that the hon. Gentleman has eaten a bigger dose of sour grapes than has the hon. Member for Pontypridd. If the hon. Gentleman looks carefully at the proposals he will see that there are a number of points that will be helpful for rural employment, such as the assistance that we are proposing with diversification of farm businesses. If we are to have the threat before us of land no longer being used for food production, it is surely good for employment and the rural economy that we should be encouraging more trees to be grown on such land. Here again, I would have thought that the hon. Gentleman would welcome the employment opportunities that there could be in that.

Mr. Colin Shepherd (Hereford): Does my right hon. Friend agree that his intention to bring forward a document early next month will be welcome in the industry, which has been waiting for a long time for just such guidance from him? Does he also agree that his action in respect of section 22 of the Agriculture Act will be welcome and should lead to a greatly enhanced set of employment opportunities in the countryside? However, will he maintain flexibility under his budget headings so that if one aspect of his plan achieves better success than another, it is not inhibited by lack of funds in that direction when there are funds lying available in another sector?

Mr. Jopling: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's warm welcome to the proposals. The policy document that we intend to produce in March will deal with a number of other wider agricultural issues. This proposal is more limited in providing new opportunities. I am also grateful for his endorsement of the point that I made a moment ago with regard to the proposals for the diversification of farm businesses, following section 22 of the 1986 Act. This will undoubtedly provide opportunities for farmers to use their facilities and their food products to get some added value and at the same time create more investment in rural areas, and therefore more jobs.

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): Why has the Minister deliberately withheld from the House the full details of his proposals to release agricultural land for housing development?

Mr. Jopling: I have not made any proposals. What I said, if he hon. Gentleman was here — I do not remember—was that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will be issuing today a draft consultative document to discuss these changes. I have kept nothing from the House.

Mr. Charles Morrison (Devizes): What temporary income arrangements may be available where land is set aside for farmed woodlands? Does diversification include the breeding of ponies and horses?

Mr. Jopling: We shall be consulting on the amount available for farmed woodlands, but our annual figures will vary. Because the amount of income lost by farmers will vary from the less good land to the rather better land, in the better land, where the loss of income will be greatest, we shall be thinking in terms of £125 per hectare, and we shall be discussing this with the industry. We shall be anxious to support diversification into projects such as pony trekking, but we shall have to look carefully at horse breeding.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Will the Minister accept that, as the food surpluses are not produced in marginal land, his policy may prove worthless in affecting the common agricultural policy? To show that it is worthless, does he not perceive the real danger of the threat to the green belt that is implicit in his statement, which may provide Britain with a glimpse of a future countryside under the Conservatives as one for the conifer and concrete? Many people engaged and interested in conservation will find his statement deplorable.

Mr. Jopling: It is unfortunate that the hon. Gentleman should see fit to repeat what I regard as irresponsible reports which have appeared recently in the press with regard to the green belt. There is nothing at all in the Government's proposals which reduces the protection given to the green belt. The same goes for the national parks, areas of outstanding natural beauty and other environmentally important areas. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will take some pleasure from that and will not go on repeating the foolish reports that we have read.

As for surpluses not being created on marginal land, a good deal of marginal land is producing milk and beef, both of which are in surplus. Those who are farming on land that is not so good are the ones who are most concerned and anxious at this time. Those farmers will feel that they have not been forgotten and that we have made specific plans to help them to develop alternative enterprises.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. As the whole House knows, there is heavy pressure on time this evening. I shall allow questions to continue for a further 10 minutes, and then we must move on. That will mean that Back Benchers will have had a full half hour.

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): Will my right hon. Friend accept that, unlike my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Sir P. Mills), I believe that building on this land is the one solution that is unacceptable to this side of the House? Will he accept our congratulations that the otherwise accurate report in *The Observer* is hotly denied on this point by my right hon. Friend?

Mr. Jopling: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's kind words. I agree with him that building per se is not unacceptable. The key point is that it should be controlled under our planning system, and the best land will continue to be controlled in exactly the same way. All that we are suggesting is that the agricultural considerations should be diminished on the less good land, but the planners will continue to apply all the other yardsticks which they have hitherto applied.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Is the Minister aware that in rural Cheshire the suggestion that to build houses will somehow deal with persistent rural unemployment will be met with absolute astonishment? Farmers need clear financial targets and, above all, a complete renegotiation of the milk quotas and of the absolutely unacceptable scheme which the Minister has taken on board from Brussels.

Mr. Jopling: The hon. Lady has not been listening. Either she has not heard or she has not read what has been said about this proposal. Nobody has remotely suggested that there is to be an open door to the building of houses on agricultural land. That is in nobody's minds. It is only in the minds of those who, like the hon. Lady, ask questions like that purely for the purpose of making trouble.

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): Will my right hon. Friend seek to direct the compensation and planning benefits of his proposals, which are very much welcomed, to the needs of the existing agricultural community? In the document that is to appear in March, will he try to announce, as a continuing policy, that the anomaly of the green pound should be avoided wherever possible? Will he confirm that these proposals are not part of any encouragement to over-develop in the south of England, which would benefit neither the agriculture industry nor those who live in rural areas?

Mr. Jopling: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for what he said about the planning proposals. The green pound is not referred to in my statement. However, the Government are conscious of the developments regarding the green pound.

My hon. Friend also asked for an assurance that this is not just a recipe for over-development in the south of England. Of course it is not. It merely relieves planning authorities from the need to have to consider outdated considerations based on food shortages rather than on food surpluses.

Mr. D. E. Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): Will the Minister say whether his statement represents Government policy, as there is no Welsh Office Minister in the Chamber? Will he also explain what is new about this policy, as he is now only implementing what he told us he could not do under the Agriculture Act 1986 regarding the number of environmentally sensitive areas? Will he also tell the House why he thinks that agricultural support and rural development are two different aspects and that people can be switched from one to the other? Diversification has been an ongoing problem for many years for most of the marginal farmers in the rural area that I represent. Will the Minister explain how these policies are in any sense new? In particular, how will the support for forestry provide new jobs, when forestry jobs have been collapsing in the countryside for the last 30 years?

Mr. Jopling: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman takes such a jaundiced view of all this. He asked what is new about the proposals. When we first introduced the concept of environmentally sensitive areas we received such a warm reception from virtually every hon. Member that we felt that we had to take it step by step. We allotted a certain amount of money last year to the scheme, and we have already designated nine environmentally sensitive areas in the United Kingdom. We have now decided to devote more money to the scheme. That is what is new.

The hon. Gentleman also asked what is new about diversification. My answer is very simple. The hon. Gentleman said that this had been an ongoing problem in his constituency for many years, but it has been an ongoing problem in many constituencies for many years. What is new is that we are announcing a scheme whereby, once it is working fully, £5 million a year will be allotted to diversification on farms. That is new, and I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman could not bring himself to welcome it.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the draft circular that is being published today will in no way open up the countryside to uncontrolled development? Does my right hon. Friend recognise that there is a taxation problem for those farmers who are switching their activities? Will he examine the possibility of some reduction of taxation and capital gains when farmers switch over, as the Government want them to do?

Mr. Jopling: I can give an assurance straight away that in no conceivable way is this a recipe for uncontrolled development. Nothing could be further from the truth. On taxation, my hon. Friend will know that my stock reply is that that is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. However, it should be made clear that the majority of those whom we expect will be interested in the farm woodland proposals will not be the kind of people whose personal taxation means that their approach to the growing of trees can be compared with the approach of those who grow trees on a very much larger scale.

Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson (New Forest): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the broad thrust of his statement, but is he aware that there are now disturbing signs that some farmers are declaring buildings redundant in order to get round planning application permission and selling them off as second homes? Will he assure the House that in no way will any of the encouragement to which he referred lead to planning authorities having to abandon their normal planning systems?

Finally, does my right hon. Friend's statement include any help for those who live by commoning? I know that recntly he visited the New Forest and therefore he will

[Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson]

know that many of those who live by depasturing their animals are having a difficult time. Is there anything in this scheme for them?

Mr. Jopling: As to the disturbing signs of buildings being declared redundant so that they may qualify for further development at a later stage, that is not a matter for me. However, my hon. Friend the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Planning is sitting on the Treasury Bench. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for the New Forest (Mr. McNair-Wilson) will write to him about that. As for help for the commoners, I know that my right hon. Friend is thinking of the New Forest. Again that is not part of this specific scheme, but we have this important area of great environmental beauty very much in mind.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): As most of the EC food surpluses are created by our European partners, can the Minister tell us whether they are adopting measures similar to those that he has announced to take agricultural land out of production?

Mr. Jopling: I fear that the hon. Gentleman is not exactly correct when he says that our European partners produce the surpluses. I invite him to go to the Library and look up the surpluses that have been created in Britain. If he does that he will see that we are building up many of the surpluses.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): Will my right hon. Friend categorically deny the report in *The Observer* yesterday that the presumption against house building on agricultural land is to be abandoned and that housing estates, each of up to 100 acres, will be allowed in future? Does he agree that if such a thing were to happen nothing could be less appropriate than to surround an environmentally sensitive area such as the South Downs with a concrete jungle on the Weald of Sussex?

Mr. Jopling: I can assure my hon. Friend that a great deal of that article was a very long way from the truth. The suggestion that it made of opening up land for the building of houses on the scale that he mentions is utterly untrue. I repeat again that the principal change is that it is no longer appropriate to say that on less good land there should not be development because it may be needed for food production. There may well be other reasons which could cause the planners to refuse permission for building on that land, but it is nonsense nowadays to say that permission should be refused because the land might be needed for food production.

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): The Minister alluded to the good work of the Development Commission in the countryside. How much will its budget be increased as a result of his proposals? Will the Minister confirm that the report in *The Observer* was basically true, and that the presumption against house building on agricultural grade 3 land downwards will be lifted, thus meaning that if a democratically elected local authority refuses planning permission, on appeal the Secretary of State would have to reverse that decision? In view of the full attendance in the House, does the Minister accept how badly he misjudged the feeling of the country in trying to sneak through this announcement?

Mr. Jopling: There is no question of trying to sneak it through. That is a ridiculous idea. The hon. Gentleman was in the House and knows that I came straight to the Dispatch Box and said that if the House wanted a statement I would be more than delighted to provide one.

I know that the hon. Gentleman pays great attention to these matters, but, with respect, he has made it clear that he has not fully understood the proposals about planning matters. I hope that he will write or put questions to my hon. Friend from the Department of the Environment. We can supply him with a copy of the draft consultative paper, and from that he will discover that the point he made in his question is a long way from the truth. Before he asks any more questions he should make himself more familiar with that paper.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I assure those hon. Members whom I have not been able to call in the last 45 minutes that I shall bear them in mind when we return to this subject, as undoubtedly we will.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I thank you for the time that you have given the House on this important matter. You will have heard the last exchange. Many hon. Members are far from clear about the impact on planning and about matters relating to the responsibility of the Department of the Environment. Could you or anyone else in the House tell us whether we may expect a statement tomorrow from the Secretary of State or from one of his Ministers on the precise implications for planning in the rural areas?

Mr. Speaker: That is not a matter for me. However, the hon. Gentleman has made the point and no doubt those on the Front Bench will have heard what was said.

Mr. Ron Davies: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have had a long run and I have called the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Davies: May I draw your attention to the wording of the reply from the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food?

Mr. Speaker: No. The hon. Gentleman cannot do that now. That would be a clear continuation of questions on the statement and would be unfair to those hon. Members whom I have not been able to call. I think that all hon. Members would agree with that. I also called the hon. Gentleman during Welsh questions. He raised the matter then and has had ample time on it.

Orders of the Day

Social Fund (Maternity and Funeral Expenses) Bill

Considered in Committee.

[MR. HAROLD WALKER *in the Chair*]

Clause 1

AMENDMENT OF SECTION 32(2) OF SOCIAL SECURITY ACT 1986

7.45 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): I beg to move, in page 1, line 7, at end add

'and there shall be added at the end of section 32(2) of that Act the words "provided that the amounts prescribed under paragraph *(a)* of this subsection in respect of maternity expenses shall be sufficient, subject to prescribed deductions in respect of the resources of the claimant, to meet the cost of prescribed items".'.

On Second Reading the Government sought to suggest that the proposals that the Bill embodies for the second time are logical and consistent. However, despite the small compass of the Bill, the Government have succeeded in putting forward proposals which are innately contradictory. The Government claim that their purpose is to target help —to use their phrase—at those in greatest need. So far they have leaned heavily on the fact that a wider group than those people who are now eligible for supplementary benefit and who in the future to be eligible for income support will, under these proposals, be eligible for assistance. That is not the same wide group as that which is eligible for assistance with funeral and maternity expenses. My first question to the Government is: why not?

For funeral expenses people drawing income support, family credit or housing benefit will be eligible if they meet the other criteria of limited capital. As the Government have explained on many occasions, they want to ensure that all people on low incomes are treated alike. Maternity expenses can be claimed only by those who receive income support or family credit, and not by those who receive housing benefit. I repeat my question: why not?

The unworthy suspicion arises, as it arose in Committee on a different Bill, that not even this Government think that they can discourage people from dying by reducing the amount available for funeral expenses. However, they hope that providing a wholly insufficient amount for maternity expenses might discourage low-income families from having children. If there is another logical reason for the distinction that the Government make we shall be more than happy to hear it.

The second way in which the proposals are contradictory is the different way in which the amounts are dealt with and assessed. For funeral costs a list of items without a specific check list of costs is included. In effect, that list is much the same as the one for the system of single payments. There is one minor exception about which I should like to probe the Government's intentions. In the new draft regulations there is specific mention of funds being allowed for one return journey either for arrangements to be made for a funeral or for a person to be able to attend a funeral. On the face of it, it is hard to see why someone who is charged with the arrangements for a funeral and, presumably, has difficulty in meeting the cost of such travel should be forced to choose between arrangement and attendance. That is one of the areas that we should like the Government to reconsider.

A list of items of maternity expenses also exists under single payment regulations. To put it mildly, they are not over-generous. The Government recognise that they are not over-generous, because until last summer the guidance given in regulation 7103 of the S manual which deals with these matters specifically says, "The following is not a comprehensive list". The paragraph goes on to say that

"these are the items which will most commonly need to be considered:—"

The same paragraph of the S manual says that an adjudication officer may

"Make a single payment for any other items necessary to meet the baby's needs."

Before last summer the Government recognised that even this list might be inadequate to meet the needs of a newborn child.

In August, the Government issued fresh guidance in circular 20/86, presumably to tide them over during the run-up to the regulations, which may have been withdrawn but the basis of which we are considering in the debate on this paving Bill. The Government issued another list which was almost identical to the previous one. It covered essentially the same grounds but was somewhat more restrictive than the previous one. This time the list was said to be an "exhaustive" list of items for which a single payment might be made. In other words, anything outside the list would not even be considered. Paragraph 9.1 in the circular stated:

"no other item is now provided for by regulation 7".

Some time between the issuing of the original single payment regulations and last August the Government decided that babies needed rather less provision than in the past. The provision which the Government thought as late as last August to be necessary for babies—it was not over-generous—was three sleeping suits, one pram suit, three pairs of plastic pants, one baby bath and three cot sheets. It has often been suggested that a determined baby can get through some of those items in a short period.

Not only are the items listed in number but the suggested cost per item is given, totalling £187·45. That ties in, to a degree, with the most recent figures last year from the Maternity Alliance for the average payment made under the existing single payment regulations — about £143. The Maternity Alliance pointed out that most mothers said that they had to buy additional items as well as the items which could be provided for from a single payment. Clearly, between £187 and £190 would cover, on a not very generous basis, the items which, until August 1986, the Government thought that a new baby might need.

But now it is February 1987 and we are told that the maximum grant for any mother will be the princely sum of £80. What has happened to new babies since last summer that suddenly they cost half as much as before? Have babies come furnished with new equipment which has not been revealed to us? Clearly, some magical transformation has taken place. Certainly the cost of the items in the original list has not halved.

The Minister said that the purpose of the maternity grant has always been to make "a reasonable contribution" to the cost of maternity. I shall not argue at

[Mrs. Margaret Beckett]

the moment whether £80 is a reasonable sum. That comment may have been true of the original maternity grant which could be topped up for the poorest mothers by single payments, but the new grant which we are debating in the Bill and for which the regulations will be laid is not a reasonable contribution; it is the sole contribution available to meet the costs of maternity for low-income mothers. It is not just our opinion that that sum is inadequate. A number of organisations have made representations to the Government pointing out the inadequacy of this sum: the British Medical Association, the Conservative Women's National Committee — presumably, the hon. Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) who spoke the other evening is not in touch with that organisation—the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Health Visitors Association, the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, the Royal College of Nursing, the Select Committee on Social Services and many others.

The Minister boasts that the Government's intention is to meet the "true" cost of funerals—the "full" cost. The hon. Gentleman spoke recently of the "realistic" help towards the cost of funerals. Why are not the same principles applied to maternity expenses?

Last year, when these proposals were first put forward in another Bill, we asked the Minister the same question. I shall not bore the Committee with the hon. Gentleman's answer, because it was fairly incomprehensible, but he appeared to say that perhaps the Government had decided that, because they were going to give a lump sum only to those on income support, they were going to apply the same principle of giving a lump sum only to those on family credit or family income supplement. That does not even deal with the argument why those on housing benefit are excluded in this case, let alone why the lump sum was thought to be the correct approach. It certainly does not deal with the question why, if a lump sum is appropriate, it should be half or less than half even of the average amount now paid to mothers in equally poor circumstances. The Minister has had six months to think of a better argument. If he is not able to do so, he should reconsider the way in which the regulations were drafted and accept our amendment.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): I support the amendment. It is well worth remembering that the parent of the Bill was the Social Security Act 1986, which was described in a derogatory way—certainly in my area—as the result of the Fowler review. At the Labour party conference in 1986, a motion supporting the repeal of that Act was passed by a vote of 6·3 million to 173,000—a 37:1 majority, greatly exceeding the necessary 2:1 majority needed to ensure that when my hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) takes up her position in Cabinet as the person responsible for the Ministry of women's rights she has the Labour movement's full support in putting this legislation and its parent in their justifiable place—the dustbin of history.

The Bill gives the Secretary of State the power to prescribe regulations to define limits on such items as maternity grants. The £80 for maternity grant, which has been cited in statements, and which, no doubt, will be mentioned later, is woefully inadequate to meet the needs arising from the birth of a child in Britain in 1987. The grant was woefully inadequate at £25 some 18 years ago when it was first introduced. If the amount had been increased to allow for inflation since 1969, the grant would be about £130 and it would still be inadequate.

The Bill and the Social Security Act which it amends do nothing to tackle the problems of the gradual reduction in maternity benefit over the past few years. Clause 1 would end the right to a statutory grant for about 500,000 women. It aims to prescribe the top limits of the payment. These changes are grafted on to a number of other reductions which have taken place under the Government. They include the 5 per cent. cut some seven years ago in the level of maternity allowance, which saved the Government about £8 million, and the ending of earnings-related supplement in 1982, which saved the Government £35 million. We are now talking about a means-tested substitute for a statutory grant on top of the loss of free milk, vitamins and other cuts in provision which working class women have had to put up with over the past seven years. Those who are in receipt of maternity grant have had their chances of returning to work reduced because the Government have removed the requirement that employers with fewer than 10 employees have to offer a job back to a woman who leaves to have a baby.

A particular group of women will be affected by the legislation — the 200,000 young women on YTS. They do not get the chance to build up the necessary contributions or service to qualify for maternity benefits in general. If I could broaden the debate—a possibility not usually open to me — I should add to the list of pressing restrictions imposed during the past seven years on working class women who are about to have babies. They face the problem of finding child care facilities as the children grow up. Apart from Liverpool council, few councils have had the money in the past seven years to extend child care provision, such as nurseries, creches and play groups. That is the general background.

8 pm

Good quality child care — including maternity and paternity rights, as well as levels of benefit — are essential if men and women are to share the joys and responsibilities of bringing up their children and not be restricted, which is what will happen if the Bill is passed. That is why we need a universal maternity grant that properly reflects the cost of bringing up a baby — £80 does not do that, either in terms of pregnancy and childbirth or in terms of the general cost of raising children.

We have the first woman Prime Minister in Britain, but she has shown, through sponsorship of the Bill and in previous Acts, that she is ruthless in reversing the gains made by working-class women in the past few decades. She might make a few headline comments about individual cases of child abuse, but the Bill represents mass child abuse in terms of the poverty and inadequacy of provision that working-class women and their children have to suffer.

The original amount of benefit was £25. The Bill gives the power to the Secretary of State to raise that to £80. My wife and I had a baby some 18 months ago and we received the £25 benefit. Jane was able to buy two maternity bras, a box of breast pads, some sanitary towels and enough wool to make the baby's first cardigan. That is all that the £25 bought. All the other essential items will not be covered even if the grant is increased to £80. One of the

cheapest cribs these days is £50, one of the cheapest high chairs £48, one of the cheapest playpens £47, and the cheapest fire guard for an open fire is £20—a total cost of £170. My wife and I cannot afford to buy those things. But for the generosity of friends in Coventry who loaned us those four items, we would not have had them. I keep my standard of living at the average factory wage, which in Coventry is £170 or £180 a week gross. We are talking about working-class families for whom £170 or £180 a week would be a dream. If we cannot afford to buy those new things on average factory wages in Coventry, the hundreds of thousands of women who will be caught by the trap in the Bill will have no chance of buying them.

In addition to borrowing some items, we were lucky in that my wife had worked in a department store for 11 years, which entitled her to a 25 per cent. discount off certain items. That possibility is not open to most working-class families or to the unemployed single parents who are caught by the trap. A couple of days before Christmas we bought our daughter, Charlotte, her first pair of shoes. We paid £9·99 for a pair of child's shoes, which will last 10 to 12 weeks if we are lucky. I do not pay £9·99 for my shoes and I expect them to last at least two years. I hope that the next Labour Government—I trust that my two comrades on the Front Bench are taking note of this—will consider providing items such as children's shoes on the National Health. It is essential that a child has shoes that do not stunt the growth of its feet and lead to far worse problems in later life.

The Minister will no doubt tell us that he will generously make the maternity grant £80 if the Bill goes through and gives him the authority and power so to do. I was talking to my local citizens advice bureau a few days ago as part of the preparation for tonight's debates and I asked whether it had any information on the costs of the basic requirements necessary to bring a baby into the world and provide for its first few weeks or months of life. The CAB quoted to me, and I can quote to the Committee, figures for essential basic items for a new baby layette which were worked out by the Health Visitors Association. Even the Minister will recognise that most professionals, such as health visitors, whose daily job is to monitor the development of children, should have an idea of what is essential. The list was costed by the Durham and Derwentside citizens advice bureau after visiting the local Boots shop. The total for the basic kit recommended by the Health Visitors Association came to £241·23p last year —three times the £80 that the Minister intends to offer today.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): My hon. Friend has given us a number of examples of how people have costed the basic needs of looking after a child in its first few weeks of life. The Government always claim that taking away universal benefit and means testing it—or "targeting" it, as they like to call it—means that they can make that targeting generous enough for the people at the bottom of the pile. My hon. Friend's speech is helpful in showing how false that claim is.

Mr. Nellist: The Government say that the grant is supposed to cover necessary requisites. If the Bill goes through it will give the Government the authority to take the grant away from at least half a million women in Britain.

Mr. Field: Supposedly to provide an adequate benefit.

Mr. Nellist: Yes, supposedly to provide an adequate benefit to bring the child into the world.

The initial costs of bringing up a baby, worked out in March 1984 by the *Daily Mirror*, came to £444. In November 1985, a magazine called "Parents" estimated that the cost of a new born baby, including baby clothes and equipment, came to £702. It is worth comparing the situation here with what happens in other European countries. In Belgium, all mothers receive £395 for their first child. In France, all mothers receive £70 per month pregnancy allowance. In Luxembourg, all mothers receive a grant of £627. And what are we talking about in this country? A measly £80 from the Government.

Mr. Field: Will my hon. Friend remind the House that that analysis in the *Daily Mirror* was instigated by the current junior Minister for Transport, the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley), whose wife so enlivened our debates last week?

Mr. Nellist: I was not aware of that. It should not only be recorded in *Hansard* but shouted from the roof tops that the initiation of such an exercise produced a figure not far short of £500. However, it seems to have had no impact on the thinking of the Ministers who have proposed this ludicrously low figure of £80.

There are other problems attendant on accepting a figure of £80, because of the way in which the regulations intend that sum to replace the single payments available to mothers. A young woman, who was six months pregnant, came to see me on Saturday morning at my constituency surgery in Coventry. In the last few weeks she has moved into council accommodation, but the furniture regulations of August 1986, which were amended by the original Social Security Act, now preclude her from claiming for a cooker, a bed, sheets, a wardrobe or other necessities of setting up home. She will be able to get some help under the Bill for essential babywear costs, but she will be bringing a baby into an unfurnished, unheated flat with no basic requisites for bringing up a family. Not until she has been on benefit for six or seven months will she be entitled to one or two other additions. That fact was reflected in much of the evidence that the citizens advice bureau in Coventry supplied to me.

What figure ought we to be discussing? If my hon. Friend's amendment were accepted and there was a review of the prescribed items before the figure was finally set, what sort of figure would be come up with? Unfortunately, I have left the booklet that I wished to quote from at home, but on the telephone a few minutes ago I wrote down all the essential points, so I will paraphrase. The Health Education Council perhaps knows more than any other body what is needed to bring a child into the world and to provide for it during its first few weeks of life, and it gives every expectant mother a list of the items that she should get before her baby is born.

Mr. Field: Be careful or the Government will close it down.

Mr. Nellist: As my hon. Friend says, we may be on dangerous ground in quoting the Health Education Council. It may end up being abolished by the Government.

I looked through the list from the Health Education Council and I turned to what I hope the few Tory Members present will regard as an ideologically sound

[Mr. Nellist]

source of prices — the current Mothercare catalogue. That produced the following list: two dozen terry nappies —£21; six pins—56p; 50 nappy liners, which would not last one week, as I know to my cost—£1·10; four pairs of plastic pants—£3; 100g of cotton wool—78p; baby lotion—89p; a bucket to put nappies in, with a lid to keep the stink down—£5·99; sterilising powder—£1·49; a basic cot—£63; three sheets—£11; a duvet—£9·99; a baby bath—£6·99; one bar of soap—53p; a towel—though more than one is needed—£6·99; a pram—£173·50, including a rain hood; six bottles and teats and sterilising equipment—£14; a brush to clean out the bottles—£1·15; four stretch suits—£14; two woollen cardies—£7; four vests—£4·50; a shawl or a blanket for when the baby is taken out—£10·99; a woollen hat—£1·75; two socks—£1·85; two mittens—£1·05; nail scissors—89p; a hair brush—£2·99; a plastic changing mat—£3·99; a changing bag—£9·99. In my rush I have not been able to find the price for a cat net or for pram straps, a sun hat or other essential items in the Health Education Council list. I do not even mention toys, although in terms of stimulation from colour and sound the first few months of a baby's life are the most important in developing its potential. That list adds up to £376·46, yet we are talking about only £80 being given to meet the needs of working-class women.

I should like to spend more time making the essential points, but I am interested to know how the Minister will respond. From that Health Education Council list, from my personal experience over the past 15 months and from constituency cases as recently as last Saturday morning, I have no doubt that millions of families look forward to the implementation of the conference policy decided by the Labour party in October. I could take the Committee and the Minister through the statistics, but for now I simply stress that we need to pass the amendment so that the real costs of bringing a baby into the world can be identified and taken up by a Labour Secretary of State.

I hope that when my hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) takes her place in a Labour Cabinet in the next few months she will make it a priority to redress the problems caused by this legislation. We know that she will have a fight on her hands to ensure that a Ministry for women's rights has the necessary finance to carry out improvements in the lives—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) thinks that the list of essential items that I have read out is a laughing matter, perhaps he would like to come to Coventry and join me in visiting the damp houses in my constituency where babies who do not have good, clean clothes soon start suffering from bronchitis and other bronchial problems.

8.15 pm

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): The reason for my mirth was not the content of the list that the hon. Gentleman read out, but the concept of a Ministry for women's rights, which is so ludicrous as to be laughable.

Mr. Nellist: I will leave it to those who are present for the debate or will hear it on the radio or read about it in *Hansard* or in the press to judge which is the more laughable—the idea that a baby can be brought into the world and helped through the first weeks of its life on £80, when the realistic cost, according to estimates from the Health Education Council, the Health Visitors Association and magazines such as "Parents", ranges from £400 to £750, or the idea that a majority Labour Government will give my hon. Friend the Member for Barking the job of changing that position and ensuring that millions of working-class families can give their children a proper start.

I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Barking shares my view of the importance of that task and understands that there will be a battle against the vested interests, represented so well by the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire, who will say that the money cannot be afforded. If that is the answer of the City, the employers, the industrialists and the Tory party, the extension of a Labour Government's control over the means of finance and over industry to provide the necessary money for an expansion of public services will become increasingly urgent.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): I support the amendment and I agree with much of the analysis, though not all the premises, of the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist).

I do not cast aspersions on the strength of feeling at the Labour party conference, but having left that party on the principle of one man, one vote, I always recall the sketch in, I think, "Not the Nine O'clock News" where a meeting had to decide whether to have tea or coffee. Five hands, representing 1·5 million votes, were raised for tea and one hand, representing 7 million votes, was raised for coffee. So coffee it was, and on the meeting democratically went.

I support the amendment because it is a good and sensible proposal. Some of the proposed amendments seem longer than the Bill. The alliance proposed an amendment about the rights of mothers under 16. That is germane to the Labour amendment and I hope that the Minister will respond to our suggestion, because it was not adequately dealt with on Second Reading.

I also underline what the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East said about the dramatic decline in the real value of the maternity grant. The Government's proposal of an £80 grant marks a slippage. In 1983, the average single payment made by the DHSS was £60, which, with the £25 maternity grant, gave a total of £85. Therefore, the Government's latest proposal is lower in cash terms and in real terms than what was made available to mothers on supplementary benefit in 1983.

The Government have not attempted to justify the suggested level. I hope that the Minister will explain why such a disgracefully low level has been set. How can the Government justify such a dramatic slippage in both cash and real terms?

The Under-Secretary said, here or elsewhere, that he would reconsider the position of pregnant girls under the age of 16 whose parents are not in receipt of supplementary benefit or family income supplement. There was no time at the end of the Second Reading debate to comment on that in detail, so I hope that he will comment tonight. I support the amendment because at least it would allow the House to conduct annually a debate about adequate maternity support.

From the detailed list supplied by the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East, from the comments by the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) and from the speech by the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson), it is

clear that the proposed level bears no relation to the reality of the cost which women and families face when bringing up children. Does the Minister really believe, with his hand on his heart, that the level proposed is sufficient?

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I support the amendment. It is right to emphasise the need to meet the cost of prescribed items. My hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) mentioned £170. There is no doubt that £80 is inadequate.

A few months ago I approached my local DHSS on behalf of two young girls who were seeking assistance with maternity payment. Both girls live in appalling poverty and received about £195. That is not a princely sum, given the appalling circumstances in which they live in Port Glasgow. Was that sum over-generous? In future it seems that girls in similar circumstances will be penalised. What will girls in the same circumstances receive in future? What will happen in constituencies such as mine where 43 per cent. or 44 per cent. of the population is in receipt of social welfare benefits? I presume that youngsters living in such poverty will have the right after six months to apply for a loan from the social fund. Will women in such circumstances be able to apply for a loan to buy the essentials for a baby's first few weeks of life?

I have often said that the legislation is squalid, especially for many of my constituents. The sum of £80 is disgracefully inadequate. If the Government had any honour or principles they would support the amendment. I look forward to the day when such matters, as they apply to Scotland, are decided in a Scottish Parliament.

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. John Major): The hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) moved the amendment in her usual beguiling fashion, but she hid the fact that the underlying effect, if not the intent, of the amendment is to reinvent the single payment system with all its complexities. From time to time, the hon. Lady pays lip service to simplicity, but she tends to take a hatchet when her heart becomes involved.

The hon. Members for Derby, South, for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist), for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) and for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) raised several issues with which I should like to deal before coming to the underlying argument involved in the proposed amendment. The hon. Member for Derby, South asked why housing benefit was used as a passport for funeral payments and not for maternity grant. She thought that the intention was to restrict the entitlement to maternity grant. Whether one decides that that is the intention depends upon the end of the telescope through which one looks, or upon whether one concludes that the Government want to widen the entitlement to help with funeral expenses for many of the reasons which hon. Members have put forward on a number of occasions.

I want to widen the entitlement to funeral payments for a series of self-evident reasons. With the cost of meeting funeral expenses comes an immediate large-scale cost at a time of distress, to which hon. Members have repeatedly drawn our attention in recent months. I want, therefore, to allow the widest possible entitlement to the funeral payment. I make no apology for that being my intention, although it is not possible to extend the passporting provision of housing benefit to maternity grant.

Family income supplement itself makes a fairly satisfactory passport to maternity payment for low income families. That is clearly not so for funeral payments since people on low incomes who tend to take responsibility for funeral payments do not usually have dependent children.

The hon. Member for Derby, South also queried whether £80 was the correct level. The hon. Member for Coventry, South-East spoke with some feeling, from his own recent experience of paternity, about the expenses involved in having a baby. I, too, have a family—a little beyond baby age—so I recall only too clearly the expense involved.

8.30 pm

Mr. Frank Field: I cannot remember the eligibility rules for FIS for those who are expecting their first child. The Minister told the House that FIS was a more convenient passport, but he failed to tell us for whom it was more convenient. Will he tell us at what point people would be eligible for FIS when expecting their first child? If they are eligible only after the birth of the child, they may be ineligible for FIS.

Mr. Major: We considered that matter, the hon. Gentleman may recall, in respect of family credit. It is in the depths of the Social Security Act, but it will take me a moment or two to recall what precise conclusion we reached. I hope that I shall recall that conclusion before I complete my remarks.

The hon. Member for Coventry, South-East also touched upon the particular expenses of having a baby. I make nothing other than an acknowledgment that having a baby means a significant degree of expense for the young couple involved. The hon. Gentleman, in what I thought was a compelling phrase with which I agree, made the point that parenthood brings with it both joys and responsibilities. One of the responsibilities—I certainly do not seek to present this in a hard-faced manner—is for the parents to make a contribution towards the welfare of their child. All we seek to do with the maternity grant—the hon. Member for Derby, South used slightly different words—is to make a reasonable contribution towards the expense of having a baby.

I should perhaps underline the word "contribution" as we do not see and never have seen the purpose of this payment as being to cover the entire expense of having a baby for precisely the underlying reason that the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East gave in his speech.

Mr. Nellist: While the Minister is dealing with this matter, may I ask how he arrived at the figure of £80? In the Mothercare catalogue, a basic layette, which consists of two of each item for the first few days or weeks of a baby's life, comes to £39·99. If, as is most likely with the sort of families we are talking about, the family did not have a washing machine and a tumble drier to air clothes properly—if people are living in a damp house they will need at least four or many of those items, such as vests and so on—those basic things will cost £80 before they start. I understand that the original grant in the 1960s covered the cost of a pram. Therefore, how did the DHSS work out this sum of £80?

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman assumes that some weird and odd mathematical equation has been used to arrive at the £80 figure. There is no such calculation. Within the social security budget there are always competing demands for what is not an unlimited amount

[Mr. Major]

of resources. Within those competing demands Ministers must decide where to direct the resources that are available. In making that decision we thought that £80 would represent a reasonable contribution towards the cost of having a baby when set against the present flat rate £25 maternity grant.

Mr. Nellist: Further to that, will the Minister confirm that the Department, in effect, said, "Here is the amount of money. Here are the number of women that it will cover. Divide the money by the number of women, and it comes to £80."? In other words, it bears absolutely no relation to the real cost of bringing up a baby.

Mr. Major: That was a good try by the hon. Gentleman, but that was not what I said and that is not the position. I shall repeat precisely what I said just a moment ago. There are competing demands, and that is so for whoever is the Minister. Within those competing demands there is a whole range of areas — the hon. Gentleman frequently draws other examples to my attention — where it is desirable to ensure that the benefits are uprated, perhaps increased, or whatever it may be. Social Security Ministers must make a judgment between those competing demands. Possibly other hon. Members would draw the line at a different level and make a different judgment, but that is the decision that any Minister must make. Upon that basis, we judged that £80 was right.

Mrs. Beckett: I was wondering whether the Minister would tell us whether the judgment that he made was influenced in any way by looking at the list of costs published by his Department last summer.

Mr. Major: Of course it was. I have just explained precisely how the judgment was reached. The hon. Lady may try as much as she wishes to put words in my mouth, but I am disinclined to leave them there and accept them.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Major: The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye was first in the queue. For the purposes of convenience, I am also prepared to give way to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow should he wish to intervene.

Mr. Kennedy: We are talking about something that the Government, for their own purposes in this Bill, define as a sufficient level. How can £80 be sufficient when the £25 maternity allowance in 1983 was on average chalked up by a single payment of £60, bringing the total sum in Government support at that point to £85? How, in real as well as in cash terms, can £80 be justified three years later?

Mr. Major: It was not on average. The hon. Gentleman is wrong on that. It was on average for those who received single payments, but I remind him of something of which he may not be aware. It is by no means the case that all young ladies in those circumstances received single payments. About 20 per cent. of new mothers may have done, but certainly not much more than 25 per cent. received the top level. It is certainly not an average figure in the sense that the hon. Gentleman suggests.

Mr. Frank Field The Minister has just told the House that the Department had to do that complicated sum and how much it should budget for that part of social security expenditure. Will he tell us what the estimate was for the first year of the new scheme's operation? When he has given us that figure, will he compare it with what would have been paid out if the £25 for each qualifying mother had still been in existence?

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman can be provided with those figures. I shall have them for the clause stand part debate or my hon. and learned Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security will.

We have made no secret of the fact that the abolition of the flat rate grant which was spread so widely will certainly have led to a saving. I do not have the precise figures, but I shall endeavour to obtain them in time for that debate.

The hon. Member for Derby, South also referred to a minor, although perhaps important matter on funeral payments. She referred to the meanness of the proposition that one return journey to arrange or attend a funeral was adequate. That is a matter for regulations. The hon. Lady may well be right in what she says. We shall certainly consider whether it is one of the matters that we can change.

I have dealt with some of the underlying points made by the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East. I thought I recognised that compelling phrase that he used, "the dustbin of history." However, as my Parliamentary Private Secretary has been unable to find what I thought it referred to, I shall skip lightly over that point in the interests of avoiding controversy. The hon. Gentleman may have borne in mind in his remarks the fact that what is proposed after April 1988 in terms of free welfare foods is that income support families will continue to receive free milk tokens for children under 16 and that families on family credit, although they will not receive milk tokens on account of pregnancy, will receive cash compensation to be included in the child credit instead of milk tokens. That will apply only to a child born before the claim was made.

The Government's intention and the general aim is to provide help in cash rather than in kind. That is the underlying proposition of the new family credit which is wider and more generous than the present FIS scheme.

As regards the low income scheme to which the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East referred, I make no particularly derogatory remarks about that scheme. However, I simply observe that it has the rather derisory take-up of only about 7 per cent. at present. It is not as valuable as the hon. Gentleman appears to think.

It is true that vitamin tokens are to be abolished as a benefit, but the hon. Gentleman may not yet be aware that they will instead be available free from health clinics from a date still to be decided. He may not have been aware of that point.

The hon. Member for Coventry, South-East also referred to France and one or two other countries in Europe and to precisely what was provided there. There are five countries within the European Community that do not pay a universal maternity grant. The proposition that perhaps underlay the hon. Gentleman's remarks, that Britain was being uniquely ungenerous, although I put the matter more mildly than the hon. Gentleman, is perhaps not the case.

The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye, with a notable disregard for precisely what the amendment is about, referred to maternity payments for mothers under

16. It is perfectly true, as he knows, that my hon. and learned Friend and I some time ago in a conversation with the One Parent Family Group agreed to consider that matter.

When we examined the matter in 1986, during the passage of the Social Security Bill as it then was, we were entirely unconvinced by the arguments for extending the provision to mothers under 16 years of age. I am not unsympathetic to the various arguments that have been advanced and I understand the concern that hon. Members feel. I am familiar with the forceful arguments that have been advanced on behalf of one-parent families, for example. There is, however, a genuine dilemma which is moral as well as administrative. Were we to extend the principle to those under 16 years of age, we would overturn a long-standing principle of supplementary benefit which we believe to be correct—the principle that a child under the age of 16, even if she has given birth to a child, remains the dependant of her parents or guardian. I understand the arguments for and against that principle and I can clearly see both sides of the coin, but I am not inclined to think that we shall be able to make the change that is advocated. In no sense am I ruling it out categorically, but it is not a matter for primary legislation. It is something that would be dealt with by regulation rather than by an Act of Parliament.

I do not wish to raise hopes that we shall be able to make the change that is being urged upon us, but I am prepared to say that I shall consider further any fresh arguments that may arise. I say that without any wish to give the Committee the impression that I shall be persuaded easily that the argument that is being urged upon me is the right way to proceed.

Mr. Kennedy: The hon. Gentleman has made a helpful statement and I appreciate that he is being indulgent in responding in such a way. He has spoken about the legal position——

The Chairman: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will recognise that I have been indulgent, too, and that he should not push his luck.

Mr. Kennedy: I recognise your indulgence with gratitude, Mr. Walker.

I understand that under family law in England all mothers have full legal responsibility for the care and provision of their children. Under section 17 of the Supplementary Benefits Act 1976, a mother of any age is liable to maintain her child. I appreciate the Minister's concern for the principle that someone under the age of 16 is still in the ward, as it were, of her parents, but under existing social security legislation certain conditions are placed upon mothers.

Mr. Major: Having said that he would not push his luck, I rather fancy that the hon. Gentleman did. If your tolerance can be stretched slightly further, Mr. Walker, let me say that section 17 is ever present in my brain, as indeed is the ruling in Gillick *v.* West Norfolk and Wisbech Area Health Committee. However, I am not in the business of being pushed any further upon that proposition. I have sought to dampen down expectation that I shall be able to help, and that I would reiterate, but I am prepared to consider any fresh argument that may be advanced either in the Chamber this evening or subsequently.

Mr. Frank Field: I am grateful to the Minister for his statement that he will think again. The issues that are now before us have been discussed on a number of occasions since I have been a Member of the House of Commons. Perhaps we might have a more wide-ranging debate on a future occasion. As I understand it, it is unlawful for someone to have sexual intercourse with a girl under the age of 16 years. That factor, too, should be borne in mind in our discussions. Given that there are 1,400 pregnancies each year as a result of under-age sexual intercourse, we should as well as——

The Chairman: Order. We are getting a long way from the amendment and the Bill. I hope that my tolerance will not be stretched too much.

Mr. Field: Perhaps I might be allowed to complete my sentence, as it were, Mr. Walker. When we think about meeting the needs of young mothers under the age of 16 years, we should think at the same time about the other issues that the Minister has raised that come within the term "family responsibilities". These issues apply throughout the social scale.

The Chairman: I hope that the Minister will bear these matters in mind for the moment when we debate them.

8.45 pm

Mr. Major: Indeed I shall, Mr. Walker. I shall bear in mind also that you would prefer me to bear them in mind silently this evening.

Dr. Godman: May I relate what the Minister has said to the last sentence in the amendment, which reads:

"to meet the cost of prescribed items."

There is an important point of principle. If a young girl chooses not to terminate a pregnancy, it is essential, surely, that she and her family, especially if they are living in poverty, be given all the assistance that they need.

Mr. Major: I do not dissent from that proposition. The hon. Gentleman has said that if the young girl and her family are living in poverty, they should be given the assistance that they need. In the circumstances that he envisages, the maternity grant will be paid. The issue is to whom it is paid—to the child mother's parents or the child mother herself. In the circumstances that the hon. Gentleman has outlined, there is no question of the payment not being made. The proposition upon which the Government rest currently is that, for many of the reasons that underlie what the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) has in mind, payment should be made to the child mother's parents rather than to the under-aged mother herself. That is the substantive point. When there is great poverty, I think that the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow and I are at one.

Our aims in abolishing the £25 universal maternity grant and the system of supplementary benefit single payment for maternity leave are twofold. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Birkenhead should contain himself. I think that I have shown that, if he wishes to intervene, I shall be prepared to allow him to do so. There is no need for him to chunter to me from a seated position.

The Chairman: The hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) has done well enough without any further encouragement.

Mr. Major: I am always prepared to accept wise advice, Mr. Walker, and I trust that the hon. Gentleman is as well. If both of us do so, we shall make some progress.

Our intention, first, is to provide a fairer system which makes a realistic contribution towards the costs of a new

[Mr. Major]

baby. I reiterate that we wish to have a fairer system that contributes realistically towards the costs of a new baby for all low-income groups, whether in work or not. It has not yet been said by anyone who has contributed to the debate that the proposition before the Committee will not extend help to many low-income groups in work. It should be made clear also that they would not receive help under the present system. That should be borne in mind by those who are concerned primarily with the level of income rather than the status—employed or unemployed—of the person receiving the income.

Our second aim is to simplify the existing system so that everyone is a good deal clearer about what he or she will receive than at present. I fear that the amendment would destroy both of the propositions that I have put before the Committee. I am not in a position to commend it to the Committee and I shall not do so.

To accept the amendment——

Dr. Godman: I am grateful to the Minister for allowing me to intervene. I do so to remind him of my question about the right to apply for a loan to meet the requisites that we are discussing. I thought that he would reply to that question.

Mr. Major: I think, Mr. Armstrong, that the hon. Gentleman's question goes a good deal wider than the proposition that is before us. I believe that I would be in even more trouble with you, Mr. Armstrong, than with your predecessor in the Chair if I were to deal with the issue now.

To accept the amendment would mean returning to a system under which it would be necessary to prescribe, as the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East said, the number of plastic pants, feeding bottles, nappies and other accoutrement that a mother is likely to need on the arrival of a new baby, whether it be the first child or not. Most hon. Members, but clearly not all—I make no critical point about this—are agreed that such a rigid system would not be an especially satisfactory way of dealing with needs that we all wish to see met. The amendment seems to support a rigid system for the future. The hon. Member for Derby, South is clearly an unrestructured supporter of a complex system.

We believe that our aims are best met by a flat rate payment, which has clear, qualifying rules to target it at those who are most in need. We think that is what we have. We also feel that it is in the best interests of the claimant to leave her with complete freedom as to what she buys with the money. Our proposals represent a significant improvement over the present arrangements. I hope that the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) will be disinclined to press the amendment to a Division, but if she does, I must advise my hon. Friends to resist it.

Ms. Jo Richardson (Barking): I hope that I can stretch your tolerance, Mr. Armstrong, or rather the tolerance of Mr. Walker, who has just vacated the Chair, in referring to the under-16s. I intended to refer to them on Third Reading, and perhaps I will. The matter was raised by the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy). The Minister says that, without any commitment, he might reconsider the whole matter of the under-16s if he can be presented with fresh arguments. I do not know what fresh arguments we can present to him. It seems to me that all the arguments that have been presented so far are good and valid. The plain fact is that the Minister seems to underestimate the number of young women under 16, who, for one reason or another—it is not for us to inquire necessarily into their family circumstances—would be better off, and whose child would be better off, if the money were paid directly to them, not via the parent, who may or may not pass the money over. We cannot always inquire into the delicacy of family circumstances.

I do not know why the Minister is so resistant to our argument. I do not know whether he thinks that, because one is under 16, one will simply go out and spend the money on a video tape. I have met young women of that age who, unfortunately in some cases, have become pregnant. They have taken the matter extremely seriously and have been frightened, and a little bit of money in their hand to cope with their difficult situation is badly needed.

The Minister said that it would be so much better to have a flat rate of £80 and not continue with the present complex system. He called my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) an unreconstructed supporter of the present system, which she certainly is not. I know that she would agree that the system needs streamlining, but not in the way in which the Government have done it, which is simply to wipe out many of the benefits that women will have until the ruling is introduced.

Much mention was made last week of the £60 average that women got from various other benefits which, with the £25, brought the payment up to £85. My hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South reminded me a few moments ago that last year, when we debated the Social Security Bill, now an Act, the Maternity Alliance said that the average amount that was paid out in other benefits was not £60 but £143. I am not sure whether my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) referred to that point in a speech that he made in Committee about the additional benefits.

Dr. Godman: I am sure that the Minister and his officials will correct me if I am wrong on the matter, but I am fairly certain that in 1985 and perhaps 1986 the average payment to claimants in those circumstances was well over £143. It was closer to £200.

Ms. Richardson: Perhaps I was being conservative. I am sure that in many instances the payment was nearer to £200. That just shows the situation that women face.

At the end of a speech that I made on Thursday, I referred to what Finland provided for pregnant women, in the form of a basket of goods full of maternity and children's wear. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State—indeed, the Minister of State has just repeated it—said that most people would wish to choose and buy their own baby clothes. That is true, but even with the present bases upon which we give pregnant women money, most of us realise that many women do not have enough money to buy the clothes now.

There are an awful lot of hand-me-downs. Clothes are passed on not just in the family but from one woman to another. Many of the clothes are well worn. It is not a matter of handing on new things. That is happening because the woman who is newly pregnant cannot afford the clothes. The same applies to maternity clothes. Women pass on to one another two or three maternity outfits. That

is not because they want to do it; it is because they cannot afford to buy new clothes for themselves, even with the present payments. The £80 that they will get will not enable them to buy new clothes, so the old system will continue, almost like a jumble sale.

It is clear to me that both the Ministers and the Government do not live in the real world, yet, as many hon. Members have said, in some senses the Department lives in the real world—because it produced the list of maternity items and their cost. The cost for a vest, a sleeping suit, a cardigan, a pram suit, a wrap or a shawl, plastic pants, 24 napkins—they will not go very far—feeding bottle and teat, a cot, a cot mattress, a pram or carry-cot, cot sheet, cot blanket and baby bath amounts to £187·45, on the Department's estimates. So how does the Minister think that £80 will go anywhere near that?

The figure that catches my eye most is 24 nappies. That is what the Department recommends as a sufficient quantity. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist), whose experience is perhaps the most recent in the House, will realise that 24 nappies go nowhere. As he said, if one lives in a damp council house or council flat and one does not have a tumble drier, one will need an awful lot more than that. I believe that it would be much better for parents to be encouraged to use disposable nappies.

Mr. Nellist: I want to make the point that 24 nappies in the first few weeks of a baby's life, at six a day, would last only four days. I must stress the point that if someone does not have a washing machine or tumble drier, more nappies will be required because of the frequency of the need to wash them. I agree also that disposables are more convenient. However, over the two or three years that a baby needs nappies, when it comes to choosing between either terrys or disposable nappies, disposables are a damn sight more expensive.

9 pm

Ms. Richardson: We have all been grateful to hear about the recent personal experiences of my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East. I know that other hon. Members have—I was going to say "had babies", perhaps that is not entirely correct—had experience of babies, but perhaps my hon. Friend's more recent experience is more useful.

My hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East also referred to European comparisons. The Minister's rejoinder simply contained details of other European comparisons, which were worse. Do we want to aim for the worst rather than the best? Surely the United Kingdom wants the best practices and not the worst. The Minister's rejoinder was unacceptable.

The hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) flitted in and flitted out and made one crack in passing. He was an opponent of mine during his first election campaign in 1974. I was quite sorry to see that he came to the House eventually. In his comments today he tried to rubbish the idea of a Ministry for Women to which my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East referred. When Labour is in power, we shall have a Ministry for Women — *[Interruption.]* I wish that Conservative Members would remember that their female constituents will read the report of this debate and will understand that, for the first time, a Labour Government will have a Ministry that will do its best to pull together the disadvantages and deprivation suffered by women in social security, in employment and other matters. The Ministry will monitor and ensure that benefits place women on a proper, equal footing and give them the level of support to which we believe that women, as more than half the population, are entitled. It ill-becomes Conservative Members continually to rubbish women.

We have had an interesting debate and I propose to end now——

Mr. Francis Maude (Warwickshire, North): Hear, hear.

Ms. Richardson: The hon. Gentleman says "Hear, hear" no doubt because we are talking about women.

I propose to finish now by inviting my hon. Friends to vote for amendment No. 3 because we want to show the Government that we do not believe that they have treated pregnant women and women with babies in a decent fashion, but have treated them meanly.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 110, Noes 160.

Division No. 84] **[9.02 pm**

AYES

Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Crowther, Stan
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Dewar, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Haynes, Frank
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Marek, Dr John
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Mikardo, Ian
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Ms Jo
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Tinn, James

Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
Winnick, David

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Don Dixon and
Mr. Ray Powell.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Crouch, David
Dorrell, Stephen
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fletcher, Sir Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gower, Sir Raymond
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mather, Sir Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Murphy, Christopher
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Tony
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Waller, Gary
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wiggin, Jerry
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Neubert and
Mr. Michael Portillo.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clauses 1 and 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

New Clause 1

APPROVAL BY PARLIAMENT

'In section 83(3) of the Social Security Act 1986, after paragraph *(c)* there shall be inserted the following paragraph:

"*(cc)* regulations prescribing amounts under section 32(2)*(a)* above;"'.—*[Mrs. Beckett.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mrs. Beckett: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

This is a minor and relatively technical matter, but it is one which the Government might do well to consider. The intention is to ensure that regulations made in this context come before the House on the affirmative rather than the negative resolution procedure. This is the only way in which to ensure that the regulations are debated other than by relying on the Government's good will and their acceptance of a debate on a prayer.

The Minister will no doubt stress that the Government have every intention of ensuring that the first set of regulations are debated as we propose and therefore the new clause is unnecessary. We assume, being charitable souls, that even this Government, having, for example, halved the money going to the poorest mothers, do not intend that halved sum to stand in perpetuity. We assume that the Government intend to uprate the sum from time to time and, indeed, to table an amendment to assist them in that procedure. If the Government have that intention, it seems that the regulations that ensue should be treated as other uprating regulations and be debated under the affirmative procedure. If the Government have no such intention, the Minister can tell us now and we and the other place will know where we stand.

9.15 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Nicholas Lyell): The reason for making regulations subject to the affirmative resolution procedure is to provide adequate opportunity for Parliament to debate the issues. In this instance, however, the matters concerned have already been debated twice, once during the passage of last year's measure, and again on this Bill. It is a little difficult to imagine that the House will wish to go over the matter again in some weeks, rather than in months, as it is unlikely that new facts would arise from such a debate.

It is proper to point out that the mere fact that an amount of benefit is subject to an affirmative instrument is no guarantee either that the sums will change or that the matter will be debated. Obviously, it is always open to the Opposition to table a prayer and seek to have it debated. Bearing in mind the recent debates, it does not seem that

there is a strong case for this amendment, nor for an affirmative resolution of the House, should uprating arise in future.

Mrs. Beckett: I do not accept the Minister's argument. Should uprating be considered, it would be correct for the matter to be debated under an affirmative resolution. As happens from time to time in our proceedings, it may well be that the Minister did not previously recognise that this was the purpose of the debate. In order to give him time to consider further this reasonable proposition, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

Bill reported, without amendment.

9.17 pm

Mr. Major: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

This one-page Bill has already generated a few pages of *Hansard* over a rather short period and I do not think that I need add very much to that weight of paper now, not least because I suspect that Opposition Members who are scribbling on their pads wish to take up some of the time available over the next few minutes.

On Second Reading, I explained in considerable detail the background and objectives of the Bill. We have discussed several related and, thanks to the interventions of the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy), unrelated subjects in today's debate. It may be appropriate if I recap briefly on why the Bill is needed.

The present system of help with maternity and funeral costs is widely acknowledged to be in urgent need of reform. That, at least, is common cause across the Floor.

Mr. Frank Field: Increase, not reform.

Mr. Major: Not just increase; reform, too. The hon. Gentleman is entirely wrong. The system fails to give effective help to many people on low incomes who need assistance, while it provides a large number of small grants to people who do not need them. That is undoubtedly true. Even the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) with his well-known generosity with taxpayers' money will appreciate precisely that proposition. Therefore, we have proposed a much more realistic system, concentrating the available help on people on low incomes, whether in or out of work. I look for some acknowledgment from the Opposition Benches of the fact that there will be help for people in work as well as for those out of work, which did not previously apply. Even the hon. Gentleman must acknowledge that that is not a cut but a positive improvement in the available help.

Our proposals were outlined in both the Green Paper and the White Paper on social security reform in 1985, and were debated at length during the passage of the Social Security Act 1986, not least by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman), who is chuntering happily on the Back Benches.

Dr. Godman: Unhappily.

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman is unhappy. I am deeply concerned about that, although I must confess that it is not one of my life's ambitions to keep him happy, and no doubt he will say that I have not failed.

Parliament approved the essence of these proposals not long ago, and we are here this evening, as the House knows, only because it has emerged that a few vital words necessary to implement the policy that Parliament approved were inadvertently omitted from the 1986 Act. We thought that we had the powers necessary to carry out the policy that Parliament had approved. Subsequent events and advice from our wise friends the lawyers told us that that was not the case. It would clearly be wrong to overturn so soon what Parliament had approved because there were defects in the legislation. We have no intention of doing that or of jettisoning or delaying these much-needed reforms because of such a technical defect. The Bill is designed simply to correct that defect so that the report can proceed as planned.

When the Social Security Act was introduced, it provided, among other things, for a social fund to be set up. It provided for payments out of that fund to meet "maternity expenses; funeral expenses; and other needs". We singled out maternity and funerals for special mention for two reasons. First, we always intended these payments to be rather different in nature from other social fund payments. Decisions on many social fund payments will be based on a flexible approach to individuals in varying circumstances, something that the current supplementary benefit system signally fails to provide.

Decisions on maternity and funeral payments will be based on clear-cut criteria. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Birkenhead is interrupting regularly. We look forward to his intervention from the vertical rather than the seated position. If people meet the criteria that we are setting out, they will get the payment. *[Interruption.]* The House may get a speech from the hon. Gentleman, but it will not come if he keeps on interrupting me so that I take up too much of the available time.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): The Minister is goading my hon. Friend.

Mr. Major: Nothing is further from my mind, and the hon. Gentleman should know that.

When we first began to consider this matter, it was decided to refer separately in the Bill to maternity and funeral payments. Secondly, this formulation made it easier to introduce the social fund in two stages, with maternity and funeral payments starting in April, 1987. This has the advantage of providing us with a year's experience of operating the social fund before it takes on its new and novel responsibilities, in April 1988.

Those were the proposals that we put before the House last year, and we spent many happy hours, upstairs and downstairs, debating this. The House will be relieved to know that I have no plans to go over all that ground again. On Report, we strengthened the provision for reviews of disputed decisions with the introduction of social fund inspectors. We gave this unexpected novelty, responding to the concern that had been expressed. The Bill was amended in the other place at the end of June to provide that all social fund decisions should be based on regulations and should carry the same appeal rights as other social security benefits.

As the House knows, we did not feel able to accept those amendments in total, because they would have replaced what is clearly a better and more flexible system with one that, for most social fund payments, would be rigid and inappropriate. However, we made some changes in July in response to the concerns that had been expressed. We further strengthened the provision for reviewing cases with the appointment of a social fund commissioner, and we recognised the special nature of maternity and funeral payments in the social fund by

[Mr. Major]

making them, unlike other social fund payments, based on regulations decided by adjudication officers and subject to the normal appeals procedure.

Dr. Godman: The Minister may or may not remember that I have asked several questions about the social fund commissioner. For example, I asked from where he or she was to be recruited. Is this to be an internal appointment within the Department, or is the person to be brought into the Department from elsewhere?

Mr. Major: I have just explained that the matter that we are discussing this evening is based upon regulations that are to be decided by adjudication officers and that it will be subject to the normal appeals procedure. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman's question goes a little wider than the subject that we are debating this evening, and I must leave my response to it to a more suitable time.

The changes that we have in mind were approved by Parliament, with the result that the Social Security Act 1986 now provides that payments may be made out of the social fund

"to meet, in prescribed circumstances, maternity expenses and funeral expenses; and to meet other needs in accordance with directions given or guidance issued by the Secretary of State."

In this context, the term "prescribed" means

"specified in or determined in accordance with regulations."

The next step—I can reassure the House that this history lesson on the background to this Bill is coming to an end—was for those regulations to be laid. We did that on 16 December. They aimed to give effect to the policy, well known to this House, that was made clear during the proceedings on the 1986 Bill—that is, that effective help would be directed to people on low incomes, with a flat rate sum for maternity and payments for the full, reasonable cost of funerals.

That is the substantive concern that has guided the propositions that we have put before the House from the time of the Green Paper onwards. The Bill seeks to ensure that those propositions may be carried into effect. It is designed to correct the defect that arose in the redrafting of the Bill last July and that was spotted at the time that the regulations were submitted to the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments. The Bill corrects that defect and ensures that the reforms can proceed in the way that we planned. I commend the Bill to the House.

9.27 pm

Mrs. Beckett: The Opposition remain concerned about the inadequacy of the provision that will be made under the Bill. The Minister's argument went nowhere near convincing us that we were mistaken. He said again this evening that the maternity grant would be realistic and referred to it as concentrating the available help on low-income families both in and out of work. He failed to notice—although I acknowledged this in my opening remarks on our first amendment—that help will be made available through the social fund to a wider group of people, but I pointed out then—and I remain convinced now—that to make help available to a wider group when one is halving the amount of help that is made available to anybody who manages to make a claim is not exactly generous. It means that, although a wider group among the poorest may be able to claim, they will receive far less. I fail entirely to understand why the Minister imagines that that will be welcomed by the Opposition.

We have always questioned why these payments should be made under the social fund. That thought came to my mind when I heard the Minister explain how the treatment of these payments under the social fund will differ from the treatment of other claims and payments under the social fund. The Minister referred to the fact that there are separate arrangements for appeal and for adjudication. When he replies, I hope that he will clarify that point.

The Minister also referred to the fact that there will be special rights of appeal, but I understand that, under the regulations as they were originally drafted and laid, the right of appeal is to exist only in relation to the specified circumstances under which such a payment is to be made—in other words, to whether someone is entitled to a payment, not to whether the payment is adequate. That seems to be only half an appeal.

I wonder whether it was fully realised in the other place when the Minister's noble Friend made the concession that the amount of the payment could not be queried, but only whether any payment should be made. It is a rather curious matter, because we well remember that in the earlier debates on these issues it appeared that the Government's main position was that a truly independent appeal could not be allowed for most of the items claimed under the social fund. That was because a truly independent appeal would have to look at each claim on its merits and would be bound to bust the Government's cash limits. The Government keep telling us that this part of the fund is not cash limited. If that is the case, why is it not possible for the appeal system for this part of the fund to stand on all fours with the present appeal system?

My hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) spoke about the social fund commissioner. I cannot call to mind any information about where that commissioner may be appointed from, but I can tell my hon. Friend that, from answers that I have received, it appears that the social fund inspectors that he will appoint will be drawn from names given to him by the Secretary of State, and that the inspectors will be subject to directions by the Secretary of State, though only to the advice of the commissioner. If the Minister thinks that that is an independent system of appeal, his view of what is independent is typical of this Government's view, and it is not a view that would be shared by people outside.

We are worried about the lack of understanding, even in this House, of how this part of the social fund will work. I notice that on Second Reading two questions were raised about this matter.

Dr. Godman: These inspectors may have a modicum of independence, but surely they will be part of the career structure of the Department. We are not likely to encounter, or are we, non-conformists? In order to maintain their access to the career structure, they will conform.

Mrs. Beckett: My hon. Friend is right. I understand that it is intended that the officers will be nominated by the Secretary of State and will be subject to his orders. I cannot understand how anybody could think that that is an independent system of appeal.

As I say, two questions were asked on Second Reading about how this part of the social fund will work. I shall clarify the answers given and press the Minister on the information that he gave. One hon. Member asked the Minister if a grant for funeral expenses would be given to

someone who might be entitled under income criteria to one of the qualifying benefits—income support, housing benefit or family credit — but who was not claiming income support at the time. The Minister said—I do not think that I paraphrase him too much—that it would be in keeping with the spirit of the Government's proposals if such a person were entitled to reimbursement for funeral expenses. It might be in keeping with the spirit of the proposals, but it is not in keeping with the letter of the regulations. They quite specifically say

"in respect of the period"

a person has to be

"in receipt of supplementary benefit, family income supplement or housing benefit".

I should be grateful to the Minister if he could clarify this point, because his hon. Friend who asked the question might have been misled into thinking that the Government are being more generous than they are.

Another hon. Member asked about a widow who borrowed money from her son to meet a funeral payment and the Minister told him that such a person would not now need to do that. The Minister's reply was quite fascinating. Is he saying that the rules which apply now about single payments — namely, that if one has borrowed money and met an expense the need for reimbursement no longer exists — will not apply under the social fund? I think that this is the first time that such a suggestion has been made. I should be pleased to hear the Minister tell us that that will be the position, and I should welcome clarification from the Minister or from his hon. Friend. If the Minister is not saying that someone who borrowed money would be entitled to reimbursement, he seems to be saying that people will be more aware of their rights under the social fund than they were under the single payment scheme—even though they will not have more rights than they had before.

The hon. Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs Bottomley), who I am sorry to say is not in her place, said that it was perfectly all right to abolish the maternity grant and single payments in their present form. She said that it did not matter that single payments were being abolished because they were not at present claimed on anything like a sufficient basis. I accept the argument that single payments are insufficiently claimed, but it is not clear what magical transformation is expected to take place which will mean that people are much better informed and find it much simpler to make claims under the social fund than under the present system of single payments. This is apart, of course, from the detailed list of entitlements which go with single payments but which could easily be simplified if the Government were prepared to be rather more generous in their payments. A deliberate decision by the Government keeps these matters complicated. It is not necessary for them to be so complicated simply because they are set out in regulations.

I am especially sorry that the hon. Member for Surrey, South-West is not here. I should have warned her that if social fund claims turn out to be easier to make and people find it easier to claim and receive money than under the single payments system, the Government will take steps to abolish them at the earliest possible date. One reason given to us for the abolition of single payments is that too many people claim them and they are drawing too much money. The hon. Lady is probably mistaken in her basic point.

The whole concept of a social fund with a limited budget is deeply alarming. Not only the Opposition but almost all groups which are aware of and have commented on the Government's proposals are alarmed. On all other aspects of the social fund, matters are even worse than we were first told. It is now apparent that loans will be made only to someone who has been on income support for as long as six months. It is apparent that the Government envisage repayments of up to 10 or 15 per cent. of people's benefit being made. It is far from clear what will happen to someone who is judged by the social fund officers not to be in a position to repay such loans. It appears from what I have read of the Government's statements that the Government intend to rule that if a person is not sufficiently well off to repay a loan he will not get anything. I should be interested to know whether the Minister is able to clarify that point.

As in the social fund as a whole, we are seeing under the Bill a return to officers of the DHSS choosing, as their predecessors did in other agencies, between the deserving and the undeserving poor. We are seeing a step away from provision by right, with people having a clear and understood basis on which to claim. I do not say that they had a simple basis on which to claim. I recognise that the system has been inflexible, especially under this Government, but at least people were able to go through the check list of demands and make a claim as of right. Instead of that, we are back to people being asked to go to the DHSS and plead for charity. We remain convinced that these proposals are mean, divisive and damaging. We shall oppose them on Third Reading.

9.38 pm

Mr. Kennedy: I wish to speak briefly on Third Reading to confirm that my right hon. and hon. Friends will vote against the Bill.

Mr. Frank Field: Well done.

Mr. Kennedy: Both parties will be in the same Lobby.

Dr. Godman: We shall guide them.

Mr. Kennedy: I have completely lost the thread of my comments. I shall start again. I confirm that the alliance will vote against the Bill.

The most offensive aspect of the Government's actions is that, as I said on Second Reading, this will be the first in a long line of measures which will result in DHSS Ministers being told by their lawyers to rewrite the legislation or be hauled before the courts. They will have to return time and again to the Dispatch Box or to Committees bringing forward more and more alterations to legislation as a result of the social security reviews. This is but the tip of the iceberg.

The fundamental reform announced by the Secretary of State has ended up running into sand. It has been fundamental in the impact it has had on the most vulnerable groups in society but, as the Secretary of State knows, it has not been fundamental in the extent to which it has provided for a fairer, simpler, more efficient social security system.

For example, attention has not been given by Ministers to improving take-up levels. They have made some nods and gestures in that direction, but much of their determination has been to contain, if not to reduce, costs. However the Minister may try to dress it up, the Bill is a cost containment, if not a cost reduction, exercise. The Minister cannot have it any other way.

[Mr. Kennedy]

It is worth noting, for the purposes of the *Official Report*, what the Social Security Consortium has said. It has continued to raise, among other issues, the practical working of a cash-limited system; the proper definition of community care—for example, grants from the social fund; the unreasonable restriction that loans will not be available to claimants who have been in receipt of income support for less than six months; the issue of mothers under the age of 16 years that the Minister dealt with a few minutes ago, which remains outstanding; and the fact that the £80 level of grant is thoroughly inadequate.

All of these matters, and many others, including independent rights of appeal, remain outstanding, despite the fact that the legislation has been working its way through the system for over 18 months. It is unsatisfactory that, before we have implemented the reform wholesale, we are faced with pre-emptive legislation tidying up the mess which is already anticipated. It is not that the mess will be upon us once the system is up and running; it is in advance of that. Lawyers and DHSS draftsmen are foreseeing that the system will be chaotic. What we have experienced over housing benefit will be nothing compared with what we shall get from the social security reviews. There seems to be no comprehension of that among Ministers.

We have tried to improve the Bill, which may be a necessity in view of the Government's existing legislation, but it is highly offensive and throws up some of the glaring anomalies that the social security reviews will give rise to.

The maternity grant that the Minister is proposing is inadequate in real and cash terms compared with the level following the last general election in 1983.

The system for funeral expenses is not the most sensible system, and I reiterate the point made on Second Reading that it would have been more sensible to have a system with a flat rate payment, with an additional top-up at the discretion of local officers to help people at a time when they most need it. Any sums given could be reclaimed out of the estate of the deceased depending on the circumstances. In that way, much of the distress, which will inevitably take place, could be avoided. It would have been fairer and would have helped to target resources more effectively to those most in need.

The Government have been largely deaf throughout the social security reviews, and this one-page piece of legislation is a further example that that condition has not improved.

9.45 pm

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): I had not proposed to take part in the debate, but I have been surprised at how long the Bill has taken to get through the House.

I leave aside the reasons for the oversight in omitting the provisions from the Social Security Act, because I wish to examine the direct clash of political philosophies that the Bill produces. Conservative Members believe that those who can help themselves should do so and that we should assist those who cannot. The Opposition believe in a blanket pay-out for everyone.

The only common ground over the Bill is the agreement that reform is needed. The maternity grant has remained unchanged at £25 since 1969. It is a derisory sum for those of straitened means. The death grant of £30 has remained unchanged since 1967 and is a mere drop in the bucket for anyone who has to pay for a funeral. It is nothing to those who can afford to pay for a funeral and it is little help to those who cannot. That is why I believe that the Bill is necessary. The low level of the grants means that they are of little help to people in need. Giving the grant to everyone does not help those who really need the help.

I am pleased that the £80 maternity grant and the meeting of the reasonable costs of a funeral will not be subject to budgetary constraints. That is an important factor which must be made clear to those who try to denigrate the Bill. However, there may be discussion and dissent about the meaning of the words "reasonable costs". I hope that those who will have to interpret those words will be given clear and generous guidelines.

People who have to bury loved ones cannot run funeral costs through an audit. They are under emotional pressure and they may agree to various arrangements that may not be wise. I hope that the Government will issue guidelines to social security offices to make sure that undue pressure is not put on those who may have agreed to unsuitable arrangements.

I am surprised that one matter has not come to light in the debate. [HON. MEMBERS: "The hon. Gentleman has not been here."] I have read the various *Hansard* reports, because I have been approached by local pensioners' groups who have been exceedingly worried about the existing arrangements and have not been satisfied with a mere £30 death grant. People on low incomes have been decidedly worried about that grant and have been asking me for several years to press for an increase. I am delighted that the Government have introduced the Bill and I am surprised that the Opposition are trying to block it.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister, but I hope that the £500 savings limit will be increased. That limit is against our political philosphy. The limit should be higher because, as a comfort and security, people should be able to have more than £500 to set against a rainy day before they are asked to dip into their pockets. I support the measure because it is in line with the Conservative party philosophy of helping those who need it most.

9.51 pm

Mr. Frank Field: The Minister has considerable ability at the Dispatch Box. That ability has been deployed tonight, as on other occasions, to describe what this measure is about.

I wish to make a short contribution about the Bill's aims. In spite of the generosity of spirit with which the Minister introduced the measure, he was covering up an unbelievable cock-up by the Government. The Minister told us that our amendment was merely technical. If that amendment had been carried, a coach and horses would have been driven through the Bill. So much for it being a mere technical amendment.

Being also of a generous nature, I should not have drawn attention to that if it had not shown the Government's mean approach to our amendments in Committee. Had the Government accepted one of our amendments, which prescribed the levels of benefit, perhaps we should not have needed this squalid Bill. That was disguised by the quality, cleverness and adroitness of the Minister's tongue tonight. Despite all the wonderful talk from the Government Front Bench, claiming that this was a targeting measure, the Bill introduces a cut. Although some people will receive more than they might

have received under the previous scheme, overall the Government will save money to deploy elsewhere — perhaps in the social security budget. With a general election coming up, we do not need to guess where those savings will be made.

Although this does not appear in Roper's "Life of More", in the wonderful film on the subject there is a scene in our Great Hall after Rich has committed perjury. More goes up to Rich, picks up the chain of office round his neck and asks Rich what it is. Rich says that it signifies that he is Chancellor for Wales. More says to Rich that to lose one's soul for the world is one thing, "but for Wales?"

The difference between the Minister and Rich is that Rich did not know that he was doing wrong. The Minister knows that this is a squalid little measure that cuts benefit for large numbers of vulnerable women. The Minister lost his battle in the Department, but he still thought it worth fighting. It is a sign of hope for us that the Minister knows that the measure is wrong. I am sad to say that that hope will not be extended to many of our constituents.

9.54 pm

Mr. Nellist: This is a mean, despicable little Bill. It is significant that in the last two hours we have heard only one contribution from the Tory Back Benches, and that contributor obviously does not understand the debate. The Bill does not represent an extension or a reform of the rights of pensioners and expectant mothers, but imposes a cut in the benefits which they could expect to receive. It ends a statutory right to the present level of benefits and introduces instead a measure which, as has become crystal clear tonight, will be inadequate to meet their needs.

By means of the Bill the Tories are creating a generation of cash-limited children. We have talked about the £25 maternity grant, which was introduced in 1969, and we have heard that according to the Department of Health and Social Services the grant should be about £180. According to the Health Education Council and the Health Visitors Association, it should be about £400. According to some other sources, such as the *Daily Mirror* and the magazine that is entitled "Parents", the grant should be anything up to £700. All that is on offer this evening at the late stage of Third Reading is £80 for expectant mothers. Hundreds of thousands of mothers on low incomes who are not entitled to or not claiming the qualifying benefits will be denied even the £80 that we have discussed.

It is worth remembering that one in four households has a woman as the sole or main breadwinner of the family because of the number of single parents and the consequences of mass unemployment. I happen to think that the best approach would be to increase the level of real national minimum wages so that people have enough money in their pockets from their earnings to enable them not to have to rely on handouts from the Government. That would be a better approach than merely to increase the level of benefits.

The introduction of the Bill will exacerbate another problem. If a mother is unable to receive from the state the necessary level of support when the first baby comes along, there will be the insidious progress of the bounty bag in our hospitals. The manufacturers of the various aids to women, of nappies through to bottles, for example, will provide one each of a small number of items as samples as a form of almost subliminal advertising in the hope that they will buy the material later when they leave hospital.

The Minister has refused to say how the sum of £80 has been arrived at. Instead, he has referred to pressures on the Department over the allocation of funds. He has not really denied the argument that has been advanced forcefully by myself that the sum was based on the number who would be entitled to the grant and the amount set aside for the purpose. The second was divided by the first and the result was £80.

The Bill perpetuates the Social Security Act 1986 in continuing to place the main burden of the rearing of children on the individual, especially on the working class woman. I consider—I believe that my view is shared by the majority of Labour party members—that the burden should be borne by society as a whole. In other words, we need a universal system of statutory maternity grants that are sufficient to allow children to be given an adequate beginning and reflect genuine costs. Such a system should be coupled with maternity and paternity leave and an expansion of nursing and child care so that both parents can experience the joys and responsibilities of bringing up children.

These reforms should be wedded to an increase in wages for midwives and other supportive staff such as health visitors who are disgracefully low paid by the Government. The first step should be to get rid of the Bill. If we are talking about a massive expansion of health and social services, we need a change of Government. Finances should be under the control of a Labour Government so that we can provide the help that British working people so richly deserve.

9.58 pm

Dr. Godman: It is plain, as my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) has said, that, despite the Minister's courtesy, fluency and intellectual skills, the Bill is a dismal correction of a squalid Act. The social fund is designed to save money. In translation, that means that the poor will become poorer.

The Minister referred to a realistic maternity benefit, yet he is talking about £80. Two examples of many from my constituency involved sums that were just short of £200. These payments were received by young pregnant women. In other words, claimants will receive less, not more. They will have the right to appeal, for what that is worth. There is no independent system of appeal. However, the inspectors and the rather curious animal that is known as the social fund commissioner could redress grievances. The commissioner or the inspectors may examine recent records of maternity grants and single payments awarded to claimants. Were that to happen, applicants in, for example, Strathclyde would receive payments much higher than those envisaged by the Government. However, that, I regret to say, is a wholly unrealistic view. The present system, as I have said on many occasions, is both cumbersome and obscure. It causes a great deal——

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Social Fund (Maternity and Funeral Expenses) Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

Social Fund (Maternity and Funeral Expenses) Bill

Question again proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

Dr. Godman: The present system causes a great deal of distress to claimants, especially those new to social welfare. I am curious about the social fund commissioner. I understand that young women in these circumstances will obtain loans from the social fund only, when they have received benefit income support for six months.

The proposals stand out in stark contrast to the Government's promise of tax cuts. Here we see the Government at their pernicious worst. We see tax cuts alongside benefit cuts. That, surely, is a disgrace to the very many poor people in Great Britain.

10.2 pm

Mr. Haynes: I shall be brief, bearing in mind that another debate will follow this one. I suffered in Committee, and I am suffering once again from some of the squalid things that have been pushed out by Conservative Members.

I wish to refer to a couple of Right-wing Tories who spoke without having listened to the debate. They made a contribution and got it on the record in the hope that their constituents would take note. They were participating in the debate but had not been here to hear every word, unlike other hon. Members who have sat here during the debate this evening. What we have witnessed from the Tories is a disgusting state of affairs. *[Interruption.]* It is no laughing matter either. I remember the things that the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) had to say. I hope that he will have to respond to his constituents, especially to the women of this nation, because the mickey was being taken out of them when some of my hon. Friends were speaking.

When a Labour Government return to office, my hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) will be the Minister for Women and will do a first-class job on their behalf. We do not want any cracks from Conservative Members about that.

We have been talking today about the cradle to the grave. I make no bones about that. I heard the horrible things that were said by Tory Members in Committee and they have been repeated tonight.

Some Conservative Members have arrived back in the Chamber. One of them, the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth), made a quick intervention, nipped off and now he has come back.

On the question of the death grant, I have experienced over many years as a member of a local authority——

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): Speak up.

Mr. Haynes: I never thought that I would hear that from a colleague.

When I was a member of a local authority we had to find places in a graveyard for a pauper's funeral. I believe that the proposals in the Bill will mean that there will be more paupers' funerals.

Mr. Major *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Haynes: The Minister shakes his head. He is not living in the real world. I do not know where he and other Conservative Members go when they are supposed to be back in their constituencies. I get around, talk to people, and find out about their serious difficulties. It is high time that the Minister and his colleagues did the same.

In my constituency people experience many financial difficulties, especially over burials. I am trying to say to the Minister—I hope that he will take it in—that I have reason to believe, because of my experience, that there will be more paupers' funerals in the future.

Mr. Major *rose——*

Mr. Haynes: I shall not give way. It is 10.2 pm, and we are moving on to a prayer. We are cutting the time for that debate—

Mr. Major *rose——*

Mr. Haynes: The final point that I wish to make— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Major *rose——*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Mr. Major.

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman feels deeply about these matters. Let me try to put his mind at rest. The underlying thrust of what we are seeking to do is to make sure that the very poorest people who have no resources get not just £30 but the full cost of the funeral. That is the point. The hon. Gentleman's remarks about proper funerals are 100 per cent. wrong.

Mr. Haynes: The Minister is stipulating the type of funeral. It is not fair. He is forgetting those who will not qualify. They are struggling right now. I tell him this: he will have a good send off. *[Laughter.]* That is funny. The Minister can afford to have a good send off. There will be many more like us who can afford a good send off, but we represent people who are struggling in this world. They are struggling in our constituencies— *[Interruption.]* I am making my point for the people whom I represent, and other hon. Members have been making their points for the people whom they represent. So the Minister can come off it. He can take the grin off his face. He can think seriously about what we are saying. There will be serious difficulties with the Bill. I tell the Minister this. When we get back into office, we shall repeal it.

10.7 pm

Ms. Richardson: As we have gone beyond the time that we expected, I shall be only a couple of minutes. If this miserable little Bill, which was introduced because of some draftperson's mistake — *[Laughter.]* Conservative Members laugh at everything, do they not? It is all funny to them. If the Bill has done nothing else, it has highlighted the meanness of the Government when it comes to dealing with vulnerable people, as so many of my hon. Friends have said. When pregnant women should be having as relaxed a time as possible, in a difficult period in their life, as well as in the delightful period when they have the child, the Government make it difficult for them to get the benefits and goods that they need to make their life as easy as possible.

Nobody has ever suggested that the £25 grant did not need uprating. We have always said that, but to do it in the way that the Government have and in effect cut down the benefits that have now accumulated for pregnant women and babies, is not the way to do it. We need decent benefits as of right — not means-tested. As my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist)

said, we need decent maternity and paternity leave. I add one thing to his package — parental leave. The Government have consistently blocked it for goodnesss knows how many years, and doubtless will go on blocking it until we have blocked them out of government.

With that package of benefits and leave, one can at least ensure that the child and the parent have a decent beginning, with a new little life. Apart from the Government, not a single body that I have met likes the Bill or any other aspect of the Social Security Act 1986. [HON. MEMBERS: "Name them."] If anyone can name a body that likes the Bill, I shall be happy to hear it. I cannot find a single person or body of people who believe that the social fund in particular is not really the begging bowl. People believe that we are returning to those days which we had all thought had gone for good. With this measure, as with others, the Government are taking us back into Dickensian days.

10.9 pm

Mr. Lyell: The hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) said that this debate took us from the cradle to the grave. I commend the hon. Gentleman to listen to his hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field). I agree with the hon. Member for Birkenhead on one point, although, if I may politely do so, I quarrel with him on another. I agree with his comment — and I noted his words carefully because they are the essence of the Bill — that an increased number of people in the targeted groups will get more than they would have received previously. That is the essence of the Bill. We are righting the wrong which the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) has just acknowledged existed——

Mr. Frank Field: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Lyell: No, I shall not give way.

Mr. Field: Give way.

Mr. Lyell: I shall not give way.

Mr. Field: My point was that while some women will gain more, the very poorest will gain less. So much for the Government's targeting.

Mr. Lyell: Mr. Speaker, you will recall that that is not exactly what the hon. Gentleman said.

The hon. Gentleman was running down Wales in the form of its Attorney-General in the 1550s and he referred to "A Man for all Seasons". I commend to the House my hon. Friend the Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major) who is indeed "A Man for all Seasons" not only in this Bill, but, as the House will remember, especially in matters of exceptionally cold weather. Although the Bill has had its chilly moments I shall answer one or two points raised in the debate, especially those raised by the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett).

The hon. Lady raised the matter of appeal and adjudication and asked whether there would be a right of appeal simply on circumstances and whether that was adequate. Of course, in relation to maternity payments, the matter is to be prescribed. The Bill is before the House so that that payment may be prescribed. However, there will be a right of appeal on circumstances and on the amount given against the listed items in relation to funerals and, as has been emphasised, the allocation for funerals to the targeted groups is far more generous than the previous provision.

In connection with appeal, I commend to the House, the comments made by Lord Denning in another place. He saw the proposal coming from this House as being simple, fair and just machinery. He said that he had seen a lot of over-complicated, over-lengthy and over-costly procedures and he commended the appeal procedures to the other place.

With regard to the point about the widow who borrowed and who would no longer need to do so, my hon. Friend the Minister of State was right. It is now possible to give full help with a funeral. The rules will be simpler and it will be easier for people on low incomes to get help. That is of the essence of the Bill. The Bill targets help on those who have the greatest need.

Mr. Beckett *rose——*

Mr. Lyell: Problems are being tackled on the principle of concentrating help where it is needed. The level of help given to families and individuals in these wider categories will, for the great majority, be a significant improvement upon what they receive today. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 174, Noes 117.

Division No. 85] **[10.15 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bigge-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Bruinvels, Peter
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Crouch, David
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fletcher, Sir Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gower, Sir Raymond
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Hicks, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Jackson, Robert

Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Maclarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mather, Sir Carol
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Murphy, Christopher
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Waller, Gary
Wheeler, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Francis Maude and
Mr. Michael Portillo.

NOES

Allen, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Proven)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Crowther, Stan
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Dewar, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Haynes, Frank
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Marek, Dr John
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Rayneford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Ms Jo
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rose, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sheerman, Barry
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Strang, Gavin
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Tinn, James
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
Winnick, David

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Don Dixon and
Mr. Ray Powell.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Dockyard Services (Devonport) Order

Mr. Speaker: I understand that it will be for the convenience of the House to take both prayers together.

10.25 pm

Mr. Martin J. O'Neill (Clackmannan): I beg to move,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Dockyard Services (Devonport) (Designation and Appointed Day) Order 1986 (S.I. 1986, No. 2243), dated 15th December 1986, a copy of which was laid before this House on 18th December, be annulled.

As you have said, Mr. Speaker, with this it will be convenient to take also the following motion:

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Dockyard Services (Rosyth) (Designation and Appointed Day) Order 1986 (S.I. 1986, No. 2244), dated 15th December 1986, a copy of which was laid before this House on 18th December, be annulled.

This debate has been long awaited, as this is the third occasion on which we have tried to introduce it on the Floor of the House. It is of considerable importance to the 20,000 workers whose terms and conditions of employment will be altered from 5 April 1987. The two orders give effect to the Dockyard Services Act 1986, define the areas of the dockyard and the functions to be carried out within them, and specify the designated date of 4 April 1987 as being the date on which contractorisation will begin.

The prayers mark the end of a lengthy process which has involved consultation and Committee stages. At no stage has any of the pressure from the Opposition made any major impact on the Government's thinking or attitude. The fact that the Government are alone in support of the principle of contractorisation, that they have been discredited by Committees which have within their ranks majorities of Conservative Members, that the Public Accounts Committee, the Defence Select Committee and unanimous opinion outside the House have been against the proposal, has mattered not a whit to the Ministry of Defence.

Section 1(6)*(b)* of the Act, concerning the legal, economic and social implications of transfer for the employees is the most sensitive part. It was the subject of what has come to be known as the Denning amendment. In another place, Lord Denning was able to insert a provision placing responsibility on the Government to secure some form of consultation. That form of consultation has been wholly unsatisfactory. In last Monday's debate on the Royal Navy, the Minister clearly knew how many redundancies would result from contractorisation and how many contractors Babcock had in mind, but he would not tell the House and he will not tell the trade unions. It makes a complete mockery of the Government's responsibilities to disclose the economic and social implications of the transfer if the unemployment consequences are not made clear.

The unemployment consequences affect not only those who work in the yards and their families, but the communities and those who will work in the yards under different auspices—apprentices and those in the course of study and training. Those awaiting retirement are unclear about the circumstances surrounding their pension rights. The condition of employment of those who may be taken on by the new employers because of skill shortages may be different from those already in employment. People in one yard may be operating under different terms and conditions of employment from those in another, because there will be no responsibility on the employers to ensure similar standards of pay and conditions and, most importat, pensions conditions, in the two yards.

This debate comes late at night after two false starts, and I do not wish to take up the time of the House unduly, because I know that a number of right hon. and hon. Members wish to speak. I imagine that there will be few voices heard in support of the orders. Among the work force and the management there are grave forebodings about the effects that these two orders will have as they make the way clear for contractorisation.

In every debate that we have had on this topic, we have been united on the outstanding contribution of the work force in times of crisis and national emergency and, the commitment of both the management and the workers to contribute their best to the realm. For many of the workers, this has been an expression of their life's work —a continuation of service to the country that started in the Navy. For others, it is simply the maintenance of proud family traditions.

The willingness to sacrifice, as shown at the time of the Falklands conflict, can never be translated into pounds and pence. It cannot be translated into the profit and loss accounts about which the Government have been speaking, especially for the contractors who are out to make a fast buck, or for the loss of jobs of those workers for whom the accountants have no further use.

These two yards have given public expression to a rare combination of effort and skill. From the labourers and the skilled craftsmen to the designers and managers, from the deck hands to the admirals, civilian and sailor alike have combined to make sure that those who defend our shores, in whatever craft, have done so in the knowledge that no effort or expense has been spared. We believe that our seamen are the best in the world, and they are entitled to the best. Whether the new consortia can maintain those high standards remains to be seen. We hope that they will.

It has to be stressed that the disruption and uncertainty that this wretched Act and these orders will cause in the communities can end only in undermining the work of the yards. The work force feels that the consultative processes have not been fulfilled, and the communities sense that their futures are in danger, so the Government should think again about the whole scheme. Let us make sure this evening that we force the Government to think again, by voting against the orders. That will ensure that we have the time and the opportunity to look for a better solution than the crazy scheme of contractorisation which is embodied in these orders.

10.33 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Archie Hamilton): These two orders refer respectively to the Devonport Royal dockyard and the Rosyth Royal dockyard.

The Dockyard Services Act does not specify the dockyard employees who will transfer on vesting day. Rather, section 1(1) defines the "Qualified dockyard service employees" as those persons employed in or in connection with the "dockyard undertaking" in the Civil Service of the Crown on such day as the Secretary of State appoints by order. The "dockyard undertaking" is itself defined as the provision by the Crown of "designated dockyard services", which are to be designated by order.

[Mr. Archie Hamilton]

It follows that the question of who are qualified dockyard service employers is answered by reference to the designated services.

The orders do three things — they designate the dockyards that are to be affected, they designate the dockyards services—that may in future be provided by contractors, and they appoint the date for the purposes of determining who are the qualified dockyard service employees. With your agreement, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall consider those three aspects in that order.

First the dockyards. After all the debate which there has been on the Government's policy for the dockyards there can be no hon. Member who is not aware that the dockyards in question are those at Devonport and Rosyth. During the consideration of the Dockyard Services Bill the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Denzil Davies) and his hon. Friends were concerned that the arrangements in the Bill could be applied to any other dockyards that might subsequently be created. To address this concern, and with the agreement of Opposition Members, the Bill was amended to provide that the only dockyards which could be designated by order were

"those dockyards which are Royal Dockyards when this Act comes into force."

So the Act put the matter beyond doubt, and the orders respectively designate Devonport royal dockyard and Rosyth royal dockyard.

I turn now to the designation of the "services" in the orders. Since the wording in both orders is identical, my comments apply equally to both dockyards in this respect. As I have said, the designation of services is in order to facilitate the transfer of the appropriate staff. Section 1(1) of the Act refers to the services as being

"for or in connection with ships or vessels or related establishments in the service of the Crown, provided at such dockyards, as may, . . . be designated by the Secretary of State by order."

When the Bill was considered last year, my hon. Friends referred to the services that it was proposed should in future be provided by contractors. The orders are based very closely on the information provided before, but examples of particular equipment and services have been included. As hon. Members can see, the work of the dockyards has been described under five headings.

The first will be recognised as the main task of the dockyards—that of repairing, maintaining, refitting and modernising ships and vessels in the service of the Crown. The words "ships and vessels" are apt to include both surface ships and submarines. Since the latter include nuclear submarines, it might be for the convenience of the House if I were to repeat what my hon. Friends have made clear on many previous occasions.

The managing company at the dockyard will be required to comply, in the same way as does any other contractor employed on sensitive defence work, with the stringent security rules that have existed under successive Administrations. Also the company will be required to operate under the terms of a nuclear site licence issued under the Nuclear Installations Act 1965. Radiological protection of the work force will be as high a priority in future as it is now, and the contractor will have to satisfy the Health and Safety Executive that the legal obligations set out in the Ionising Radiation Regulations 1985 are being met.

As those hon. Members who have been closely involved with the dockyards will know, their work is not limited to repairs and refits of vessels. They also repair, maintain, overhaul and test naval equipment and machinery, and examples of such equipment are given under the second heading. The third refers not only to work on machinery equipment used in the dockyard but to that used in

"establishments related to ships or vessels in the service of the Crown".

As the order makes clear, it is not the work of other establishments that we are intending to transfer to dockyard contractors but rather work that has been traditionally carried out at the dockyard for other establishments. This includes the work of maintaining the equipment for naval training establishmenrta, or, for example, cranes, generators and high pressure air systems for other fleet and civil shore establishments.

Some dockyard staff who have been employed on such work for other establishments — particularly those furthest away — are expected to remain in the civil service and to be transferred to the strength of the establishments concerned. Discussions on this are being held with the unions involved.

Under the fourth heading are listed examples of the naval equipments which the dockyards manufacture, and these speak, I believe, for themselves. Finally, the list refers to support and utility services, and mentions in particular compressed air, gas, electricity and water. These are services customarily provided by the dockyards, not only for themselves but also for the naval base and other local establishments and ships alongside. It is sensible that the dockyard should continue to provide such services.

I turn now to the last of the three aims of the orders — the appointment of a date for the purposes of determining who may be considered qualified dockyard service employees.

As hon. Members can see, paragraph 4 of the orders seeks to appoint that date as 5 April 1987—that is to say, the day before the planned vesting day of 6 April 1987. It is proposed, therefore, that those employees to whom the arrangements apply who are employed immediately prior to vesting day will be transferred to the contractor. As the House will know, there are some 17,750 industrial and non-industrial employees in the dockyards. Between now and the appointed day of 5 April 1987, some 400 staff at Devonport and 320 at Rosyth are planned to transfer from the dockyard to the naval base commander, remaining in the Civil Service.

As my right hon. Friend the then Minister of State for Defence Procurement said during the consideration of the Bill, we have made our proposals known to transfer to the staff of the managing director of the dockyards those employed in the dockyard laboratories. Similar arrangements will be made for those who work in the pay offices who will be required to deal with future dockyard personnel and for catering staff and estate maintenance staff. The trades unions are aware of these intentions.

Before leaving the matter of the appointed day, I can inform the House that my right hon. Friend will shortly be writing to the trades unions summarising the considerable amount of consultation which has already taken place with them and setting out his proposals for the final stages of consultation in the period leading up to vesting day on 6 April 1987. As soon as my right hon. Friend has written, I shall place a copy of his letter in the Library of the House.

Since most of the employees' conditions of service transfer unchanged, there is, we believe, sufficient time between now and vesting day for any outstanding consultations to take place. We hope, therefore, that the trades unions will now consider the way ahead speedily and approach the series of meetings we are proposing in a positive and constructive manner.

I have explained the content of the two orders and the reasons for them. They carry forward in a realistic way the Government's plans in respect of the future management arrangements for the dockyards which, as the trades unions have now heard direct from the most senior Royal Navy officers concerned on the Navy Board, offers the best way forward for the Royal Navy, the dockyards, the work force, the taxpayer and the local regions. The Government believe that there is no better way forward and that is why we ask the House to pass these orders.

10.41 pm

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): The Minister's lack of enthusiasm for this legislation was quite obvious from the way that he rushed through a civil servant's brief. This is a fairly miserable day, but I suppose we ought to ask the Minister to justify the decision that he has announced to the House. There is no better starting point than a document, issued on 8 October 1986, which sets out the timetable for evaluating the bids for the two dockyards. I shall deal only with Devonport. The document says that the contract negotiations should be completed by "early December 1986" in order to meet the vesting day which was planned for 6 April.

The contract negotiations have not been completed, and here we are debating in February what should have been agreed in December. The contract, which was to be signed at the end of December, has still not been signed. The parallel running was to start in early January, but I understand it has just started. Any objective look at the Government's own timetable, published in October, shows that the vesting date for Devonport should not be 6 April. The Government find themselves in great timetable difficulties but they are intent on pushing ahead regardless.

The Minister must answer a few questions. The first one is about pensions. On vesting day will the dockyard work force know about its pension arrangements? Will any substantive negotiations be completed about pension arrangements? Will the workers know the detail of their redundancy payments, or will these matters be left until after vesting day, to be settled when the members of the work force are, technically, no longer civil servants? The men have a right to know the Minister's intentions and the House, which has been ignored throughout these proceedings, has at least the right to put to the Minister that it is extremely unfair to the work people to leave the matter over for decision.

It is true that the Royal ordnance factories have not settled the matter, but they were going through a transition and the workers there were still under Government control when their pension arrangements were being left open. The dockyard work force will no longer be under any form of Government control and will be the responsibility of the agency. We are entitled to be satisfied about those issues.

It is my judgment, for what it is worth, that if the unions are not given ample time for the negotiations — they cannot be rushed through between now and 6 April — they would be wholly entitled, if they saw fit to do so under the terms of the legislation and of the obligations to the European Community under its various laws, to take the Government to court. If the unions take that decision, they will have my full support.

I am glad to see the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Clark) in his place. He was the first to sense the right contractor. On 2 October, the Plymouth *Evening Herald* made a perceptive comment on the hon. Gentleman: "Clark backs American Bid". We all wondered whether the hon. Gentleman had some special line and whether, being a member of the Government, he was going to tell us something. The trouble is that he backed the wrong American company. He was after Foster Wheeler. There is little point in a Plymouth Member of Parliament, or anyone else for that matter, spending his whole time criticising Brown and Root, which has been given the contract. Whether we like it or not, for some months at least, we are saddled with the company and Plymouth will have to make the best of it.

As for the Libyan connection, it is a fact that it is not illegal to carry out work for the Libyan Government. It is strange that at Vickers Barrow the part of the new submarine build that cannot be seen by any American is the propulsion unit, yet an American-owned company will be responsible for repair and refit involving the propulsion unit of our nuclear submarines. Anyone who believes that the United States navy would dream of giving a contract for the nuclear propulsion unit of any of its submarines to a British company is not living in the same world as me. It is an extraordinary fact that we keep United States personnel away from the propulsion unit of our nuclear-powered submarines, yet we pass the repairing and refitting to an American-owned company, Brown and Root.

As I said, we have to live with Brown and Root. How it handles the work force in Plymouth, the wage negotiations, the pension arrangements and redundancy payments is of crucial concern to us. I make it clear that my job is to defend my constituents' interests and I shall treat Brown and Root with an open mind. If the company treats the work force well, negotiates well and takes account of the fears of Plymouth city council, Devon county council and Cornwall county council, I shall treat it well, too. I am not in the business of rubbishing that company. The problem is the Government, and I am certainly in the business of rubbishing them.

I still do not know the position of the hon. Member for Plymouth, Drake (Miss Fookes) on the preferred option. When we first considered these matters on 2 December 1985, she said that she could not support the Government. The hon. Lady said:

> "If the Government cannot change to the plc fallback position, which is my preferred option".—[*Official Report*, 2 December 1985; Vol. 88, c. 46.]

The hon. Lady then seemed to vacillate about supporting the agency management proposal, provided that it was the dockyard management—the very people whom we were told were not capable of running the dockyard efficiently, which was why we needed to introduce agency management. When agency management for the dockyard management was not granted, we heard little from the hon. Lady about the Government-owned plc. I do not know whether she is in favour of the agency management or whether she will vote for the order. Perhaps we shall hear from her.

I shall deal with one of the points put forward by the hon. Member for Drake. She said, mistakenly, that one

[Dr. David Owen]

cannot have a trading fund outside the Civil Service. As I made clear in the Navy debate, it is possible. I made it clear that it was possible to do so in a memorandum to the Select Committee on Defence. The only option to which the Government would possibly be converted now would be the Government-owned plc. One gathers from the management of Brown and Root that it is a ritual. No one in Plymouth believes that there is any consultation, but on 13 February the trade unions will be told that Brown and Root is the preferred contractor. I do not intend to go through the pretence of believing that the Government are listening to the debate in terms of the substantive decision. I assume that they will go ahead and railroad the date of 6 April. I reiterate my serious complaint that, as I understand it, none of my constituents know what their pension arrangements or redundancy terms will be.

It is unfair and unrealistic to pass on the redundancy commitments after a period of time to the agency management. Those redundancy commitments must be underwritten in full by the Government. To do anything else would be to treat these loyal people who have served the nation extremely well, very poorly indeed. This is a miserable order on a miserable Bill, and 6 April will be miserable day in Plymouth.

We have not discovered from Brown and Root how many redundancies there will be. It has said that there will be no more than 2,000 compulsory redundancies, but that does not give us any clue as to how many jobs will be lost in Devonport dockyard; nor does it give any clue as to how many jobs will be lost in a knock-on effect. The working assumption seems to be that over a 10-year period we will lose 6,000 jobs from the general management work force and another 2,000 to 3,000 jobs in knock-on effects in Plymouth. If that is the case, the present level of Government assistance for Plymouth to attract new industry is woefully insufficient.

I strongly urge the Minister to try to persuade the Secretaries of State for Employment and for the Environment to take more active measures to help the economy of the far south-west. We will find it difficult to replace those jobs in a male, skilled industry without greater help for the far south-west. This decision alone should justify the creation of a far south-west development agency, and the sooner the better.

10.52 pm

Mr. Robert Hicks (Cornwall, South-East): Even at this late stage it is worth emphasising that the provisions contained in the orders relate to the defence and security of the nation and to the servicing of the Royal Navy in particular.

We have rehearsed the arguments as to why changes are necessary, and few people would dispute that fact. The majority of people recognise the changing nature and volume of the type of work undertaken in the dockyards. It stems from the fact that there are fewer ships in the Royal Navy, refits occur less frequently and less time is taken for refits.

In recognition of that fact, in April 1985 the Government published their consultative document. There were three options, but one of them was euphemistically called the preferred option—the introduction of agency or commercial management. Everything that the Government have undertaken since April 1985 has been with that sole objective in mind.

I expressed the fear at the outset — which I have repeated on a number of occasions inside and outside the House — that the system of agency management is speculative and unproven. There is no comparable defence model anywhere in the world on the scale required for the administration of our royal dockyards. The defence and security of the nation is what we are considering. A preferred contractor has been announced for Devonport, which is the consortium comprising Brown and Root, the Weir Group and Barclays de Zoete Wedd, which currently holds 45 per cent. of the shares.

Some people have argued that with the announcement of the preferred contractor some of the anxieties and uncertainties felt locally, not only by the work force but by those in the local economy, have come to an end. I suggest that the contrary is the case. We are not certain what the projected employment figures will be. We know that the core programme represents about 40 per cent. of the existing workload at Devonport, but we do not know what proportion of the remaining 60 per cent. that will go out to commercial tender will in fact come back to Devonport. However, the Ministry of Defence has told the successful contractor that it can expect a maximum of only 50 per cent. Even if that maximum is achieved, this means that Devonport will take only 70 per cent. of its present volume of work.

The third variable is the amount of outside work that the dockyard will attract from the commercial sector. Given the depressed state of the Merchant Navy and of shipyards generally, one cannot be optimistic. Devonport represents a microcosm of British industry and technology —no doubt the same is true of Rosyth. Almost every skill and craft is represented there. With uncertainty hanging over it, perhaps for the next five years or so, there is hardly a conducive environment in which to seek new contracts.

I have been an hon. Member for 16 years and I have never witnessed such unanimity of purpose and outlook locally. The trade unions and the majority of the work force are apprehensive about developments, and the city of Plymouth, supported wholeheartedly by the Devon and Cornwall county councils and the three local district councils all express doubts and fears about the adverse effects of the change. It must be unique in the far south-west for such a consensus of view to exist. I am saddened that the Government have not taken note of that unanimous expression of local concern and anxiety.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I hope that hon. Members seeking to catch my eye will remember that the debate must end at 11.30. It might be sensible to try to share out the time.

10.53 pm

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): As it is three years since the privatisation proposal of Mr. Peter Levene was first divulged to the House, more than two years since the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) first announced his intention to go ahead with privatisation, and more than a year since we started debating the Dockyard Services Bill in Committee, the least that the

House had a right to expect was that the problems that we identified at the outset about retaining a minimum strategic capability in the dockyards, about retaining British control, about the workload and about apprenticeships would have been resolved before the Minister decided to proceed with the orders before us.

After more than seven months in Committee in both Houses, after the work of 19 working parties set up by the Minister and his colleagues and after the period of promised consultation, we are no nearer a solution to all the problems that led a civil servant from the Ministry of Defence to describe the Government's plan as the high-risk option for the maintenance of the fleet, that led the Public Accounts Committee to say that on financing it had received from the Ministry of Defence the worst evidence that it had received in this Parliament, that led originally to universal condemnation of the Government's proposals and that have led the trade unions to regard the consultation process instigated by the Ministry in the past few months as nothing more than a charade.

I leave aside the question of who controls Devonport and Rosyth. In its rush to transfer the dockyards from public to private control, the Ministry of Defence has created conditions under which it has become possible to transfer the dockyards from British to foreign control. In its rush to privatise, the Ministry has failed to secure proper guarantees for jobs, apprenticeships and workloads.

When the operation began, we were assured that the dockyards would retain a strategic minimum reserve for emergencies to do exactly the sort of work which they had to do during the Falkland campaign. Yet now, one of the virtues that the Minister argues for the contract that he has signed is that there is no agreement on a strategic minimum reserve or capability.

One of the documents produced for the work force says that the figures on which the Ministry is working do not assume that additional manpower will be retained as a strategic reserve. There are no strategic reserves, no safeguards and no guarantees. The same applies to jobs, workloads and apprenticeships.

The Government have accepted an obligation under the Dockyards Services Act that they will spell out the legal, social and economic consequences of their actions. They promised only a few weeks ago that they would consult the trade unions about the consequences. The transfer concerns the number of people who will have jobs and the number who will lose them, and yet the Minister has gone ahead in the last few days and signed a contract agreeing to finance a number of redundancies at Rosyth. Tonight he refuses to give a figure, despite obligations under the Act, and claims that the figures are commercially confidential.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I shall give the figures at the end of the debate.

Mr. Brown: Perhaps the Minister will tell us how many redundancies have been agreed at Rosyth and are likely to be agreed at Devonport and why there have been changes, even in the last few weeks, in the workload which the contractor is taking over at Rosyth. Will he also confirm that the cuts in the workload are not because of an inevitable rundown in the work at Rosyth or at Devonport, but because of pressures on the defence budget, because of an extension of intervals between refits, because of reduced engineering standards and because of everything that we feared would be the consequence of privatisation?

The only possible argument in favour of the Minister's proposals, which were accepted so readily by the Admiralty Board, is that they will save money.

Even if we accept that after 1990 some savings might be made, will the Minister accept that the figures are speculative? If we accept that the transitional cost could be spread over a number of years and not be an immediate cost on the defence budget; if we accept that the transfer of the pension fund is a book-keeping exercise and does not involve more than £200 million in the first instance, the Minister must accept that over the next three years, when the Department's budget is under pressure, we shall lose £15 million by privatisation at Rosyth—and much more at Devonport. That is before the Minister finds that he is held to ransom because of unprogrammed refits by monopoly suppliers, who will get their price, not the Minister's price.

The proposals arise from dogma and ideology. They mean lower standards, less Government control — although the Government foot the bill—higher costs for the Navy and the Treasury, and a reduction in standards and jobs in the dockyards. We have a loyal work force, dedicated civil servants and a concerned and supportive community, yet the Government have betrayed the workers. The workers legitimately claim that they have been let down by successive Ministers in the Department and are being transferred forcibly to the private sector. They are to be forcibly transferred to the private sector. The national interest is to be subordinated to that of commercial gain. I hope that the election comes sooner rather than later so that this insidious proposal can be immediately reversed.

11.4 pm

Miss Janet Fookes (Plymouth, Drake): I shall make my contribution to this debate rather shorter than I would have wished, bearing in mind the need for other hon. Members to take part in what is essentially a short time in which to consider these orders.

In passing, however, I register a protest at the way in which this matter has been delayed on no fewer than two occasions. This is the third bite of the cherry, which causes considerable inconvenience to hon. Members and to those outside who take a close interest in these proceedings. We must make a decision now and end uncertainty. From that point of view I welcome the order although I wish to confine my remarks to the order that affects Devonport.

I register surprise at the fact that the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) does not appear to find my views on this subject sufficiently clear. I thought that I had made them very clear at various stages throughout the time that we have been considering this matter and especially during the Royal Navy debate a week ago today.

I have always believed that the dockyard should be taken outside the Civil Service. In other words, I have always broadly favoured privatisation in whatever form that may take. I had reservations about the agency management, and I registered those in the House. The turning point for me came when the management team put in its bid, because I felt that that dealt with many of the worries that I had expressed. I am sorry that the right hon.

[Miss Janet Fookes]

Member for Devonport did not feel able to join me in at least welcoming with enthusiasm that bid when it came along.

There is no lack of logic on my part in giving the management bid my support, because my point has always been that local management has never had full powers to manage and that the whole web and set-up of the Civil Service was a brake upon efficient activities. That was in no way to decry the work of the work force or the local management. Therefore, I was pleased when it became clear, when the preferred contractor was announced, that the management bid, as I call it, was to be subsumed within the winning bid and that there is therefore a strong likelihood that Mr. David Johnston and his team will be incorporated into the management and will still be responsible for the day-to-day running of the dockyard. That seems to me to be a good move.

I shall deal briefly with certain aspects of Brown and Root. Much has been made by some hon. Members tonight of the number of redundancies. Surely the number of redundancies will depend on how much outside work that consortium or any other consortium brings in when —*[Interruption.]* I am not sure why that is a cause for laughter. To me it is a key issue. Knowing that there are always ups and downs with Royal Naval work, it makes sense to try to embrace within the dockyard work from outside sources. I cannot tell how much will be brought in, but it is obviously of the greatest importance to the economy of Plymouth that as much should be brought in as possible.

I should have thought that a consortium with Brown and Root in it would have a reasonable chance. It is not without significance that that company is receiving the Queen's award for industry. This award is not handed out to any old company, and it is an indication of Brown and Root's stature.

I have also made particular inquiries of Brown and Root, and I have discussed with the chairman the issue of Americans in the dockyard. It is a Royal Navy rule that no foreigner, no American, can view our nuclear systems, any more than the Americans allow us to view theirs. That will continue to be the case and the Brown and Root consortium will be happy with that. It has no objection to that rule.

I understand also that Brown and Root is keenly interested in and concerned for apprentice training, and we have already had some good news about the number of apprentices who are to be taken on this year in Plymouth. I trust that that will continue to be the position. Members who take a close interest in Plymouth will know that I have always been especially keen and interested in the apprentice centre. I hope that it will become a focus for more and more training, not less and less.

At the short time at my disposal I wish to say that I do not share the gloom and doom that has been peddled by the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill), or the guarded approach of the right hon. Member for Devonport. I hope that once the decision is made there will be an opportunity to take a constructive approach and to make a real go of the new structure.

11.16 pm

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): I shall not necessarily take up the remarks of the hon. Member for Plymouth, Drake (Miss Fookes), but I shall address myself to the subject of Brown and Root during my contribution to the debate.

There is a great rumour circulating in Scotland that the Lord Advocate has been approached with an order, which will be accompanied by a surcharge, to find one Tory in Scotland who is in favour of the measure. I suspect that there is only one—he will be a reluctant supporter—and that is the right hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger), the Secretary of State for Defence. Wee George is a pragmatic gentleman and I do not believe that he would have visited such a proposal on the House and the country. Throughout the contractorisation of the docks we have yet to hear one Tory Back Bencher who is willing to support and speak up for it. I do not believe that there is one who would be willing to do that.

It would seem that there is a serious deficiency in the order. It designates a number of services, including repair, maintenance, refit and the modernisation of ships and vessels in the service of the Crown, but there is no mention anywhere of main engines or nuclear reactors. That is a serious deficiency in an order of this sort. By their very nature, main engines and nuclear reactors for SSNs and SSBNs are quite apart from anything else. Is the order deficient or is the omission deliberate?

I have great respect and regard for the hon. Member for Drake, but I advise her not to look at the crystal ball when she can read the book. The thrust of the Brown and Root operations in the United Kingdom is oil related. The concept of an oil-related rig yard is to have a core labour force and to add to it when orders come in. I know something of the yard because I went to Nigg bay during its early operations. It is part of Highland "Fab", of which Brown and Root is a major participant. It may be suitable for oil-related work but it is not suitable for a dockyard operation, where we are looking for continuity of skill and workpeople. I offer that to right hon. and hon. Members who represent Devonport.

I am not sanguine about Rosyth. I also prefer to read the book and not look at the crystal ball. We are told that Mr. Allan Smith, the managing director designate, is already in the yard. He seems to be quite an honest fellow. in an interview that he gave a few weeks ago in *Spotlight*, he said:

"I have a contention which I believe is fundamental. You should never tell an employee a lie."

That is good so far as it goes. We are told that later on we are likely to get the redundancy figures. Mr. Smith says:

"There is no need for anything other than natural wastage and, in certain cases, limited voluntary redundancy.

Enforced redundancy is a last resort which we would wish to avoid under any circumstances."

As Mr. Smith is in the yard, I presume that the consultation process will become meaningful and that someone will have told the Minister what redundancies he can communicate to the work force.

Further on in the interview, Mr. Smith is asked:

"Will pay scales within the new company be substantially different from the present Civil Servant rates?"

Employees want to know that. Mr. Smith's answer is interesting:

"Pay scales will be related to the success of Rosyth Dockyard. All employees' earnings are related to company earnings. I don't see that anyone would allow us to cut wages."

There is no guarantee in that. There is no guarantee that the remuneration of the work force will be commensurate with what it is now earning. That is a bit of sleight of hand. It is not a lie that Mr. Smith is telling, but it is certainly something that is a little different from the truth.

There is also the concept of bringing new work into the yard. Mr. Smith is asked:

"There is a great deal of mistrust of commercial management in the Dockyard, how will you overcome those fears?"

Mr. Smith tells us that new work might be coming in. But there is no guarantee about the type of work. He continues:

"Babcock Thorn have every intention of coming into the Dockyard and staying, not just for the seven years of the Term Contract, but beyond that although a second Term Contract would have to be negotiated."

Mr. Smith looks forward to other further work, but it is not clear what it will be. Essentially, the dockyard has a guaranteed workload with a core programme. It is always much easier to attract new business if one already has a heavily loaded core programme. One has a yard with a core programme, and trying to attract new work that may not be related to it is the problem. There are real dangers in that.

Anyone who thinks that this cock-eyed idea will facilitate servicing and keeping the Navy afloat, which is the sole purpose of the dockyard, is stoned out of his tiny mind. It is significant that the Minister cannot move from his brief. He shows the flexibility of mind of someone learning to read by rote. He has no idea whatsoever. I doubt whether he has ever been near a dockyard. I advise him, for goodness sake, not to attempt to go near Rosyth because I would not be willing to guarantee his well-being.

11.19 pm

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): After listening to the Minister tonight, the House will know that I will be the next Member of Parliament for South Hams. We need a swing of about 45 per cent. and anything is possible after listening to the Minister's comments tonight.

Last Monday the Minister referred to the savings that the exercise would produce. He said that more than £320 million would be saved over the next four years and more than that thereafter. Not one person in Devon, Cornwall or anywhere else in the country would believe that. The Minister did not say where he got the figure from; he probably just thought it up. It was not in his brief tonight. However, perhaps he has the figures in his brief for the redundancies.

The redundancy figure has varied. Brown and Root estimated the figure to be 2,400 on one occasion and 3,200 on another. The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) on Monday and again tonight has estimated the figure to be about 6,000 plus about 2,000 indirect job losses. The hon. Member for Plymouth, Drake (Miss Fookes) does not know how many redundancies there will be but hopes that they will all be taken up by private work in the dockyard. We hope that the hon. Lady is right. However, I guess that she is not. The industry is in such a state that the amount of work coming from that source will be very marginal indeed.

I want to thank the Minister for making the arrangements for my visit to Devonport dockyard just before the Recess. I must report to the hon. Member for Drake that the people I met did not have anything nice to say about her. She will have to get off the fence before the next election because everyone in Devon and the local authorities in Devon and Cornwall are opposed to the Government's actions at the moment——

Miss Fookes *rose*——

Mr. Hamilton: And many Conservative Members are opposed to this including the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Clark) who says that he will try to get extra money from the Government because of the enormous loss of jobs that will result from this exercise.

This exercise will be the biggest issue in the election in the south-west, including my Bill for the establishment of a south-west development agency which I asked the right hon. Member for Devonport to support. He refused, as did the hon. Member for Drake. That was a wonderful idea to resolve the unemployment problems of Devon and the south-west, but Conservative Members turned it down, with the exception of the hon. Member for Devon, North (Mr. Speller) who agreed to sponsor my Bill.

The consequences of the Government's policy will be devastating in terms of jobs and job opportunities in the south-west. Every hon. Member from the south-west is aware of that. If they had the faith in their convictions that they should have, they would join the Opposition in the Lobby to support the workers in their areas by opposing the Government's dogmatic approach to a very important issue of national security.

11.22 pm

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): If there is anything more disgraceful than the proposition that the Government have put before us, it is the way in which they have pushed this measure through the House. I remember vividly on the Second Reading of the Dockyard Services Act 1986 that the former Secretary of State for Defence, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) did not even turn up to move the Second Reading.

On this squalid occasion tonight, the Minister has not answered any of the arguments and the Government have not carried through any of their commitments. They should have consulted properly with the workers concerned. Those discussions and negotiations have been a farce, as everyone who has read the reports in the *Western Morning News* and elsewhere will be aware. This has been an absolutely disgraceful way in which to treat people who have given tremendous service to this country for nearly 400 years.

The Royal dockyards have served the nation and the Navy and have been publicly owned. The Government have, without any consultations or commitments to the people involved, wrecked the whole of that process. They cannot even tell us how many people will be thrown out of their jobs and what will happen to those people when they have lost their jobs. They cannot tell us what will happen to the royal dockyards when that happens. As soon as the Labour party wins the next election, we will scrap this measure which should never have been brought before the House.

11.24 pm

Mr. Archie Hamilton: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall reply to the debate.

The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) wanted details of the information given to the work

[Mr. Archie Hamilton]

force on pensions. A consultative document on pensions and an outline of the proposed new scheme were sent to the unions in April 1986. The non-industrial unions attended a joint meeting in August 1986 to which the industrial unions were invited. Industrial and non-industrial unions declined to partake in further discussions until a meeting this month. Our intentions for the new pension scheme are clear. We shall set up schemes which replicate the Civil Service scheme as closely as possible. The consultative document fully illustrates that intention. I hope that the unions will come and talk, which so far they have been slow to do. It is in their interests.

On redundancy, we have always made it clear that redundancy requirements under the new employer would take full account of reckonable service in the Civil Service pension scheme, would reflect Civil Service redundancy procedures and would pay equivalent levels of benefit. Babcock Thorn and Devonport Management Ltd. have given undertakings, written into the term contract, that existing Civil Service terms will not be changed without negotiation and agreement with the trade unions. A paper setting out those arrangements in more detail will be passed to the unions later this month. I hope that they will come to discuss it.

I told the hon. Members for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) and for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) that I would tell them about job losses rather than redundancies at Rosyth. Under the Government-owned plc, we forecast 1,160 job losses during the first four years. Since we signed the contract with Babcock Thorn, it has said that it expects no redundancies in the first year, because the workload is such that it will be unnecessary. The company believes that there will be job losses of 200 a year for the next three years. So they will be running at half the rate that we expected under a Government-owned plc. It is expected that those losses will be covered by natural wastage, although there will be some voluntary redundancies. It is highly unlikely that there will be compulsory redundancies.

If either of those hon. Members was my Member of Parliament, I would resent the alarm and despondency that they are trying to spread among the work force at Rosyth. It is the most appalling nonsense, when one considers that those job losses will be covered by natural wastage. What on earth do they think they are doing?

As the House will know, for Devonport we have only a preferred contractor, although my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State wishes to make a decision on the future of Devonport later this month. In those circumstances, we cannot come to a firm agreement over job losses there.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Does the Minister accept that 600 redundancies in an area of high unemployment are wholly unacceptable and unnecessary? What is the status of the assurance from Babcock International about the first year of the contract?

Mr. Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman did not hear me. They are not 600 redundancies; they are 600 job losses, and most will come from natural wastage. It is a great pity that he cannot even hear.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South-East (Mr. Hicks) reflected the worry at Devonport. I accept that, but we must remember that what is worrying the work force at Devonport is the falling workload of the naval refitting programme. That would be a problem whatever management we had at Devonport. We have always believed that if we introduced private contractor management to Devonport, much more work would be brought in. My hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Miss Fookes) also mentioned that. We cannot avoid the problem of a declining workload. Far fewer ships are coming in to be refitted, and we must amelioratethe job losses whatever form of management the dockyard has. My hon. Friend the Member for Drake was right to say that we must make the decision now. I am glad that she does not share the gloom and doom of Opposition Members. She is right not to.

Apprentices were mentioned. This matter is an important criterion when assessing the bids. Both Babcock Thorn and Devonport Management Ltd. have stated a commitment to apprentices and the continuation of training. Babcock Thorn intends to take on about 100 at Rosyth in 1987 and Devonport Management Ltd. intends to take on about 125 or 150 in 1987 and much the same in the following two years, according to its preliminary indications.

The hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) has great ambitions in the west country, as we can see, but I am not sure that they are shared by many right hon. and hon. Members. My hon. Friend——

It being half-past Eleven o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 15 (Prayers against statutory instruments, &c. (negative procedure)).*

The House divided: Ayes 104, Noes 152.

Division No. 86] **[11.30 pm**

AYES

Alton, David	Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Anderson, Donald	Foster, Derek
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Foulkes, George
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*	George, Bruce
Barron, Kevin	Godman, Dr Norman
Beckett, Mrs Margaret	Golding, Mrs Llin
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*	Hancock, Michael
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*	Hardy, Peter
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*	Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Caborn, Richard	Haynes, Frank
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*	Hicks, Robert
Campbell-Savours, Dale	Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*	Howells, Geraint
Clay, Robert	Hoyle, Douglas
Clelland, David Gordon	Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann	Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*	Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Coleman, Donald	Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*	Kennedy, Charles
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*	Kirkwood, Archy
Corbett, Robin	Lamond, James
Crowther, Stan	Leadbitter, Ted
Dalyell, Tam	Leighton, Ronald
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*	Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*	Livsey, Richard
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*	Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Dewar, Donald	Loyden, Edward
Dixon, Donald	McDonald, Dr Oonagh
Dormand, Jack	McNamara, Kevin
Douglas, Dick	Marek, Dr John
Dubs, Alfred	Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Eadie, Alex	Maxton, John
Eastham, Ken	Maynard, Miss Joan
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*	Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Fatchett, Derek	Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*	Nellist, David
Fisher, Mark	Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon

O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Redmond, Martin
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sheerman, Barry
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Strang, Gavin
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
Winnick, David

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John McWilliam and
Mr. Allen McKay.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Bellingham, Henry
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Crouch, David
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Hickmet, Richard
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lilley, Peter
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
Madel, David
Major, John
Marlow, Antony
Mather, Sir Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Murphy, Christopher
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Norris, Steven
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Wheeler, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Michael Portillo.

Question accordingly negatived.

PRIVILEGES

Ordered,

That Mr. Attorney General be discharged from the Committee of Privileges and Mr. Solicitor General be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

Education Reorganisation (Sutton)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

11.40 pm

Mr. Neil Macfarlane (Sutton and Cheam): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary for giving time this evening to answer a debate about a subject of enormous concern to my constituents in Sutton, Cheam and Worcester Park. That concern is felt equally by my hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman), who hopes to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I have finished my speech.

I fully appreciate the locus under which the Department of Education and Science has to operate when considering these proposals, which ultimately come to the Secretary of State. I fully understand the quasi-judicial role of my hon. Friend and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State over the next few months. These are early days in considering the radical and debilitating options that have been offered to Sutton's residents by the alliance council.

I ask my hon. Friend to look at the problem facing parents in Sutton as they try to fathom the reasons behind these damaging, destructuve and extreme proposals. Let no one be in any doubt—they have all the hallmarks of Socialism, reminiscent of the 1970s, when the Lib-Lab pact did so much to undermine the country. Education in Sutton is now being undermined, and, if the residents do not make their feelings known, we are in for a decade of educational chaos, rather like those years in the 1960s, when other local education authorities embarked on a programme of chaos, thus generating some of the disasters in national standards.

In Sutton, we have not had disasters until now. My hon. Friend knows well that Sutton has always had a high success rate, and any analysis will show it to be one of the top three education authorities. I find it impossible to comprehend the thinking behind these options—if any thinking has been done. It seems on the face of it to be pure political dogma. Before I offer that theory, we must look at the individuals involved in encouraging our people in Sutton to follow them down the path of social destruction. The social consequences on the community are the first item that we have to consider.

It is revealing to note that in the ranks on the new alliance council in Sutton there is a plethora of social scientists. I will not be uncharitable about that profession, because there is no doubt a worthy function for it. However, I fear that not much social science has gone into their thinking on the options paper.

There is widespread anxiety in the teaching profession over these issues. All the work done by our excellent head teachers and their staffs will be lost, and in Sutton we have a devoted teaching force. There is concern among parents, especially those whose youngsters are in primary school or just embarking on their secondary schooling. Anxiety in the home quickly affects youngsters, and any talk of major reorganisation tends to destabilise the community. By the nature of things, it will be prolonged, and thus have an enormous impact. There is no progress in schools when there is reorganisation. There is simply regression, and that is bad for the confidence of the teaching staff, parents and pupils. It undermines many socio-economic factors. Many people are put off moving into the area; housing prices can be affected; it can undermine commerce and industry in many ways. Therefore the social factors are absolutely critical. There are many areas that we have to look at, but social factors are an essential element in our consideration of these problems.

As for financing such a project, it looks as though Sutton has a looming problem over rates. I predict huge increases for my constituents before the year is out. One knows that the authority is increasing the number of staff and that it has retained the Marketing and Opinion Research Institute to handle the public consultation exercise for rates and local services. Even without the cost of education reorganisation, which admittedly would be over a period of years, we are heading for the title "Big spender of the south." I must warn my constituents to read the small print of the questionnaires very closely, because these papers are not what at first they appear to be.

We can take comfort from the words of Lord Diplock in a judgment in 1983. He said that a rating authority owes a duty to its ratepayers to deploy the full financial resources available to them, to the best advantage. Equally we know that section 76 of the Education Act 1944 also has the effect that a local authority is required to avoid "unreasonable public expenditure."

The Audit Commission has also made some important observations, detailing some of the steps that should be taken. It said that the authority should

"determine the cost of doing nothing in financial and educational terms before any options are considered."

It goes on to say that rumours are more damaging than reality and that the council should release a discussion paper outlining the problem and the cost of doing nothing and also publish the full range of options, with the cost and educational options spelt out for discussions before the local education authority decides what course to adopt.

I noted, too, in the publication "Education" dated 3 October 1986 an article by the deputy chief education officer of Devon, a county that is also going through this particular reorganisation scheme. He said:

"It is necessary in any but the simplest scheme to have a second round of public consultations where the preferred option of the council is presented."

Time will tell whether we have a local authority in Sutton that recognises expertise and advice. At the moment it appears to be hell-bent on pursuing political dogma.

I turn to the third category that I want to examine—education in Sutton. It is a vital area for consideration. I must emphasise that my grave concern about the future of our young people in no way hinges upon grammar schools versus comprehensive schools. In Sutton we have a range of schools. Anybody who studies the prospectus of the local authority will see that that is so. I am anxious to retain the system that has served us and that is serving our youngsters so well. I cannot stress that point too strongly. It is serving us extremely well.

I said at the outset that our record is in the top echelon of the nation's educational achievement. The statistics show it, from the Inner London education authority's statistical survey to the recent Sheffield survey that was published not only in the *Daily Express* but in *The Times Educational Supplement,* which carried it on 30 January 1987. Indeed, in its statistical bulletin 13/84 the Department of Education and Science shows, in a regression analysis, that Sutton is the only local education authority among the London boroughs to have better actual passes than that forecast, or "fitted", by my hon. Friend's Department.

I shall quote the two extremes. I refer to the assessment of the London borough of Sutton by the Department of Education and Science. It said that no graded results should reveal a percentage of just under 8 per cent. Actual passes were just on 6·5 per cent. At the other extreme an assessment made by the Department of Education and Science suggested that those with one or more higher graded passes at O level or CSE should be 57·7 per cent. Sutton achieved over 60 per cent. In the category of one or more passes at A level, the suggested forecast figure by the Department is 18·8 per cent. Sutton achieved nearly 25 per cent. That gives some idea of how successful and effective we are.

Those statistics are open to everybody, wherever they may be, to review. Anybody who studies them will conclude that we have excellent results under the present system. Her Majesty's inspectorate report of 1983 recognised the all-round competence of Sutton's education system. I offer one comment from that report. The report says:

"The secondary schools are pleasant, well-ordered institutions, with hard-working and committed teachers. The courtesy and discipline of pupils and students is impressive —the achievement of pupils is generally satisfactory. Pupil achievements in public examination is good and teachers in Sutton's secondary schools are more likely to be graduates than the national average."

That is not a bad series of recommendations to begin with. If we had more time in this debate I could enhance the evidence for the local education authority to note. I and Conservative councillors in Sutton have tried to elicit from the council what reasons it has for wishing to smash a good system. It is clear that reorganisation is not necessary as a result of falling rolls because the local education authority, under Conservative leadership, and under the education committee chairmanship of Mrs. Mavis Peart, took some difficult and unpopular decisions and closed four schools, taking out all the surplus places that it was necessary to take out. That was consistent with the need to allow for the expansion in rolls in the early 1990s. That fact is well acknowledged by the district auditor. In stark contrast, many other local authorities have had serious problems with falling rolls and surplus places and some are having a second and third reorganisation within 15 years. That is destabilising, but not so in Sutton's case where stability was acknowledged by the careers inspectors.

Another argument that I have heard used in favour of reorganisation in the council is what it claims is lack of opportunities for a wide range of subjects in either grammar or secondary modern schools. This is arrant nonsense, because Greenshaw comprehensive school in my constituency offers 23 CSE opportunities. Cheam high school, which is a secondary modern, offers 29, and it is the same throughout the borough. There is an enormous range of opportunities. We have linked courses with the college of further education, TVEI, CPVE and so on. There is a broad curriculum and to say that there is not is to demonstrate ignorance. It is disappointing to note that the council has refused to offer the status quo as an option in its so-called consultation. That is against the advice of just about every organisation and, indeed, the circular from the Department of my hon. Friend the Minister. I rather feel that someone in Sutton's education committee is, perhaps, pursuing a personal vendetta against his or her former school and that that is the target of the strategy. I notice that twice in council the alliance voted against further consultation on a preferred option and my evidence so far is that this so-called consultation is meaningless, because parents have to unravel nine listed options, all of which, inevitably, mean change. Where is the leadership?

There are so many disadvantages to reorganisation on comprehensive lines and even more with a break at 16 years of age. First, we would have total chaos and disruption for a minimum of 10 years. Secondly, the proposals will have a disastrous effect on the staff. Thirdly, quite clearly the proposal is wholly unnecessary in the education sense. Fourthly, there will be more mixed schools, which most parents dislike. Fifthly, schools will become larger, and social problems are likely to start. Sixthly, there will be endless disruption for pupils between the ages of 16 and 18 as the local education authority tries to set up a tertiary college, and the problem will be compounded if the denominational schools refuse to join in.

The cost of building a new tertiary college or an extension at Carshalton college of further education would seem never-ending to the ratepayer. Disruption would be prolonged for the student. That is further evidence of the total disarray that we could expect — all because the alliance says that it has a manifesto commitment. Judging by the results of the election last May, I tend to doubt that.

The alliance says a great many things about its reasoning for going comprehensive and encouraging 11 to 16 schools. It says that the 11-plus is too restrictive on the primary school curriculum and that it dominates work in all primary schools. That is nonsense. What does a child have to undertake — merely two verbal reasoning tests and one practical test? Head teachers are under instruction not to coach or pressure the children. The alliance claims also that the 11-plus puts pressure on parents. It says that it is considering banding—testing children at 11 plus— to allocate different abilities fairly between comprehensive schools. Furthermore, I am told that the chairman of the education committee has said that the alliance does

"not object to tests — just to the pressure it puts on parents".

The alliance council says also that the 11-plus is not an accurate prediction at that age for sorting out children into different schools and thus influencing future careers. That, too, is nonsense. Pupils can and do transfer, but not many do because, in general, parents are totally satisfied and do not seek a transfer for their children.

I note with growing anxiety further pronouncements from the alliance group. It says that secondary modern schools cannot provide a full range of advanced level subjects and that, therefore, the pupils are at a disadvantage. That is absurd. Non-selective pupils do not, on the whole, have the ability to take advantage of a full range of A-levels. At the Greenshaw comprehensive school, non-selective pupils in the main do not take the A-level courses. They opt for CPVE, one-year re-sits, CET, and so on. In addition, pupils can transfer from one school to another or to Carshalton college of further education. The message that must be put across to the alliance council in Sutton is that, nowadays, at 16 years of age there is a choice.

The council tells us that the comprehensive system offers all pupils similar opportunities. Our present system offers all those same opportunities. The non-selective schools have the same range of subject options as the comprehensive school. Changing the system will not make any difference. The alliance council also says that our

[Mr. Neil Macfarlane]

grammar schools offer solely academic subjects. That is patently absurd, as my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State understands. Business studies, TVEI, CDT are part of a grammar school curriculum.

The council's paper, which is now available for analysis, states:

"This leaflet invites you to help decide the future pattern of secondary education in Sutton. The move to a comprehensive system is a tremendous opportunity to make real improvements in the quality of our schools and the Council is determined to let everyone have a say in how this can best be done.

The Council decided to move to a comprehensive system".

Where is the choice? That is the alliance council's interpretation of consultation. It is decided by the committee; it is now a fait accompli. There is nothing liberal about these proposals.

But the most challenging issue facing teachers and parents is the alliance proposal in the paper to go for a tertiary college for students at age 16. This is a major break with our tradition in Sutton. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will recall that, in the early part of this decade, I chaired a research group inquiring into education for 16 to 19-year-olds which was composed of all interested organisations. I do not think that that system is suitable for Sutton. It may well be suitable in some large metropolitan cities. A break at 16 may be beneficial. But at Sutton parents, teachers and head teachers will have to think very carefully before caving in to pressure from the alliance for this wholly new dimension to education in Sutton.

The future position is made clear in the option paper:

"In Sutton the tertiary college would be based on the present site and premises of Carshalton College. The premises would have to be extended and would cater for about 2,200 full-time equivalent students instead of 1,400 as at present."

Everything that we read about the proposals is a mess. If the proposals go ahead, I foresee a barren wasteland for education in Sutton, especialy in the 16-19 years age group. I see that for an entire generation and beyond. These proposals are disreputable, deceitful and designed to destroy.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Does the hon. Gentleman have the consent of the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Mr. Macfarlane) and the Minister?

Mr. Forman: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I shall speak briefly in the strongest possible terms in support of my hon. Friend and his carefully researched speech. The proposed reorganisation of Sutton schools will be damaging, disruptive and expensive. It will be damaging to schools of proven worth, such as Wallington boys school and Wallington girls school. It will be disruptive to an excellent local education system which caters successfully for the full range of pupils and educational needs. It might force certain schools, such as Wilson's, which are an asset to the borough into the private sector. It will be expensive. Estimates of the cost of going comprehensive vary, but the figure could be as high as £12 million to £14 million for building works alone.

My hon. Friend has already quoted the chairman of the local education committee, who claims that the move to a comprehensive system will provide a tremendous opportunity to raise quality. I strongly dispute that. The quality of Sutton schools is high. Parents have been in the habit of moving into the borough for the quality of education provided, and the only consequence of such a damaging reorganisation will be to lower standards and demoralise pupils, staff and parents alike.

It is pretty good cheek for Mr. Penneck, the chairman of the local education committee, to end his message in the popular version of the consultation document by saying:

"Your Council wants to hear from you".

What a slippery contrast to the local election campaign of last spring, when the alliance parties were careful to disguise their true preference for a comprehensive system.

What is on offer now to parents and pupils is nothing more than a damaging, disruptive, Socialist-inspired plan to go comprehensive smuggled into the realm of political possibility in a false alliance prospectus. At the least, local people should be encouraged to go out and cast their votes for the existing system, the status quo. Any other outcome would be an act of gratuitous vandalism by local alliance and Labour politicians, who should know better if they claim to be in touch with local feelings. I appeal to them to think again before it is too late. If they do not, they will bear a heavy responsibility for which the vast majority of local people and my constituents will not forgive them.

12.3 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Bob Dunn): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Mr. Macfarlane) on obtaining this early Adjournment debate on the proposed reorganisation of secondary education in the London borough of Sutton. I am grateful, too, for the comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman). I should also like to pay tribute to my good friend, Mrs. Mavis Peart, for all the good work that she has done in the past and will continue to do in the future in the London borough of Sutton. I am aware that this issue is currently stimulating a great deal of local interest and discussion.

As my hon. Friends know, a standard set of procedures comes into play when a local education authority wishes to change the organisation or pattern of provision of its schools. These procedures are laid down by sections 12 to 16 of the Education Act 1980. Briefly, the requirements are that when a local education authority or, in certain circumstances, the providers of a voluntary school wish to establish, discontinue or alter the character or size of a school they must publish proposals explaining their intentions.

During the two-month period following publication, it is open to interested parties to submit objections to the proposals. If such objections are made, or if the Secretary of State has given appropriate notice to the local education authority, or if the school concerned is a voluntary school, the proposals fall to be decided by the Secretary of State and may not be implemented without his approval.

I should also mention that, although it is not a requirement of the Act, it has been established in the courts that those likely to be affected by proposals have a legitimate expectation to be consulted before such proposals are made. I understand that Sutton LEA has now reached that stage. It has issued a consultation paper seeking observations on a number of options with a view to publishing proposals later in the year.

When the Secretary of State is deciding on proposals to establish, discontinue or alter schools, he is under a general duty to act fairly. In other words, he must judge each proposal or set of proposals on its merits, taking into account both the arguments of those making the proposals and the views of those objecting to them.

My hon. Friends will, I am sure, understand that it is important for the Secretary of State to avoid prejudging the issues involved in such proposals. They will not, therefore, expect me to say anything about the proposed reorganisation that is the subject of this debate. I hope, however, that they will accept my assurance that I have listened very carefully to what has been said tonight, and that the points will be taken into account, along with other representations that we may receive, before a decision is reached on any proposals that may come to my right hon. Friend.

I thank my hon. Friends for the great interest that they have shown in the issues that they have brought before the House. I note their remarks most carefully.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at six minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 10 February 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

MESSAGE FROM THE QUEEN

INCOME TAX

The Vice-Chamberlain of the Household reported Her Majesty's Answer to the Addresses, as follows:

I have received your Addresses praying that the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Mauritius) Order 1986 and the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (France) Order 1986 be made in the form of drafts laid before your House.

I will comply with your request.

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRIGHTON MARINE PALACE AND PIER BILL *[Lords]*

As amended, considered; to be read the Third time.

GEORGE DONALD EVANS AND DEBORAH JANE EVANS (MARRIAGE ENABLING) BILL *[Lords]*

JOHN ERNEST ROLFE AND FLORENCE IVIEN ROLFE (MARRIAGE ENABLING) BILL *[Lords]*

Read a Second time and committed.

MASONIC TRUST FOR GIRLS AND BOYS BILL

Read a Second time and referred to the Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills.

Oral Answers to Questions

SOCIAL SERVICES

Dental Charges

1. **Mr. Wrotch** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether his Department has studied the effect of the current level of dental charges upon patients seeking dental treatment.

The Secretary of State for Social Services (Mr. Norman Fowler): We continue to monitor on a regular basis the demand for dental treatment. The number of patients coming forward for dental treatment continues to increase.

Mr. Wrotch: Has the Secretary of State studied closely the statistics from the Dental Estimates Board showing that the current level of charges is a serious disincentive for people seeking dental treatment? Is he aware that the number of fillings has dropped by about 5 million, with commensurate falls elsewhere? Is he further aware that the associations within the dental profession take a serious view of that? Will he seek an early meeting with the General Dental Practitioners Association and give some assurances?

Mr. Fowler: I have studied what has been said and I think that the hon. Gentleman has misinterpreted the figures. Courses of treatment have increased from 28·5 million in 1979 to 32 million now. It is certainly true that the number of fillings has gone down, but surely that is good, because it is a sign of better dental health rather than less treatment.

Mr. Pawsey: What safeguards has my right hon. Friend introduced to ensure that less well off and deprived people obtain effective dental treatment?

Mr. Fowler: There are a whole series of exemptions from dental charges, including those under 18, those under 19 and in full-time education, expectant mothers, those who have a baby under the age of one and those who receive supplementary benefit or family income supplement. In total, about 46 per cent. of chargeable courses of treatment are provided free.

Dr. Marek: Is the Secretary of State aware of the opinion held by the British Medical Association and other professional bodies that the prohibitive cost of dental treatment is deterring some people from seeking treatment? Will he ask those bodies for that evidence, consider it carefully and take action if necessary?

Mr. Fowler: There is no such evidence. The evidence clearly shows that courses of treatment have increased. That is clear from all the figures, including the latest figures for the period from January to December 1986 which show an increase of .3 per cent. in courses of treatment. The evidence is there and I suggest that the hon. Gentleman considers it.

Consultants (Merit Awards)

2. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the annual cost of merit award payments to National Health Service consultants; and if he has any plans to review the system.

Mr. Fowler: The actual amounts paid out in distinction awards are not collected centrally since the award holder is paid pro rata to his sessional commitments to the National Health Service. The current value of awards recommended by the Doctors and Dentists Review Body for Great Britain is £56·8 million, of which it is estimated that some £47 million will be paid. We have no plans at present to review the system.

Mrs. Bottomley: Does my right hon. Friend agree that with more than 6,000 merit awards now being paid annually and with the top award being worth more than £27,000, thus virtually doubling a consultant's pay, it is in the interests of the public, the patients and the profession that more information should be readily available? It is time for people to know the by whom, the to whom, the how and the why of merit awards. That would end the secrecy and suspicion.

Mr. Fowler: I understand entirely what my hon. Friend is saying about the issue of confidentiality, which has been

a long established rule, not only in the medical profession, but in the Civil Service. Consultants can inspect the record of merit awards, but I shall bear in mind what my hon. Friend has said.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that although consultants are often the leaders of medical teams, those teams depend upon the nursing arrangements for their effectiveness? As consultants are already extremely well rewarded, is it not time that merit awards were extended to senior nurses?

Mr. Fowler: I certainly agree with the first part of what my hon. Friend has said. One of the reasons why the Government have set up the independent Pay Review Body for Nurses is to allow distinctions and differentials that seek to reward the merit and long service of particular nurses. I shall bear my hon. Friends comments in mind.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Is the Secretary of State not perfectly well aware that the merit award scheme has long been total nonsense? We need to know who awards them, who sets them and, above all, why. Why does the Secretary of State not tackle what is in grave danger of becoming an abuse?

Mr. Fowler: With respect, I do not think that the scheme is in grave danger of becoming an abuse. It is a long established system, as it was under the Labour Government of which I believe the hon. Lady was a member. An incentive to maintain a high level of distinction is provided by a rising scale of awards. I cannot believe that anybody could frankly or sensibly contest that proposition.

Mr. Forth: Does my right hon. Friend agree that when consultants are overtly critical of the National Health Service, and often manipulate their patient lists to exert pressure, we are entitled to know what they are getting from the NHS at the same time as they are demanding more and more resources from the NHS?

Mr. Fowler: I hear what my hon. Friend says, and in one or two respects I have some sympathy with him, but two thirds of consultants do not receive any merit awards.

Mr. Meacher: Is the Secretary of State aware that merit awards are a secretive and elitist system which represents a serious distortion of NHS expenditure? Is he further aware that the same amount of money could be used to fund an extra 1,750 consultants to meet the consultant shortage, an extra 3,500 junior hospital doctors so that operations would no longer have to be cancelled due to the lack of doctors, or an extra 20,000 nurses so that awards would no longer have to be closed due to the lack of nurses? Why do the Government always favour tiny rich minorities at the expense of the general good?

Mr. Fowler: I knew that the hon. Gentleman would somehow work some of his well developed conspiracy theories into this. If he feels so strongly about the system, why did he do nothing about it when he was a member of the Labour Government?

Housing Benefit

3. **Mr. Raymford** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many responses he has had from local authorities to his consultation document on housing benefit; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Nicholas Lyell): We have had a number of initial queries and reactions on specific aspects of the detailed proposals issued in the form of draft regulations. Formal comments representing local authority views are submitted by the local authority associations. We have asked for their full responses by 6 March.

Mr. Raymford: Does the Minister recall that his Department's last attempt to make changes in the housing benefit scheme resulted in what was described as "the worst administrative fiasco in the history of the welfare state"? Given the present reservations of all local authority associations about the lack of time to resolve the outstanding issues and the inadequate implementation subsidies, is the hon. and learned Gentleman not worried that the Government seriously risk repeating the disaster that occurred four years ago?

Mr. Lyell: It is precisely to give local authorities time to consider the draft regulations and be prepared that we are consulting now. They will thus have the best part of a full year to prepare themselves before the regulations are in place.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. and learned Friend will be aware of the grotesque scandal of Left-wing local authorities which always have to put up the rates but never seem able to collect rents. Where those rents include an element of housing benefit, and knowing that at some stage the Government will have to bail out those lunatic authorities, will my hon. and learned Friend take action to withhold that Government benefit and keep it for later purposes?

Mr. Lyell: One aspect of the reforms that we are introducing is to enable local authorities to monitor the amount that they are spending, particularly on housing benefit, and provide incentives for them to do so.

Mrs. Beckett: Can the Minister confirm that among the proposals that he has put to authorities is a proposal that the time limits which force people under 26 in board and lodgings to move every few weeks should be abolished? Can he explain why they are needed in 1987 if they will not be needed in 1988?

Mr. Lyell: The new system of income support combined with housing benefit could provide a good framework which would overcome the present difficulties, but part of the system is the careful monitoring of the amount that housing authorities spend on housing benefit and the level of rents which they are prepared to support.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Has the Minister initiated contact with the local authorities and urged them to have rents registered where private landlords are overcharging in the knowledge that the tenants receive housing benefit and thus have no personal interest in registering a fair rent?

Mr. Lyell: Part of the changes will give local authorities greater opportunities to monitor and control the amount of housing benefit which they are prepared to pay if they think that rents in any sector are excessive.

Chemical Weapons

4. **Mr. Gerald Bowden** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information and training is available to his Department's staff on the properties of chemical weapons and protective measures.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): Health

authorities have responsibility to ensure that plans are laid to deal with major incidents arising within their boundaries. This includes any involving toxic chemicals. Specialised advice is available from the National Poisons Information Service on a 24-hour basis. Guidance on handling and transportation of chemical casualties was sent to chief ambulance officers last year.

Mr. Bowden: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply, but is she satisfied that the degree of co-operation between local authorities and her Department is adequate to ensure sufficient protection for the general public in the event of a chemical escape or attack?

Mrs. Currie: My hon. Friend will know that studies are under way led by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. Health authorities are being advised that further guidance will be considered in the light of those studies.

Abortions (Minors)

9. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services in what circumstances minors may be invited to give written consent to an abortion and to a general anaesthetic for such abortion, without parental knowledge; and whether he will make a statement.

The Minister for Health (Mr. Tony Newton): Written consent may be given in the circumstances described if, in the judgment of the doctor concerned, it is in the patient's best medical interest and she has sufficient maturity and understanding to appreciate what is involved.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Does my hon. Friend think that that squares with our principles of the defence of the family, family responsibility, parental responsibility and protection of the child?

Mr. Newton: I hope my hon. Friend will accept that those very points are emphasised both in the current guidance from the Department and in the guidance issued by the General Medical Council. It would be a rash person who would want an absolute rule in these circumstances with no room for judgment, especially as the risk would be that a young person might end up receiving no advice.

Dame Jill Knight: Is it not the case that parental approval must be obtained for a tonsil or adenoid operation on a minor, or even for the removal of a verruca? Does the Minister not feel that the removal of a child is even more important? How on earth can parents look after their children properly if they do not know the kind of ordeal that they have suffered?

Mr. Newton: As I have said, the guidance issued by the Department and by the General Medical Council clearly shows the normal desirability of ensuring that parents are involved. I am advised that in circumstances where in the clinical judgment of the doctor it is appropriate to proceed otherwise that would cover the use of an anaesthetic.

South-East Thames Regional Health Authority

6. **Mr. Warren** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will intervene in the dispute within the South-East Thames regional health authority regarding the location for new radiotherapy equipment; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The location for new radiotherapy equipment in South East Thames is the responsibility primarily of the regional and the district health authorities. I am aware of the region's proposal, which has been the subject of full public consultation. If the regional health authority intends to proceed with the proposal and the relevant local community health councils continue to object, the matter will be referred to Ministers. I understand that the regional health authority will be considering the proposal at its meeting on 19 March.

Mr. Warren: After four years, has not the time come for my hon. Friend to take action to provide the service that must be provided for patients who have been waiting for four years for the service to commence? Is it not time that the Government took an initiative?

Mrs. Currie: I entirely accept my hon. Friend's point. He will know that £10 million is proposed to be spent to improve cancer therapy for patients in Kent and Sussex. We await the view of the regional health authority. If the community health council still objects, the matter will come to Ministers for a decision.

Mr. Rowe: Is my hon. Friend aware that the regional health authority's proposal allows, among other things, for a concentration of skilled staff, which I believe to be extremely important? Will she assure us that before she overturns the regional health authority's intentions she will consider the effects very carefully?

Mrs. Currie: We are taking into account all the results of the consultation procedure. It is our view that whatever decisions are taken will be in the interests of all the people covered by that particular regional health authority.

Occupational Deafness

7. **Mr. Evans** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to extend the availability of industrial disablement benefit for occupational deafness.

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. John Major): We have no immediate plans to do so, but the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council is keeping the occupational deafness provisions under review and is expected to report further later this year. We will consider the matter then.

Mr. Evans: While I am grateful for the fact that the council is to report, is the Minister aware that many hundreds of my constituents who suffer from loss of hearing as a result of industrial noise find it difficult to understand how can win a claim against their employer for industrial deafness and they find that they do not qualify for industrial injury benefit? Is that not perverse? Surely the Minister would want that position to be corrected.

Mr. Major: I am aware of the particular problem in the hon. Gentleman's constituency, and not least the problems that he has raised in relation to the glass industry. With regard to his specific point, however, there are different criteria governing the awards of industrial disability benefit and of damages in common law. One particular difference is the question of negligence. However, I understand the hon. Gentleman's point.

Mr. Ashley: Is the Minister aware that the exclusion from benefit applied to people who suffer from occupational deafness applies to no other disability? Does he recognise that the two reasons for this outrageous discrimination are, first, the shortage of audiologists to

carry out the necessary testing and, secondly, the lack of political will? Will he do something about those two points please?

Mr. Major: The right hon. Gentleman probably knows more about this matter than anyone in the House, and I take his point very seriously. It is perfectly true that there is a shortage of audiological resources within the National Health Service. The provision of funding for such resources is the direct responsibility of individual health authorities. I am certainly aware of the right hon. Gentleman's point and I am sympathetic to it.

Mr. Holt: I am sure that none of us would want people to suffer deafness through their industrial occupation, especially in the furniture trade, in which I worked for 20 years. Will my hon. Friend ensure, however, that industrialists are not made to pay the penalty for people playing very loud music and using personal stereos which affect their hearing in later years?

Mr. Major: I take my hon. Friend's point. We are concerned about occupational deafness. That is why we have extended the scheme on two or three occasions and why we keep it constantly under review.

Mr. Loyden: Have not claimants faced a minefield when making claims relating to occupational deafness? I am blaming, not just the present Government, but successive Governments who have failed to deal with this ongoing problem. For example, in the shipbuilding and ship repair industry there are men in their 70s who have not been able to resolve this problem. Is it not time that something positive was done?

Mr. Major: Part of the problem is the point raised by the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) concerning the number of audiological technicians available. As I pointed out, we have two or three times extended the scope of the scheme in an endeavour to meet the points that the hon. Gentleman has made.

Community Care

8. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what financial provision he is making for community care in 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: It is not possible to identify all community care expenditure with precision, but National Health Service expenditure on community health services in 1984-85 was £856 million, representing a real increase of nearly 30 per cent. since 1978-79. It is likely to have increased further since then, and to rise again in 1987-88, following the increased allocations to regional health authorities which have been announced. Sir Roy Griffiths has been asked to review the way in which public funds are used to support community care policy.

Mr. Pike: Will the Minister recognise that there is considerable concern that unless sufficient financial resources are made available for community care this policy will not work? Will he also recognise that organisations such as Rescare and families of people in institutions such as Calderstones and Brockhall in Lancashire are concerned about the way in which the policy is working?

Mr. Newton: I am aware of the concerns expressed by Rescare, with which my noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State has had meetings. I am also aware of the concern, which we share, to ensure that the large sums of money being expended on community care are well spent. The Roy Griffiths exercise is designed to help us improve our capacity to ensure that.

Mr. Galley: The principle of a locally based community care fund, with resources from local authorities and health authorities and an independent manager who would procure services from a variety of public and private agencies and then match services to individual needs, would seem to have much to recommend it. Will my hon. Friend examine that proposal carefully?

Mr. Newton: I respect the source from which that suggestion comes, in view of my hon. Friend's long-standing interest in this sector. It is very much the kind of suggestion that Sir Roy Griffiths will be able to examine.

Mr. Carter-Jones: In view of the importance of community care, when does the Minister expect those eligible to be released from long-stay mental hospitals will be evacuated, given the rate at which funds are being provided?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman has a persistent tendency to ask me questions which he knows no Minister in his right mind would answer. *[Interruption.]* I am now subject to universal advice not to answer. As the hon. Gentleman knows, Government policy is that people should not be removed from mental illness, mental handicap or other institutions without proper provision being made in the community. It is our persistent endeavour to ensure that that should not happen.

Mr. Crouch: In view of the emphasis recently placed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on the importance of community care in the treatment of AIDS, will my hon. Friend allocate additional funds for this part of the treatment? Will he further confirm the reports in *The Times* this morning that an additional and separate amount of £10 million is to be allocated to research seeking a cure for AIDS?

Mr. Newton: It is for health authorities to determine how to use their allocations, including the extra AIDS allocations to three of the Thames regions announced last week. The point about community care is that further work is needed. As my hon. Friend will know, we are convening a conference towards the end of next month with the voluntary organisations, the churches and professional bodies to look at community care for AIDS cases. On the latter point, I cannot confirm any particular figure. We are discussing these matters, but we are considering initiating a different way of fostering research into AIDS.

Mr. Meacher: Is the Minister aware that the Audit Commission report on community care last month roundly condemned his policies as a £6 billion mis-allocation of public funds? What action is he therefore taking to stop his perverse anti-community care policy of flooding the private sector with public supplementary benefit money for residential care, while at the same time stopping or reducing community care by squeezing local authority social service budgets? Is he aware that there has been a 25 per cent. cut in mental illness and mental handicap hospital beds since 1979 and that many thousands of these people are now utterly neglected in the community?

Mr. Newton: I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's description, either of the Audit Commission report or of those Government policies which have significantly extended choice to many people who could not otherwise have afforded it. So far as his figures on beds are concerned, I must ask the hon. Gentleman to stop using those figures in this irresponsible way. He knows perfectly well that he is including in those figures, among other things, the beds that used to be occupied by the children in long-stay mental handicap hospitals who have been got out into better care in the community, and that is a policy which all of us support.

Community Health Councils

9. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement about the intended role of community health councils and the experience of their activities in practice.

Mrs. Currie: Community health councils are independent statutory bodies with a duty to represent the interests in the Health Service of the public in their districts. Within this broad framework CHCs decide for themselves how to go about their tasks, and we have no plans to change this system.

Mr. Taylor: I thank my hon. Friend for her reply. Will she accept from me that, given the operational role of the health authorities and the strategic role of the regions, some CHCs are struggling to find a role for themselves and resort to casting around to find things to complain about?

Mrs. Currie: I am sure that my hon. Friend would join me in deploring any suggestion that the CHCs were looking for something to do or would even dream of opposing for opposing's sake. In many parts of the country the CHCs have proved themselves to be extremely useful and valuable. We have no plans at the moment to abolish them or change them in any way.

Mrs. Clwyd: Is it not the case that community health councils were set up originally as watchdogs for the patients and that as a result of gross underfunding they have neither the bark nor bite any more?

Mrs. Currie: No, I would not agree with that. The CHCs spend a substantial amount of money, about £35,000 per CHC—a total of nearly £7 million—just for the role that has been identified. As I said a moment ago, in many cases they have proved their worth.

Mr. Latham: Is my hon. Friend aware that, far from looking for something to do, the community health council in my constituency is quite rightly criticising the Trent regional health authority for trying to shut down rural maternity units? Will she make sure that that is not a policy that is supported by her Department?

Mrs. Currie: When a community health council objects to a major change, as proposed by the regional health authority and the district health authority, the matter must come to Ministers for consideration. I assure my hon. Friend that we give the closest consideration to each individual case.

Mr. Corbett: Given that community health councils are closer to patients and their needs than either district or regional health authorities, can the Minister say why so little notice is taken of them by the health authorities at district or regional level?

Mrs. Currie: As a former chairman of a health authority before I came to this House, I disagree with the premise behind the hon. Gentleman's question.

Royal College of Nurses

10. **Mr. Pavitt** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when last the Minister for Health met Mr. Trevor Clay, the general secretary of the Royal College of Nursing; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Newton: I last met the general secretary of the Royal College of Nursing on 19 January as part of a series of informal meetings with the general secretaries of the professional nursing organisations. A very wide range of issues relating to the nursing profession were discussed.

Mr. Pavitt: Now that the Minister has had a chance to study "Project 2000" from the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visitors, what action is he going to take, and when? In view of the shortage now occurring—in England last year 27,000 nurses left but only 22,000 trainee places were provided, making a shortfall of 5,000—will he, before ever again giving the figure of 73,000 more nurses in the NHS under his Government's regime, take out the untrained auxiliaries who are now counted in the total, and will he also deduct the difference between the 37½-hour week and the 40-hour week?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will know that we normally seek to give these figures as whole-time equivalents, which is the most realistic way to do it. On his main point, as he knows, I, as well as all the other Health Ministers, received "Project 2000" from the United Kingdom Central Council last week. I undertook as a matter of urgency to seek to produce a document around the end of this month on the basis of which we would consult health authorities and others about the proposals with a view to setting a deadline for consultation to finish about the end of July. I think the council recognises that that is a speedy time scale which illustrates the importance we attach to the issue.

Mr. McCrindle: As my hon. Friend seeks to ensure that the net intake of nurses remains adequate for the purposes of the National Health Service, to what extent is consideration being given to stepping up the recruitment of those whose family responsibilities may well be reaching a conclusion and who would welcome the opportunity of being reabsorbed into the National Health Service?

Mr. Newton: That is precisely one of the courses that we are urging health authorities to consider. As my hon. Friend will know, we have also set up, with the Equal Opportunities Commission, a special study known in the trade as managing the career break, which is designed to see how we can build up procedures which make it easier for people to come back to nursing in future.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Does the Minister accept, and did he say to the general secretary of the Royal College, that nursing in London is in crisis? Of four district authorities, Riverside has over 600 vacancies, Bloomsbury and Paddington have 200 and 300 respectively, and my own authority, Lewisham and North Southwark, has over 300. Urgent action is needed. Agency nurses are not enough. What will the Minister do this year to make sure that there are enough nursing staff in London hospitals?

Mr. Newton: The problem varies from one authority to another. We are urgently seeking better information with a view to judging what action can be taken by district health authorities. It will not, I think, be the same in all cases.

Mr. Forman: I welcome warmly the action that the Government have taken in support of the nursing profession. Nevertheless, does my hon. Friend accept that there is a severe problem of nurse wastage in the London area? Does he further accept that a contributory factor may well be the differential housing and transport costs for young nurses in London? Will he consider this again?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend will be aware that the pay review body is in operation, as it were, at this very moment. I have no doubt that this is one of the points to which its attention is being and will be drawn.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Will the Minister take the opportunity to talk to Trevor Clay about the position in south Manchester, where the occupational health physician reported that there has been a massive increase in nervous debility caused by stress because of the staffing crisis for nurses?

Mr. Newton: I am not aware of the study to which the hon. Member has referred, but I shall ask to see it.

Hong Kong and Singapore

11. **Mr. Sims** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a ministerial visit to Hong Kong and Singapore to observe Government policies on smoking.

Mr. Fowler: I am prepared to make that sacrifice.

Mr. Sims: In view of my right hon. Friend's heavy commitments, perhaps it would be just as well if he did not leave us again too soon. Is he aware that since 1973 there has been a complete ban on advertising tobacco products in Singapore, and that the Hong Kong Government are preparing legislation for a complete ban on all tobacco products? Since well over 1,000 people per week are dying prematurely from smoking-related diseases, does he think that we may have something to learn from policies in Hong Kong and Singapore on advertising, promotion, education and pricing of products? If my right hon. Friend cannot visit those countries, perhaps he could ask his officials to study their policies to see whether we have something to learn from them.

Mr. Fowler: I understand my hon. Friend's concern. In fact, the United Kingdom has a favourable record in comparison with Hong Kong. On the reduction of smoking, the percentage reduction here is as good as, if not better than, those in Hong Kong and Singapore. Certainly the United Kingdom has stronger and more varied health warnings on cigarettes and has stronger and more comprehensive restrictions on advertising. Clearly I shall consider any other lessons from both Hong Kong and Singapore.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Does the Secretary of State realise that there was great disappointment throughout the nation about the agreement reached by his hon. Friend the Minister for Sport——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That has nothing to do with Singapore and Hong Kong, has it?

Mr. Hughes: Yes, it has. On the arrangements for tobacco promotion, does the Secretary of State agree that the example set by Hong Kong and Singapore should be followed and that it is not satisfactory to wait for another few years before proper preventive medicine is practised by banning advertising here of tobacco and sport?

Mr. Fowler: No, I do not think that. In the United Kingdom we have followed a voluntary policy. It is a subject that has been dealt with in public areas, for example, by those responsible for management in response to public calls. I do not find that the case for making advertising in all areas illegal is one that has yet been made out.

Unemployment Benefit

12. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he intends to introduce regulations to uprate the level of £35 a week of occupational pension above which unemployment benefit starts to be abated, as defined in section 5(1) of the Social Security (No. 2) Act 1980; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: We have no present plans to change the existing threshold. Future changes will be considered in the light of other competing demands for social security funds.

Mr. Nellist: Is the Minister aware that it is now six years since that level was set and that since then some hundreds of thousands of workers, men of 60 and over, including not least those Talbot car workers in Coventry who have asked me to raise the matter, have paid national insurance, yet now, on the point of retirement, because they have an occupational pension, are denied unemployment benefit? Why does not the Minister, if he will not abolish that regulation, at least uprate the figure by inflation to the £47 it ought to be today instead of £35? Why is it that if a millionaire has £100,000 of investment income unemployment benefit is not affected, but if a worker has £35·10p occupational pension that affects his unemployment benefit?

Mr. Major: The principle of the offset is one that previous Labour Governments twice tried to introduce, although unsuccessfully. The offset seeks to reflect the fact that occupational pensions form a retirement income, and a retirement income is not wholly consistent with people being non-retired and available for work.

Mr. Stern: Will my hon. Friend be very cautious about proceeding along the road indicated by the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist)? Does he agree that, as this country moves closer towards the four-pension household as being the norm, the aim should be to reduce dependence on benefits rather than increase it?

Mr. Major: I agree with my hon. Friend. I am always cautious about following advice from the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist).

Speech Therapists

13. **Mr. Frank Cook** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has received about establishing improved salaries for speech therapists.

Mr. Newton: There have been numerous representations about this subject, which is a matter for Whitley council negotiations.

Mr. Cook: The Minister will know that in the National Health Service there is a serious shortfall in the level of salaries paid to speech therapists as compared with those paid to other graduate professionals. The Minister should know that that shortfall can amount to as much as 70 per cent. The Minister will agree, I think, that the level of responsibility in no way justifies that differential. How can he justify that kind of situation?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will, I am sure, accept that I, too, very much value the important work of speech therapists within the Health Service, and indeed elsewhere. He will also be aware that the speech therapists, at their own request, were not included in the review body provisions when they were set up. It remains the case, therefore, that these are matters for negotiation within the Whitley council.

Ms. Richardson: When will the Minister realise that the efforts of people such as speech therapists, who are making cases for equal pay for work of equal value, are seriously impaired by the cumbersome and obstructive nature of the procedure? When will he ask his right hon. Friend to simplify the procedure so that people such as these can claim equal pay, and women attracted into speech therapy may find it a rewarding profession in a monetary way as well as in every other way?

Mr. Newton: I shall draw my right hon. Friend's attention to what the hon. Lady has said, but she will understand that I would not wish to comment further on these cases as I understand that appeals have been lodged with the employment appeals tribunal.

Matrons

14. **Mr. Lord** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to reintroduce the role of matron into hospitals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Health authorities are free to use the title matron if they wish to do so.

Mr. Lord: Is my hon. Friend aware that there is a certain amount of concern that record spending on the National Health Service at the moment is not necessarily coming through in terms of record patient care? Bearing in mind the unique tradition of the old matron in terms of understanding consultants, doctors and nurses—all her staff—and patients, as well as her ability to control supplies very carefully, will my hon. Friend reconsider reintroducing this invaluable post into our hospitals?

Mr. Newton: The role of matron in different institutions varies quite widely, but I accept my hon. Friend's point that it is important for there to be clear-cut lines of managerial responsibility. That is what we think we are achieving at the moment.

Mrs. Renée Short: Where would the matron stand in the pecking order, with the proliferation of general managers now being appointed in every hospital throughout the country?

Mr. Newton: Where a matron stood in the pecking order would depend on precisely what responsibilities she was asked to fulfil. I hope the hon. Lady will recognise that quite a number of nurses have become general managers at both district and unit level. That is something that we are anxious to see.

PRIME MINISTER

Disabled People

Q1. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Prime Minister when Her Majesty's Government intend to implement in full the Disabled Persons (Services Consultation and Representation) Act which was given Royal Assent on 8 July 1986.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): It is hoped that sections 4, 8, 9 and 10 can be brought into operation by next April and section 11 during the course of 1987. However, the provisions of the Act, which have significant resource implications, can be brought into effect only as and when these resources can be provided.

Mr. Clarke: How can the Prime Minister justify her Government's failure to introduce a single order or to set aside an extra penny for the implementation of this Act? Does she accept that people will not take lightly a decision to set aside the clearly expressed will of the House, to treat it with contempt and to do so in the knowledge that the needs of disabled persons and those who care for them are being sacrificed on the high altar of pre-election tax cuts?

The Prime Minister: During the passage of the Bill we consistently made it clear that it would be wrong to impose extra financial burdens on local and health authorities until sufficient resources were available. That remains the position. The Labour Government — *[Interruption]* — faced a similar difficulty after they had passed the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970. When a Labour Government later came in they took no steps to provide local authorities with the resources to put the Act into effect. The hon. Gentleman says that we have not provided money. May I point out to him that increased spending on benefits for the long-term sick and disabled has gone up by about 75 per cent., allowing for inflation, to nearly £6 billion.

Mr. Favell: Referring to the way in which my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food was dealt with by *The Times* this morning——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should look at the Order Paper.

Mr. Kinnock: Does the right hon. Lady not recall the Minister of State saying last July that he wanted to bring the provisions of this Act into effect in time to benefit disabled young people leaving full-time education in the summer of 1987, that is by the autumn of 1986? Given the fact that absolutely nothing relevant to this Act has been allocated in any of the rate support grant settlements, will the Prime Minister now tell us where she thinks that the extra money to implement those sections of the Act relating to school leavers is supposed to come from? In her refusal so far to honour her Government's commitments, is she not being mean and evasive with the disabled?

The Prime Minister: I have indicated the sections that we hope can be brought into operation by next April, with section 11 during the course of 1987. I have also indicated that, although we would all wish to do more, a former Labour Government — *[Interruption]* Of course, hon. Members do not like to hear this reply because it is true. A former Labour Goverment who passed the Chronically

Sick and Disabled Persons Act were also in a similar position. The last Labour Government did not, in five years of government—*[Interruption]*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a rare definitive question on the Order Paper and I think that the whole House wants to hear the answer.

The Prime Minister: The last Labour Government, during five years in office, did not take steps to provide local authorities with resources to put the Act into effect. If the right hon. Gentleman wishes me to give him the whole excellent record of this Government in giving extra help to the disabled I shall do so. We increased spending on benefits for the long-term sick and disabled by 75 per cent., after allowing for inflation, to nearly £6 billion. We have increased the real value of the mobility allowance and the new severe disablement allowance. The Opposition hate to hear that because it is true and shows us in a much better light than them.

Mr. Kinnock: The sum of which we speak in relation to sections 5 and 6 of that Act and the disabled school leavers amounts, by the best calculations, to no more than £50 million. The right hon. Lady's lectures about the availability of resources comes ill from a Prime Minister who is allegedly contemplating a give-away of £3 billion in the Budget. While all the voluntary organisations concerned with the disabled welcome any progress made under any Government, why does the right hon. Lady not heed the view that they express about this Act when they say that if the Government do not move now the future of those young people leaving school in 1988 and 1989 will be seriously and adversely affected? That is not the voice of congratulation: it is the voice of justified suspicion. Why does the Prime Minister not listen to it and do her duty by the disabled, instead of dodging?

The Prime Minister: We do not need any lectures from a former Labour supporter of the last Labour Government, who did not begin to do anything like as well for the disabled as we have done. The right hon. Gentleman's second point was about helping people into jobs. As far as the disabled are concerned—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: —we have extended help through the Manpower Services Commission which has meant that last year over 77,000 people were placed in work or on the community programme. That is all help for the disabled.

Engagements

Q2. **Dame Jill Knight** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 February.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others, and attended the memorial service for the first Earl of Stockton. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

Dame Jill Knight: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the strong public feeling that court sentences are too often so lenient that they do not deter and thus offer no protection whatever to the public? Since guidelines laid down even by the Lord Chief Justice and the Lord Chancellor on this matter have consistently been ignored by judges, will my right hon. Friend find time in her busy day to consider the possibility of supporting a suggestion that inadequate sentences be referred to an appeal court?

The Prime Minister: I am well aware of strong feelings about certain sentences. In general, the guidelines laid down by the Lord Chief Justice have been followed. However, there appear to be some cases where that is not so, and they have given rise to great concern. As my hon. Friend is aware, clause 29 of the Criminal Justice Bill would give a power to the Attorney-General to refer a particular sentence to the Court of Appeal, with the leave of that court, for it to say, not what the sentence should have been in the specific case—so it would not affect the case my hon. Friend has in mind—but to give a guideline about what would be an appropriate sentence for such a case in future. Of course, that would be argued in open court and people could hear the arguments. The guideline would then have more effect. Such a clause will help public opinion and help to give a clear indication by the Court of Appeal about a proper sentence.

Mr. Steel: As the National Farmers Union conference this morning called for the resignation of the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, will the right hon. Lady see to it? Does she recognise that his statement yesterday, taken together with the Secretary of State for the Environment's recent Green Paper abolishing structure plans, amounts to a free-for-all for development in the countryside? Will this not simply accelerate the north-south drift and turn our farmers from stewards of our land into speculators in it?

The Prime Minister: If the right hon. Gentleman has read the draft circular for consultation, he will know that what he says is nonsense. There is no question of removing planning controls on agricultural land. There is nothing in the proposals to reduce the protection given to the green belt, national parks or other areas of good countryside. What we have said is that it no longer makes sense to apply reservations on agricultural grounds to less good land that is being proposed for development. Each planning application will continue to be considered on its merits according to the usual planning considerations.

With regard to the motion of the National Farmers Union this morning, the NFU's action reflects a short-term view of the farming community. The last chairman of the NFU took a different view, which was set out in the NFU booklet "The Way Forward". This Government have made the preservation of a strong rural community an important objective. If the farming community wishes to have — *[Interruption.]* It will not be lost on the farming community that the Labour party is committed to rating agricultural land, tighter planning controls and increased capital taxation.

Viscount Cranborne: My right hon. Friend will be aware of the visit this week to Britain of Maulawi Younes Khales, leader of the Hezb-i-Islami of Afghanistan. Will my right hon. Friend therefore take time today to reassert Her Majesty's Government's support for the right to self-determination for the people of Afghanistan, free of outside interference?

The Prime Minister: We believe wholeheartedly, as my hon. Friend says, in self-determination for the people of Afghanistan, and that the occupying forces of the Soviet Union should be withdrawn completely.

Q3. **Mr. Faulds** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 February 1987.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Faulds: As this morning the National Farmers Union—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has a right to ask his question, as has any hon. Member.

Mr. Faulds: I am most grateful to you, Sir. May I assure you that the chiacking will not silence me. We will start again. As this morning the National Farmers Union passed a vote of no confidence in the right hon. Lady's Minister of Agriculture — a matter quite without precedent—and, indeed, demanded his resignation, and in view of the consternation that he is causing among his parliamentary colleagues and fellow Ministers, does the Prime Minister retain any confidence in him?

The Prime Minister: Yes, complete confidence. My right hon. Friend has done a great deal to try to modify the common agricultural policy. Whatever votes were passed by the NFU this morning, in agriculture, food supply and demand must be brought more closely into balance, and surpluses eliminated. New surpluses must not build up through the intervention system. That matter will have to be dealt with in the interests of taxpayers, and consumers—all who purchase goods.

Q4. **Mr. Hannam** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hannam: Has my right hon. Friend studied the detailed account of the events leading up to the cancellation by the BBC of Ian Curteis's play on the Falklands war? Does my right hon. Friend agree that the actions of the leading BBC officials in trying to enforce changes in the script, just because the play appeared to be pro-British, pro-Government and pro-Prime Minister, are disgraceful? Should not the BBC hand over the script to ITV so that it can produce the play to commemorate the successful defence of freedom?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful for what my hon. Friend says. I am sure that the people concerned will take careful note of his comments.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Rooker.

Mr. Rooker: Where is the morality——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Question No. 5.

Q5. **Mr. Rooker** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Rooker: I repeat: where is the morality in the British Government allowing Iranian arms dealers to organise their arms purchases from London when there are British citizens in Iranian gaols who have not been charged or brought to trial?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, the only powers that Governments have are to prevent exports of such arms from London without an export licence. There has been no such export licence. I am afraid that if the hon. Gentleman wants us to take powers to find out what goes on in every office we shall totally reject that.

Mr. Tom Clarke: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will take the hon. Gentleman's point of order later.

Rural Economy

3.31 pm

Dr. David Clark (South Shields) *(by private notice)* asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the planning implications of the Government's newly announced policy on the rural economy.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): Yesterday, we sent to the local authority associations and other bodies a draft circular on development involving agricultural land.

Hon. Members: Speak up.

Mr. Speaker: Order. If there was not so much noise in the Chamber, perhaps we could better hear the Secretary of State.

Mr. Ridley: Today's agricultural surpluses make the protection of land for agricultural production less necessary, so the draft circular proposes an adjustment of planning policy.

The draft circular underlines the continuing need for strong planning control over the countryside. It says that the agricultural implications must be considered together with the environmental and economic aspects. In deciding applications, local planning authorities will still have to take account of the agricultural quality of the land and the rate at which it is taken for development. These factors would have to be considered alongside the needs of the rural economy and the need to protect green belts, national parks, areas of outstanding natural beauty and other areas of good countryside.

Dr. David Clark: Does the Secretary of State appreciate that his announcement on planning in the countryside has caused deep dismay for all those who care about the unique beauty of the British countryside? Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that many people believe that his proposals envisage a planning regime that would threaten the very fabric of the countryside as we know it? Will he confirm that the presumption against development on agricultural land, as enshrined in circular 75/76, is being reversed and that his proposal envisages a regime where the presumption is in favour of development on all grade 3, 4 and 5 agricultural land and, indeed, all developments of less than 50 acres or approximately 500 houses on top quality agricultural land? Is this not just a charter for speculators?

Will the Secretary of State confirm that "development" in his proposed circular incorporates the widest definition, including not only housing but mineral workings and quarrying, which so easily damage our landscape irreparably? Does he accept that, under his proposals, many local authorities will hesitate before refusing planning permission for development, knowing that this will ultimately mean an appeal direct to him where there is a declared presumption in favour of development?

Does the right hon. Gentleman envisage his proposed circular — will he comment categorically on this — applying to proposed developments in green belts, national parks and areas of outstanding natural beauty? Does not the Secretary of State now accept that he would have instilled more confidence in the general public if he had announced his plans publicly in the House rather than in front of the press yesterday?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman has engaged in a massive piece of misunderstanding and misrepresentation and he has also got his facts wrong. The presumption against development has always been there in relation to the green belt, but in no previous circular has there been a presumption against development on virgin land outside the green belt. That position is not changed by the circular that I published yesterday.

The only point in relation to the 20 hectares or 50 acres that he mentioned that has changed is that hitherto, on four hectares of agricultural land, councils have had to consult the Ministry of Agriculture before they took their decision. We now propose that they should have to consult statutorily only when 50 acres are involved and it is grade 1 or 2 land. That does not mean to say that local authorities cannot consult the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if they wish. If a local authority has to choose between development or land of high amenity or landscape value and development on land of high agricultural value, it is now free to make the environmentally correct decision. It can choose to grant permission for development on the agricultural land, rather than on the high landscape quality land.

The circular can be interpreted, quite properly, as giving greater weight to environmental and employment factors, and less weight to the quality of agricultural land. I expect it to result in no more development in the countryside, but I hope that where development must take place it will be better located.

I made it clear in the circular and in my statement that green belts, areas of outstanding natural beauty and national parks would not receive any less protection in any sense than they have hitherto received. It was quite wrong of the hon. Gentleman to try to spread that alarm and despondency. With his knowledge and understanding of these issues, he should have been able to do better. He might also take note of the fact that, in almost every previous case, with perhaps only one or two exceptions, a circular has been issued in response to a written question in the House.

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): May I welcome what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has said about the need to protect the green belt? Will he assure the House that there is nothing in the new policy which lessens his ability or determination to do so?

Mr. Ridley: That is absolutely right in relation to the green belt. However, some hon. Members confuse the green belt with green land. I must make it clear that on green or virgin land, the considerations for development will now be based equally on its agricultural use, its environmental quality and the need for rural development in that area. Therefore, a higher rating will be given to the environmental and employment considerations than hitherto.

Mr. Michael Hancock (Portsmouth, South): Does not the Secretary of State agree that this is nothing more than a developer's dream and a bonanza for builders? If not, why is he removing so many of the MAFF controls at this stage? Will he also say what sort of development he sees in the way of diversification on grade 1 agricultural land of between 4 and 20 hectares? Will the Secretary of State also say what proposals he has to give new opportunities to local authorities which have no structure plans to

control the development on grade 1 and 2 agricultural land, because under this current circular, there will be no such control?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman has got it wrong. The planning authority remains the planning authority, enabled to give or refuse permission to every application, large or small on land of any quality or quantity. That is not taken away. What is changed is that the planning authority does not statutorily have to consult the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food except in the larger case of the 50-acre grade 1 or 2 land. The second change is that, alongside the quality of agricultural land, the environmental and employment aspects of the countryside are elevated and given more importance. That must be right if we want to see a rural economy that is strong and healthy. That will be the best way to protect the countryside. Therefore, we have asked local authorities not to turn down unnecessarily applications which will lead to small-scale activities of any sort in the countryside which will help to increase rural prosperity. That is nothing new and something which the Social Democratic party, as well as the Friends of the Earth and the Council for the Protection of Rural England have themselves been advocating.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): Since the Government are right in helping farmers out of an economic straitjacket by giving them a range of opportunities for land use, will my right hon. Friend protect the countryside from the planners so that we do not see line upon line of houses on the heritage coastline or caravan parks on the skyline and make sure that derelict and vacant land in public ownership is got rid of first?

Mr. Ridley: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend on the point about derelict land and public ownership. We will be proposing measures in that area to improve matters. In the first instance, the consent to planning and development lies with the local authority, so, although a certain number of cases come to me on appeal, the vast majority of planning that is given permission is given that permission by the local authority. I cannot intervene to take that away. All I am saying is that the guidance I issued in yesterday's circular will elevate the importance of the attractiveness and environmental qualities of the landscape beside those of the quality of the land.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Is it not a fact that, until now, the presumption has been that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will use its powers under legislation and require the Secretary of State to call in developments on agricultural land, particularly grade 1 and 2? Has the Secretary of State not reversed that presumption in favour of developers when he says in paragraph 2 of annex A that that power will be exercised "only in the most exceptional circumstances."
Is that not, therefore, a charter for the developers and has the Secretary of State switched off the electricity in the electric ring fence?

Mr. Ridley: That is not so. Hitherto, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has had the statutory right to be consulted and can, like any other body or hon. Member, ask me to call in an application. That will still be the case. The Ministry can still ask me to call in an application. The decision about call-in will rest entirely with myself in future and the circular does not affect that at all. It is only a question whether the consultation is statutorily required or voluntary in relation to areas of 50 acres or more.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Will the Secretary of State agree that there is now no case for giving any special protection to agricultural land compared to other land on top of the rigid planning restrictions imposed by his own Department? In view of the outburst of ingratitude at today's National Farmers Union meeting, would it not be wise to remind that union and the Opposition that the EEC currently is spending £204 million every week on storing and dumping surpluses and that the average family in Britain is paying £13 a week more for its food than it otherwise would?

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The present planning regime for the development of agricultural land is extremely strict. I would add that the circular, if anything, makes it stricter, because it elevates the importance of the environmental considerations. My hon. Friend will forgive me if I am not tempted to comment on the common agricultural policy and matters of farming policy that are beyond my responsibility.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): When the Secretary of State was appointed, the worst fears of the environmentalists were that he would try to privatise the environment, and he is certainly setting about that. He has not provided extra money for the farmers, either for coniferous planting or for anything else. The only way in which farmers will benefit from the statement will be by selling their land to developers or speculators—land they may not wish to sell, but which this policy will force them to sell. After trying to hand over the inner cities to the speculators, he is now handing them England's green and pleasant land.

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. The vast majority of land is already privatised, because it is privately owned, and it will be equally difficult to obtain planning permission in future as it has been in the past——

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): Then why are the Government making this change?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman has not got the point, although I have made it six times and he is usually quite quick. I will make the point a seventh time and perhaps he will then understand. The point is that environmental and employment considerations in rural areas will rank equal to the value of the land in terms of fertility when giving planning consent. I would have thought that the whole House would welcome that.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, on further reflection, the guidelines will be widely welcomed as a means of ensuring the maintenance of enterprise in rural areas without threatening the green belt? Nevertheless, does he accept that, when local authorities grant a change of use for redundant farm buildings, there is a delicate balance to be held between the growth of small enterprise and a possible overstrain of the infrastructure? Can he assure the House that he will pass a message to local authorities requesting them to ensure that there is no overstrain of the infrastructure?

Mr. Ridley: Certainly, I agree about the great importance of allowing alternative activities and industry

[Mr. Ridley]

to take place in the countryside to increase the income of rural dwellers. In that way the countryside can be maintained at the high standard to which we have become accustomed.

My predecessor issued a circular encouraging the conversion of redundant farm buildings and we are pursuing that policy. We are asking local planning authorities to encourage that policy, but to ensure that conversions are in scale and that they fit in with the local surroundings. They must not change the rural character of the area. There is a delicate balance to strike, and it is for local authorities to do that. I am sure that they will do it very well.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Secretary of State aware that, no matter how he tries to retreat today from what has been leaked previously and from what the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food said yesterday, the electors will see this as another posture by the Tory party to assist those in the City who have made money hand over fist during the past seven years. It gives them the ability to move out of the city into the stockbroker belt and beyond to make even more money.

Is it not a sad reflection on the highly developed western economy run by this Tory Government that, at a time when the Third world is starving and when we are faced with food surpluses which the Government cannot find ways to transfer to those who badly need them, they are preparing to line the pockets of the stockbrokers and the City slickers instead of feeding those starving millions?

Mr. Ridley: I must say that I have a certain admiration for the hon. Gentleman. Having listened to the details for 17 minutes—and I believe that the circular has been explained to the satisfaction of all my hon. Friends—he has got some neck in trying to misinterpret it and to get it wrong. It might help if he learnt to read, so that he could read the circular for himself.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle (Lincoln): Does my right hon. Friend accept that this package will help farmers to control surpluses and enable them to develop their initiatives as viable businesses?

On trees and the environment, can my right hon. Friend confirm that we should be encouraging not woodlands of conifers in the lowlands but trees that will be sympathetic to the landscape?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful for what my hon. Friend said at the beginning of his question, which I entirely accept and agree with. Forestry is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. However, from an environmental point of view, I welcome what my right hon. Friend said about grants to increase broadleaved trees in farm areas and also lower down the hill. That will be a positive contribution to improving our countryside.

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): Does the Secretary of State accept that his circular is nothing more than a charter for those who would rather jerry-build in a green field site than properly redevelop derelict urban areas?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman is quite wrong. I advise him that last year 45 per cent. of all the land that was taken for building was land that had already been used before and that was derelict or waste land. That is the best figure that has ever been achieved in this country. Despite a massive amount of development, we managed to get 45 per cent. of it on to old land, which is therefore improved, rather than on new land. That figure is getting better every year. It will improve again this year and will be better again next year as a result of the Government's policy.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): My right hon. Friend earlier acknowledged that agriculture and the countryside are indivisible. He is aware that yesterday my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food announced that he would produce a policy document on alternative land use. Would my right hon. Friend consider a joint document between the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and his Department, to which they would be joint signatories, which would make it a great deal easier for those concerned with agriculture and those living in the countryside to understand the full implications of the Government's new policy?

Mr. Ridley: I think that my hon. Friend makes an excellent suggestion. I shall ask my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether I have his agreement to pursue exactly that course. Furthermore, I intend to publish a document that is being prepared by the Development Commission, which will set out the many ways that we are working out to help those who wish to start small businesses or other concerns in the countryside, and inform those people how they can get better advice, help, premises, loans and grants. All of that is being worked out. It would be a good idea if we published it as a compendium volume in due course.

Dr. Oonagh McDonald (Thurrock): Will the Secretary of State give a firm assurance to the House that the presumption will continue to be strongly against the use of low-grade agricultural land in the green belt for housing development, especially when derelict land is easily and readily available in the vicinity?

Mr. Ridley: Yes, that has always been the case. There is a presumption against permission being granted in the green belt.

Dr. McDonald: Now?

Mr. Ridley: There will be in the future. That is exactly the same as before.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, even if he is able to bring into use those thousands of urban acres of derelict land that are owned by public authorities, there will still be a need, if we are to meet the nation's housing requirements, for some building on green field sites? Are not the proposals announced by my right hon. Friend self-evident—that poor quality agricultural land might be put to better use? Is that not an excellent allocation of the nation's resources?

Mr. Ridley: I think that my hon. Friend is quite right. Where an authority or perhaps a county that has made a structure plan feels that there is a need for more housing, it must be right not to fetter the planning authority's decision as to precisely which land should be built on. It is obviously better to build on low quality agricultural land than on high quality landscape land and that is what the circular seeks to put right.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): The Secretary of State has been much more forthcoming than

he was last Wednesday at Question Time. Is that not simply because he has been put in an extremely embarrassing position by his right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, who was trying to get himself out of the trouble that he got into earlier today? Does the Secretary of State understand that there is a world of difference between rural development and creating an open house for rural dereliction? In view of all the apparent chaos in Government circles, can he tell us whether the Scottish Office has been involved in the discussions—if, indeed, there have been any discussions?

Mr. Ridley: Obviously, I could not tell the hon. Gentleman about all these plans last week, because they had not been published. Now that they have been published, I can tell him that my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and I agreed upon the terms of the circular several weeks ago. We were only waiting to have it published alongside his important, major statement about the future of the rural economy and agriculture which he published yesterday and elaborated on to the National Farmers Union this morning. It is all part of a perfectly sensible strategy. The hon. Gentleman will find that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales are wholly content with all that has been said and done.

Mr. John Heddle (Mid-Staffordshire): Notwithstanding my right hon. Friend's answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), will he confirm that the green belt around the conurbations remains sacrosanct? Will he further confirm that his Department will make every effort to ensure that low-grade land, such as allotment land, becomes available for residential purposes? [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] Will he continue to ensure that all vacant and derelict inner-city land comes forward for development as soon as possible?

Mr. Ridley: I am entirely in agreement with my hon. Friend on the last point. Over and again I have made it clear that there is no change of policy and no relaxation of control whatever proposed on the green belt. On allotments, I have a soft spot for allotment holders. Obviously, the grade of the allotment, whether grade 1 or grade 2, must be considered. It must be for the local planning authority to decide what it thinks is appropriate.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that this is a private notice question. I have already allowed 25 minutes for it and I shall allow a further five minutes, making half an hour. Then we must move on, because we have a heavy day ahead of us.

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): The Secretary of State has sought to assure the House that the high amenity land, including the green belt, will be all right, with the excuse that some grade 3 land should be developed to provide jobs, housing or whatever. How does he square that with rate-capping local authorities, such as Sheffield, which have land for development, providing jobs and housing? Surely rate-capped authorities could do much more if they were given freedom, than, developers in rural areas can do with a blank cheque?

Mr. Ridley: I do not think that it is appropriate that ratepayers' money on revenue account should be used for development. Nobody would want to pay rates in order to see development and houses built. The hon. Gentleman is mixing the capital account with the revenue account. Surely it is better for development to take place with private capital than for ratepayers to be forced to borrow and pay interest on expensive public capital.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): My right hon. Friend's assurance that the presumption against development in the green belt remains will be welcome. Will he confirm that it is still possible for any developer to apply to develop green belt land? That application must then be considered by the local authority, it may come before him and over a long period it may cause a great deal of unnecessary local anxiety. Could he not strengthen his policy by declaring that certain parts of the green belt, such as those around conurbations, are inviolate and that no application whatever will be entertained?

Mr. Ridley: I agree with my hon. Friend that a great deal of time and effort is wasted on applications for developments in the green belt. The policy is absolutely clear: no major developments will be allowed on the green belt, but only developments in relation to the rural community, leisure or such matters. That has been repeated over and again and developers are wasting their time if they apply for major developments — [HON. MEMBERS: "What does major mean?"] — or any development which is in contravention of the policy that has been enunciated. My hon. Friend the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Planning — [HON. MEMBERS: "Where is he?"] He has a bad cold. My hon. Friend has gone a little further in saying that it is unlikely that major retail centres which are applied for in the green belt have a chance of receiving permission.

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): Could the Secretary of State indicate and quantify what area of agricultural land will be affected by these proposals? How will developments of land affect agricultural tenants with regard to landlords? What are the Secretary of State's right hon. and hon. Friends doing to ensure that other Members of the European Community are also acting in that way?

Mr. Ridley: I believe that, subject to my right hon. Friend's views, grades 1 and 2 cover about 17 per cent. of agricultral land in this country. There will, of course, be no new problems in relation to tenants in the way in which the hon. Gentleman suggested. As I have made clear, we are simply changing the presumption so that it is more in favour of the environment and jobs and less in favour of agricultural quality.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Although I disassociate myself from the emotive misrepresentations of the Opposition and the posturings of the dilettante alliance, my right hon. Friend will be aware that the vast majority of Conservative supporters support the countryside whether it be green or green belt? Will he assure the House today that, whether the land be grade 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will or should be consulted by local authorities whenever there is any doubt or controversy about a development plan?

Mr. Ridley: I assure my hon. Friend that I yield to no one in my love of the countryside and want to see it preserved in every way possible—and, indeed, enhanced

[Mr. Ridley]

and improved. We will not achieve that unless we have a new way of finding jobs and prosperity in the countryside. That is one of the objectives that the circular addresses.

Would my hon. Friend remind me of his second point?

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Would the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food be consulted?

Mr. Ridley: That is a matter for the planning authorities. They can consult anyone they please—the Nature Conservancy Council, the Countryside Commission or the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. They are perfectly free to consult experts in any of those areas. Local councillors would believe that they can be trusted to take their own decisions and consult where they believe that that is necessary rather than have endless duties thrust upon them which makes the whole process of planning slower and more cumbersome.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will bear in mind again, as I said I would last night and as I have today, those hon. Members who have not been called on this occasion, and I will seek to give them priority.

Points of Order

4.2 pm

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I refer to the Prime Minister's reply earlier this afternoon to myself and to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition. In view of the unsatisfactory nature of those replies, I give notice that I will seek to raise the matter on the Adjournment of the House.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. We have had the interesting spectacle of Government policy being made on the hoof over the past couple of days. First, we had the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not a matter for me.

Mr. Home Robertson: I am asking leave to make a request of another Minister following on from all this. The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food made a statement on behalf of the Secretary of State for the Environment——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a clear continuation of questions.

Mr. Home Robertson: No it is not.

Mr. Speaker: Yes it is. It is a clear continuation of questions. It is unfair to those hon. Members whom I have not called.

Mr. Alexander Eadie (Midlothian): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker I want to seek your guidance, and perhaps your protection. In column 38 of *Hansard* yesterday there is a statement by the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Planning in which he says that the Member of Parliament for Midlothian—"(Mr. Eadie)" as it says in *Hansard*—had accepted the fact that nuclear waste would come into his constituency. I want to make it perfectly clear that neither in this House nor outside have I made any such statement.

I understand from my secretary that the Minister will be writing to me. However, as this is an aspect of great public importance, I seek your guidance and protection, Mr. Speaker. As the statement is so grossly inaccurate, I believe that the Minister must come to the Dispatch Box and make a statement to correct his previous statement, as that is already on record in *Hansard*. I seek your guidance and protection, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I cannot force any Minister to come to the Dispatch Box. However, the hon. Gentleman has correctly made his point and I am sure that that will have been heard by those on the Government Front Bench.

BILLS PRESENTED

COMPANIES (AUDIT COMMITTEES)

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams, supported by Mr. Sydney Bidwell, Mr. Hugh Dykes, Mr. Robert Edwards, Sir Anthony Grant, Mr. Jeremy Hanley, Mr. Robert McCrindle, Mr. Tom Normanton, Sir David Price, Mr. Tim Smith, Mr. Richard Wainwright and Mr. Mark Wolfson, presented a Bill to amend the law relating to the election and responsibilities of directors of companies and to the composition of boards of directors; to make provision concerning the appointment of independent non-executive directors; to require procedures to be followed in certain public companies in regard to the appointment and functioning of an audit committee of the board; to make further provision in regard to the responsibilities of auditors; and to make other changes in the law relating to companies: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 1 May and to be printed [Bill 69].

Statutory Instruments &c.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I will put together the eight motions relating to statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the Health Education Authority (Establishment and Constitution) Order 1987 (S.I., 1987, No. 6) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Health Education Authority Regulations 1987 (S.I. 1987, No. 7) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Environmentally Sensitive Areas (Cambrian Mountains) Designation Order 1986 (S.I., 1986, No. 2257) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Environmentally Sensitive Areas (West Penwith) Designation Order 1986 (S.I., 1986, No.2251) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Environmentally Sensitive Areas (South Downs) Designation Order 1986 (S.I., 1986, No. 2249) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Environmentally Sensitive Areas (Somerset Levels and Moors) Designation Order 1986 (S.I., 1986, No. 2252) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Environmentally Sensitive Areas (Pennine Dales) Designation Order 1986 (S.I., 1986, No. 2253) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Environmentally Sensitive Areas (The Broads) Designation Order 1986 (S.I., 1986, No. 2254) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c. — *[Mr. Neubert.]*

Law of Property (Amendment)

4.5 pm

Mr. John Heddle (Mid-Staffordshire): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to eliminate gazumping.

This is a simple five-clause Bill designed to outlaw the practice known as gazumping. Gazumping is a horrible word and a horrible practice. It is the term used to describe the situation in which the seller of a house, having agreed to see at an agreed price, goes against his word and withdraws from the deal or threatens to do so in the expectation of receiving a higher offer. The buyer is then put in the position of having to pay that higher price or withdrawing altogether and being faced with substantial legal costs and survey fees.

Gazumping has caused great distress over many years to all home buyers, but most particularly to the most vulnerable, the first-time buyers, and to young married couples wishing to get onto the home ownership ladder. In the dear dead days of relative stability in the housing market, the "subject-to-contract" clause served its purpose admirably. It gave time for mature consideration and the careful investigation of a transaction, with both parties having the opportunity to withdraw from a tentative agreement. However, in an era of seemingly ever-increasing house prices, with offer followed by counter-offer, and counter-counter-offer on top of that counter-offer, the original logic of that procedure has become clouded and the formula of the previously accepted selling behaviour has crumbled.

Sellers may well be very happy with the results of gazumping, but the expense, frustration and heartache borne by potential purchasers has been very great. Last summer, the Law Commission's conveyancing standing committee set up an inquiry into the possibility of curbing gazumping. A decade earlier, in 1973, a similar exercise was carried out by the Law Commission which concluded that, although private treaty sales were open to some abuses, the arrangements were basically sound and no change in the law should be recommended.

With a new burst of activity in the housing market, generated particularly by a wider choice of lending institutions—not simply the traditional building societies and British banks, but now foreign banks and other institutions — prepared to lend ever more flexible mortgages, it was right for the Law Commission to re-examine the range of possible options.

There were three options—first, to move towards the Scottish system, where potential buyers submit sealed bids before a closing date, after which the deal becomes binding.

The second option envisaged a vendor who backed out of a deal reimbursing any legal, survey or other out-of-pocket expenses that had been incurred before the would-be purchaser had found that his aims, ambitions and dreams had been frustrated.

The third proposal suggested a voluntary agreement by both parties to pay a similar percentage of the purchase price as a deposit, which would be forfeited if either withdrew from the transaction without any good reason within four weeks or whatever time limit was mutually agreed upon by the parties.

Sadly, the Law Commission has opted for the third course, which is probably the weakest of the three

[Mr. John Heddle]

possibilities that I have described. It is the option which is, in any event, unlikely to be put into practice, because of the very nature of the voluntary agreement. It is riddled with anachronisms and uncertainties.

The commission's pre-contract deposit scheme envisages both buyer and seller voluntarily paying a deposit of 0·5 per cent. of the purchase price once the bargain has been agreed and a preliminary agreement signed. There would then be a requirement for a firm contract for the sale and purchase within four weeks, in the absence of withdrawal for good reasons. Otherwise, the lack of contract would mean the defaulting party would forfeit the deposit. Although full credit has to be given to the work done by the Law Commission's standing conveyancing committee, under the excellent chairmanship of Professor Farrand, it did not produce an acceptable answer, despite its admirable motives.

My Bill proposes five solutions, four of them to be legally binding and one by way of recommendation, which would provide the answers to this present-day problem of gazumping. To eliminate the length of time and thus the length of uncertainty between the acceptance of an offer by a seller and the exchange of contracts by, sadly, a continuingly dilatory legal profession, I suggest these five simple solutions.

First, the seller and the buyer should be legally bound to pay a 0·5 per cent. deposit, which would be forfeited if exchange of contracts did not take place within four weeks without good reason. Secondly, the seller should be obliged to provide searches and answers to prospective purchasers' standard pre-contract inquiries, so that they can be passed on to his or her solicitors on acceptance of the offer, and so reduce that length of time during which the legal ball is batted between vendor's solicitor and purchaser's solicitor and back again.

Thirdly, local authorities should be required, in any event, to computerise their legal services. Without doubt, that proposal, of all, would command both the respect and the acceptance of both sides of the Chamber. Fourthly, local authorities should be required to deal with applications of local searches within 14 days. Computerisation would enable that to take place. In the event of local authorities not doing so, they would forfeit the search fees that they charge.

Finally — I would not make this mandatory — the vendor should be encouraged to provide and make available to the purchaser, on acceptance of the offer, an independent survey and valuation report prepared by a qualified surveyor; that the purchaser could then take that to his or her building society, bank or other lending institution, which, if it accepted that valuation, could then reduce the amount of time between acceptance of the mortgage and thus exchange of contracts.

If, because of human nature, gazumping cannot be stopped completely, at least under these proposals the would-be purchaser whose offer was aborted would be better protected than he or she is at the moment and at least receive some compensation and recompense for the heartbreak and financial loss incurred. Naturally, if the vendor stands to gain more than the 0·5 per cent. deposit that he would forfeit by going against his word, the law cannot intervene. [HON. MEMBERS: "Market forces."] Yes, that would be market forces.

Anything that deters the consequential financial loss of such reprehensible conduct is, in my opinion, a step in the right direction. I invite the House to give a fair wind to this simple Bill, which should strike a chord in the hearts and minds of all constituents, particularly those wishing to buy their house for the first time.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. John Heddle, Sir Paul Hawkins, Sir Philip Holland, Sir Marcus Fox, Mr. Sydney Chapman, Mr. Andrew Rowe and Mr. J. F. Pawsey.

LAW OF PROPERTY (AMENDMENT)

Mr. John Heddle accordingly presented a Bill to eliminate gazumping: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 3 April and to be printed. [Bill 68.]

Housing and Homelessness

4.15 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): I beg to move,

That this House believes that it is an obligation for any responsible and caring Government to ensure that there is a fit home available to buy or rent for every household in the country; believes that such an objective is a social and economic priority which cannot be achieved by market forces alone, which lead to increased prices for housing and land for those seeking a home; recognises that the objective can only be achieved by a combination of private and public provision; and therefore calls for a reversal of present policies, which have failed to meet the objective, which are leading to a decline in the overall quality of the housing stock and failing to increase it at a rate sufficient to meet the needs of the people of Britain, and which are increasing homelessness.

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister. Many right hon. and hon. Members have expressed a wish to take part in the debate. As yet, I have no authority to limit speeches to 10 minutes between 7 o'clock and 9 o'clock, but I hope that hon. Members will bear that in mind. If they do so, they can all be called.

Dr. Cunningham: The Labour party has chosen to debate the deteriorating housing situation in Britain today because of the fundamental importance of the social and economic issues involved. After seven years of Conservative policies it is widely recognised that a housing crisis exists and that there is an alarming increase in homelessness. Major problems of housing shortage, deteriorating homes, and absence of any real choice are apparent in rural areas, towns and inner cities alike. The decline in the nation's housing is outpacing existing programmes of restoration in the private and public sectors. The cost of mortgages means that many people cannot afford to buy a home, and increasingly, families doing so cannot meet their repayments.

The huge and increasing gap between the cost of houses in London and the south-east and the cost in other parts of the country is preventing some people from taking up work and is adding to the difficulties of employers, particularly in the public sector. Government policies on house building, finance and interest rates are making a difficult situation much worse for millions of families.

There is a lack of any strategy for improving inferior housing, and no serious attempt to deal with defective housing, much of which results from policies of system building and high rise flates introduced by earlier Conservative Administrations. There is a scandalous growth in bed and breakfast accommodation, which is not only a wholly unsuitable way to house families but a grossly inefficient use of public money.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): The hon. Gentleman should not be allowed to get away with that. Does he not realise that the biggest drive for system building was under Mr. Richard Crossman?

Dr. Cunningham: I do not recognise that, because it is not true.

Mr. Latham: Of course it is true.

Dr. Cunningham: System-built housing and high-rise flats as a policy were initiated by the right hon. Member for Leeds, North-East (Sir K. Joseph) when Minister of Housing and Local Government in a Conservative Government, and the incoming Labour Government in 1964, having assessed the situation, terminated the additional subsidy in 1967, having recognised the weaknesses of the system. The hon. Gentleman's intervention was completely in error.

The situation in many houses in multiple occupation is a disgrace. The Department of the Environment's own report on houses in multiple occupation, published as recently as 23 January, describes a scandal. Approximately four fifths of all surveyed houses in multiple occupation were assessed by surveyors as unsatisfactory on at least one of three measures — management, occupancy, and amenity provision. Only a quarter of them were assessed as being of a good standard. Nearly three quarters of tenants lived in one room. Only 39 per cent. of tenants had access to a full range of adequate amenities. Overall, 80 per cent. of all such houses had a means of escape which was, to quote the report, "defective, inadequate or non-existent", which is a clear breach of fire regulations. The reality is that the Government stand indicted today for pursuing policies which are divisive and unfair.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Does my hon. Friend not agree that almost as scandalous as the revelations in the report was the response of the Housing Minister to those revelations, which was revolting in its complacency, stating for example that the report indicates that houses in multiple occupation do a useful job in many towns and cities, providing relatively cheap housing, furnished accommodation and a lack of restriction which is popular with some tenants?

Dr. Cunningham: I agree with my hon. Friend. He is absolutely right. The Minister of State's response, as set out in his press notice from the Department of the Environment, was disgracefuly complacent about the problem of people living in houses in multiple occupation. An examination of the past seven years shows that Government policies have actually exacerbated problems, and made difficult situations much worse. Problems resulting from short-sighted planning and defective construction are also being neglected. No attempt is made to be fair in terms of financial support either. Massive cash reductions for public rented housing contrast starkly with unlimited tax relief for those on very high incomes.

These major failures in housing policy will result in the increasing misallocation of public and private finance and considerable damage to the building and construction industries and their suppliers. Worst of all in any decent civilised and wealthy country is the social cost, misery and deprivation. These costs — economic and social — are costs on everyone. They are bills that the nation cannot afford, from a Government that the nation cannot afford. Our motion today does not suggest that the existing problems are all the fault of the existing Government. It does suggest that present policies are making things worse for millions of our fellow citizens and that the country as a whole is disadvantaged as a result.

The Government's amendment blandly ignores the seriousness of the situation, reflecting not only the complacency of the Conservatives but a lack of responsibility and of caring. There is an abundance of evidence to support the Labour party case, much of it in the Government's own reports and statistics. Reports from voluntary organisations — Shelter, SHAC and CHAR — confirm our view and are highly critical of Government policy. The Building Employers

[Dr. Cunningham]

Confederation, the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, NEDO, the Duke of Edinburgh's inquiry into British housing, the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, the Audit Commission, the Institute of Housing, the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission —we could build houses with the volumes of evidence, reports and inquiries, all highly critical of present and past policy failures.

The criticisms highlight the incompetence of Conservative policies on local government finance, their unfairness in taxation, loss of opportunities for growth and employment and a lack of urgency in responding to the problems. In spite of all the evidence, the Government have abdicated responsibility, apparently in the naive belief that market forces will solve these problems. The Prime Minister's extreme views on public services and her determination to eliminate collective provision are the root cause of much failure in current housing policy and the misery which results.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): The hon. Member talks about abdication of responsibility, but is there not an abdication of responsibility by the London boroughs which have allowed their rent arrears to run to 20 per cent of total rents due?

Dr. Cunningham: No one on this side of the House defends inefficiency in local government, as I and my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) and others made clear as recently as last weekend in Leeds. Since the hon. Member for Bolton North-East (Mr. Thurnham) is talking about arrears, let me remind the hon. Gentleman of some of the worst offenders in the case of arrears in payments to local government. The Conservative council at Winchester is owed by a single client £742,000 from the year 1985-86.

Mr. Thurnham: Name the client.

Dr. Cunningham: I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman knows who the client is. It is the Secretary of State's right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services. The same right hon. Gentleman's Department owes Salford council £100,000; Chester-le-Street district council — my home town — £330,000; Luton council £300,000——

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): Are we glad the hon. Gentleman asked this question.

Dr. Cunningham: —Manchester £100,000; Wandsworth — Conservative controlled — £125,000; Ealing £265,000. If the hon. Gentleman is interested in arrears and debtors, I suggest that he table some new questions to the Secretary of State for Social Services.

Mr. Laurie Pavitt (Brent, South): I would like my hon. Friend to add Brent, which was Conservative controlled until last May. Brent had a colossal amount of arrears which the new Labour administration now has to clear up.

Dr. Cunningham: That is absolutely true, and they have to clear it up on the basis of a Conservative budget which has been rate-cut by the present administration.

The Government have followed a deliberate and consistent policy of reducing the money available to councils to build new houses and repair and renovate their existing stock. The value of housing investment programmes is now only 28 per cent., in real terms, of the 1979 value. Allowing for the perversely restricted use of councils' own capital receipts, actual spending in real terms is 59 per cent. of the level of 1979. Government policy has not only reduced the borrowing provisions by 72 per cent., it has prevented those councils that wish to from making up that drastic reduction by using their own money raised from sales of houses and land. That is how perverse Government policy has become.

These cuts have reduced council house completions from over 66,000 in 1979 to just over 18,000 in 1985-86. Housing association programmes have also been reduced. In England the newbuild figures were 16,275 in 1979 when Labour left office and 9,039 in 1985-86. Rehabilitations are also down in that sector, from just over 17,000 in 1979 to over 11,500 in 1985-86.

So much for the claim of Ministers to be pro the housing associations. It is true that private sector house building has increased in the same period from about 140,000 to 150,000 a year. But, overall, the completion of new homes is down substantially, by about 100,000 each year compared with the Labour Government's performance. Realistically, houses for owner-occupation anyway can never on their own solve the problems of those who cannot afford to buy. In this same period the number of households accepted as homeless has doubled, from 56,750 in 1979 to an estimated 103,700 last year. But the actual number of households who regard themselves as homeless has reached the staggering total of more than 250,000 under this Government. The severe shortage of adequate, affordable, fit housing is causing the crisis.

There are regional variations in homelessness, but it is concentrated particularly in London and the south-east. In 1986, of all households accepted as homeless, 44 per cent. were from the Greater London area. In some parts of the country, again particularly London and the south-east, there are insufficient lettings available to house the homeless. The use of bed and breakfast, hostels, hotels and other short-stay accommodation has increased significantly. Published data updated by preliminary results show approximately 7,500 households in bed-and-breakfast accommodation alone. Of these, over 6,150 are in Greater London. Current individual examples include 885 in Tower Hamlets, 402 in Haringey and 980 in Camden.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): My hon. Friend has rightly stressed the increase in homelessness. Is he basing that figure on the designation of homelessness in the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977? If so, the homelessness is greater.

Dr. Cunningham: My hon. Friend is right. I am basing the figure on the provisions of that Act; I said that those accepted and registered as homeless exceed 100,000, but that the real total is more than 250,000 households.

Families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation have created a new form of waiting list. In some parts of London there is no indication when or if households in temporary accommodation will move into permanent housing. For example, the current waiting period for the bed and breakfast case in Camden who needs a four-bedroom home is at least four years. Some councils cannot say when a household will be made an offer.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Can the hon. Gentleman tell the House how many vacant

properties there are in those local authority areas run by the Labour party, which have been mentioned in the latest Audit Commission report? What does he, as a Labour Member and as the Labour environment spokesman, intend to do about those authorities and the wasted housing assets that exist in those areas?

Dr. Cunningham: I shall come to that in a few moments because it is an important question. Suffice it to say for the moment that the number of vacant tenancies in local authority control is the smallest of any sector as a percentage, and is falling.

The hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) has mentioned Labour authorities. We recognise that there are problems. Indeed, the leader of the Association of London Authorities, Councillor Margaret Hodge, wrote to the comptroller of the Audit Commission on 4 February, seeking help and co-operation from it in rectifying the weaknesses in the management systems of the authorities concerned. We welcome that positive response.

On vacancies in London, the hon. Gentleman and Ministers on the Treasury Bench have good cause to consider what one London borough is doing. It is keeping deliberately vacant nearly 1,000 houses which are in good condition. The council will not let them be occupied unless they are bought. This is a borough with almost 200 homeless families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation, almost 1,000 families on the waiting list, and almost 6,000 families wanting a transfer. It is the Conservative-controlled borough of Wandsworth.

The use of temporary accommodation is increasing at an alarming rate. Figures for families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation in England four years ago were 3,270 and today are an estimated 11,000. Several thousand more households are in hostels and other temporary accommodation. Last week the Secretary of State's solution was "to run up as many hostels as quickly as possible to house these people". — [*Official Report*, 4 February 1987; Vol. 109, c. 985.]

That was the nasty, inadequate, uncaring response of the Secretary of State, but it would not be a cheap one to the British economy or to the taxpayer. It would be a very expensive expedient, because the average cost of bed-and-breakfast accommodation to a local authority in London is £9,500, compared to the annual loan charges on the construction of a new two-bedroom dwelling of only £7,700. In other words, it is cheaper to build new houses or even to acquire existing houses than to go on putting people into this absymal accommodation.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that there would be more of a public outcry over the appalling position of people living in bed and breakfast accommodation if the media showed more interest? Has my hon. Friend looked at the Press Gallery and seen the minimal amount of interest in the debate?

Dr. Cunningham: I share my hon. Friend's disappointment at the lack of interest in what is by any test a national crisis in housing.

There are numerous examples of statutory overcrowding. In some cases, whole families live in one room in temporary accommodation. Also, wholly inadequate amenity provision and substandard fire precautions abound. There is no overall standard for bed and breakfast accommodation, although some London Labour boroughs are working towards a base minimum. The Institute of Housing says that bed and breakfast costs are £30 million a year and are rising. There is little specific assistance to councils through rate support grant; therefore, they must effectively meet the bill themselves.

Ministers argue repeatedly that the homelessness crisis can be solved by bringing empty council homes into use. The facts are that 2·3 per cent. of council stock is vacant, and the total is falling; 4·2 per cent. of the owner-occupied and private rented sector stock is vacant, over 500,000 homes; the biggest culprit of all, with the highest percentage of vacant stock as a landlord is—guess who — Her Majesty's Government, with 6·9 per cent. of Government property vacant, and that percentage is rising.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Dr. Cunningham: I have already given way to the hon. Gentleman.

Most council dwellings are vacant for only short periods during changes of tenancy or for repairs. However, 27,000 have been vacant for more than a year. The evidence shows that most of those are concentrated in London, sometimes the products of early municipalisation policies. By far the majority are already in planned renovation programmes. Those not in such programmes require additional resources to renovate them at a faster rate which is not available from the Government because of their present policies. Many of these houses are already let to short-life users, the homeless. They are let on short-life terms to housing associations or on other initiatives, even though they are officially recorded as vacant.

The housing that is unfit to live in will remain boarded up until it can be brought up to the minimum standard. Cutting council investment, restricting the use of capital receipts, stopping the acquisition of homes to rent, cutting housing association programmes and the recent restriction by the Minister of State, for no good reason, of leasing arrangements between local authorities, the private sector and housing associations, all restrict the better management by local authorities of these problems.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): The hon. Gentleman has explained to the House his assessment of the reasons why houses and flats in the public sector remain empty. Will he now enlighten the House as to the extent to which he believes that the Rent Acts are the cause of empty houses and flats in the private sector or give us his explanation why they remain empty?

Dr. Cunningham: I shall come to the hon. Gentleman's point in due course.

Mortgage payers, too, are in difficulties and mortgage defaults and arrears are increasing alarmingly. While the number of loans has increased by about one third since 1979, the number of families in arrears has risen sixfold. When the Government were elected, mortgage arrears in excess of one year were too insignificant to record. They now exceed 14,000. The number of houses repossessed from owner-occupiers last year was estimated at more than 20,000—virtually 10 times the number in 1979.

Mortgage payers got a consistently better deal under the Labour Government than they have had since 1979. Mortgage interest rates have averaged about 13 per cent. under this Government and have reached a crisis level of 15 per cent., not once but twice. Only the Government

[Dr. Cunningham]

refuse to recognise the need to build more houses and significantly to improve the rate of renovation of private and public housing. But the Government's own statistics indicate a shortfall of homes fit and available of about 1 million. The Government's own research on the local authority housing stock condition showed a staggering backlog of £19 billion for renovation and repair of council houses in England alone. That was the Government's own report.

The Audit Commission believes that this total is growing at the rate of £900 million a year. Figures for essential rehabilitation of private houses are even higher. That is one of the reasons why they cannot be let, but there are others, and I shall come to that in a moment.

Traditional private rented accommodation continues to decline despite claims from successive Ministers about shortholds and assured tenancies. There are opportunities for new initiatives between local authorities and developers on mixed tenure schemes, and councils are showing increasing interest. We welcome this. We support assured tenancies, shared ownership and mixed tenure schemes as ways of increasing the options available to those seeking homes.

We have a way of putting the Government's record to the test on all these matters. It is at the Greenwich by-election. Greenwich is an inner London borough with a mix of outer London borough housing problems which is quite typical of the housing crisis in London. The problems of the borough well illustrate the effects of eight years of Tory housing policy. Homeless households accepted under the Act have increased fivefold since 1982 from 320 to 1,500 in the current year. Over 90 per cent. of homeless cases in Greenwich are local Greenwich people. The waiting list has increased 50 per cent. in the last four years from below 10,000 in 1982 to over 16,000 currently. Many families in Greenwich are now seriously overcrowded and have no prospect of moving to better accommodation.

House prices have doubled in the past four years. The cheapest three-bedroomed house in the borough now costs £55,000 and requires an income of at least £15,000 for a first-time buyer to be able to purchase it. Ordinary people in the borough of Greenwich, even if they are lucky enough to have a job, do not earn that sort of money, and people who in the past would have been able to buy can no longer do so.

The borough has 4,000 unfit private sector dwellings —another reason for the decline in the private rented sector—some of which need as much as £10,000 each in major repairs to make them fit. The private rented sector is collapsing in the borough of Greenwich as landlords convert dwellings and sell for a substantial capital gain. The clearest example of this is the Morden college estate, where no fewer than 900 private landlord homes are currently on the market for sale. That is another reason for the decline, in case the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) is still interested in responses to his questions.

The latest assessment is that £367 million needs to be invested in the borough's housing stock over a decade, which, allowing for inflation, requires an investment, on average, of £43 million per annum. There are extensive problems of system-built estates, too.

What have the Government done in Greenwich? They have cut housing subsidies to the borough by £13 million. Government policy has cut housing investment in the borough from the 1979 average under the Labour Government of nearly £45 million at current prices. The Tories' housing investment programme allocation for the coming financial year, on the same basis, is £15·5 million —only one third of what it was eight years ago.

If the allocation had been kept at the same level the borough would have had an additional £200 million to invest in housing over the past eight years which would have built 1,500 new homes, given 5,000 more improvement grants, allowed for the protection of all the Morden college properties, replaced the windows of 7,500 dwellings, modernised 4,000 kitchens, re-roofed 5,000 dwellings and provided 8,000 dwellings with central heating. That is an indication of the damage done in the borough of Greenwich as a result of this Government's policies.

The Government have claimed that local authorities are not effective managers of council accommodation; that they are inefficient and irresponsible. Let us look at Greenwich.

Voids in the private sector in the borough are double what they are in the public sector—5 per cent. Current rent arrears represent only 5 per cent. of total income collected from council tenants. Praised by the Audit Commission as an effective, efficient, well-run authority, the borough has rehoused 2,600 homeless families over the last four years and has not spent a penny on bed and breakfast in doing so. The authority is progressive and pragmatic. It consults its customers. There are nearly 80 tenants' associations in the borough, and the housing service has 500 meetings with the public each year. It is a decentralised service operating through 13 local housing offices without screens or barriers between the public and the staff. It treats the question of equal opportunities seriously and believes that its staff and its policies must reflect the needs of all people in the borough. It works with other agencies, particularly housing associations and voluntary groups.

The borough is planning for the future, too. Under the last Labour Government, the council was building 450 council dwellings each year. Since 1982 the average has been 60, as a result of Government policy. The borough is organising now to produce 400 homes per year and is seeking to buy land and design new housing schemes for when a Labour Government is returned.

"Greenwich is a borough under quite left-wing political control but it collects its rates and rents and fills its empty houses. And it does it efficiently and I pay tribute to that,"

I pay tribute to that, and so does the Minister of State, because that is a direct quotation from him when he was interviewed on the BBC television programme "This Week, Next Week" on 2 November 1986.

This is a council which any sensible Government would want to work with and not undermine; a council which is doing an excellent job for its community. Will Ministers from the Department of the Environment dare to put a contrary view to that of the Minister of State at the by-election in Greenwich? Will they go and argue against him? We will be waiting for them if they do—I can assure them of that—but I doubt that they have the guts to show their faces.

In the February edition of *House Builder*, Mr. Peter Short, the president of the House Builders Federation writes:

"Government Ministers can no longer be trusted with responsibility for housing".

He goes on to say that under-provision of housing or its deterioration in both the private and public sectors will have increasingly severe effects on the efficiency of industry, while inadequate investment in the public sector stock and in the provision of housing in areas of need with which the market cannot deal will add to the decay of urban areas and the rise of homelessness—and he is right. Yet neither of these issues is adequately addressed—least of all, he says, by the Ministers responsible at the Department of the Environment.

The reality is that Ministers have abdicated those responsibilities. They have combined malice towards public provision with incompetence in administration. Their policies have failed and can only make an appalling situation much worse. A Labour Government will expand investment in housing, public and private, and allocate finance more fairly. A Labour Government will work in partnership with the building industry and local councils to improve people's homes and build more where necessary and, in doing so, create much-needed jobs. We shall strengthen tenant's rights and equal opportunities too. We will do these things because they are right—right for the people and right for the country.

4.51 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"welcomes the Opposition's long overdue recognition of the need to combine public and private provision in housing; commends the Government for taking steps to re-establish the right to rent; recognises that further progress in increasing choice and supply depends on re-creating a market in rented housing and harnessing private sector resources, and therefore rejects calls for more municipal housing which can only lead, as it has done in the past, to poorly managed, badly maintained unpopular estates provided at excessive public expenditure cost; and commends instead this Government's achievements in seeing one and a half million more homes built since May 1979, and in widening the opportunities for home ownership, so that there are now well over two million more home owners than in 1979, and in meeting housing needs in the most efficient and effective way.'.

I welcome this debate and a discussion of the issues in the first part of the speech of the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham). I rather lost him when he started to fight the Greenwich by-election. He might have been wiser to go down to Greenwich, because there are not many people here from Greenwich and certainly no one else in the Gallery was listening to him.

We on this side of the House are quite clear that everyone should be able to have a decent home, whether rented or owned. Everyone should be able to afford a home, and we will continue to ensure that no one need be homeless because he cannot afford a home. There are problems, but they are not the result of a lack of resources or an overall shortage of housing. They are a direct result of the lack of a proper market in rented housing and the inevitable inefficiencies that arise when we have a managed economy in rented housing. If we can create a true market in the rented sector, we will help not only those who now find accommodation through the homelessness legislation, and council tenants who now have very little choice in their housing, but those who do not fall within the priority need categories—young people looking for jobs, for example, or people whose job requires them to be mobile.

The figures issued by my Department, which the hon. Gentleman quoted, do not show the number of homeless people. They show the number of households which are accepted as homeless by local authorities under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 and given shelter. All the households in these figures have roofs over their heads, although after listening to the hon. Gentleman one would not think so. Fifty per cent. of them move immediately into permanent, full-time accommodation. That did not exactly emerge with crystal clarity from what the hon. Gentleman said.

If we wish to debate homelessness, we ought to look at its causes. The number of households housed under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 is rising. Why? Fundamentally, the causes are social. They arise from changing values and expectations, and from the loosening of family ties. The break-up of marriages caused 19 per cent. of homeless acceptances in 1986—up from 15 per cent. in 1978. Thirty-nine per cent. became homeless because parents or friends would no longer accommodate them. There are rising numbers of illegitimate children. These were 17 per cent. of all births in 1984, up from 6 per cent. in 1961. One-parent families are now 13 per cent. of all families, compared with 8 per cent. in 1971. Young people are leaving home earlier and expect to be housed.

There is also the "Dick Whittington" factor.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle) *rose*——

Mr. Ridley: People move to London because they believe that there will be better opportunities there, that the streets are paved with gold. Dick Whittington had to trudge through Camden, where he left his cat, and Islington, where he heard the bells, but, being a good entrepreneur, he sensibly chose the City, rather than one of the Labour London boroughs. Although he became Lord Mayor of London, this was not by twin-tracking with Southwark council, and he was certainly not boosted by any "engines of growth".

We cannot control these social factors. We cannot force people to behave differently, nor do we wish to.

Dr. Cunningham: It is because of Government policy.

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman consistently misses the point. He does it on purpose. He is trying to say that homelessness is in some way the result of Government policy. He knows from those figures that it is the result of changing social practice, and it is about time that he acknowledged this to be so.

Dr. Cunningham: We have the incredible proposition by the Secretary of State that changing social conditions have nothing to do with Government policy and that the Government have no responsibility for what is happening. It is a preposterous thing to say.

Mr. Ridley: Now we have it. The Labour party would stop people from leaving home and getting divorced. What penalty will it bring out against one-parent families, because that is the implication of the hon. Gentleman's remarks?

Mr. Allan Roberts *rose*——

Mr. Ridley: No, the hon. Gentleman does not ask good enough questions.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East) *rose*——

Mr. Ridley: I shall give way to the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson).

Mr. Anderson: Is the Secretary of State saying that the moving hand has written and that nothing can pull it back; that he has no responsibility for unemployment and for the collapse in house building?

Mr. Ridley: I should not have given way to the hon. Gentleman. Let me explain again. The cause of the rise of homelessness is the change in the way that people are behaving.

Mr. Allan Roberts: What about unemployment?

Mr. Ridley: I do not think that people's marriages break up because of unemployment. They break up because they are——

Mr. Roberts *rose*——

Mr. Ridley: No, I have a lot to say. The hon. Gentleman would be better seen and not heard in the debate.

We cannot control these social factors. We cannot force people to behave differently. I do not intend to do so, nor do I wish to do so, but we can try to make people take a more realistic view of their prospects of getting a house. This year we are giving over £500,000 to bodies providing practical advice and help to the homeless. For example, through the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless Trust we fund a leaflet aimed at school leavers and other young people, but I suspect that, as always, social factors are stronger than the advice.

In addition, the demand for rented housing increases because for many people housing benefit means that the cost of housing is virtually zero. If a commodity costs little or nothing, demand is unrealistically high. Maintaining a separate household costs a certain amount, so there are costs involved, but housing benefit makes it easier for people who are in the lowest income groups to move away from home and be rehoused under the homeless persons legislation. *[Interruption.]* I am not complaining about this. I am merely explaining the reasons for homelessness. The Opposition are getting terribly over-excited, but I am merely telling them what the problem that we are debating is all about.

Nobody wants to keep unhappy families together. I accept that we have a responsibility to provide financial assistance at the bottom end of the market so that everyone can afford a home, but undoubtedly the benefit system increases demand for rented housing. That is why there is growing demand, but what about the supply? Overall, nationally there is no shortage of housing. Our projections of household growth in England to the end of the century show an increase in need averaging 100,000 per year. That is much slower than over the last two decades.

New building and conversions by the private sector are already proving more than sufficient to cover this amount. Last year private builders completed about 159,000 homes, not the 150,000 which the hon. Member for Copeland so meticulously misquoted. That is the highest level since 1973. There is also no shortage of dwellings overall, in either the owner-occupied or the rented sector. However, there is a serious mismatch in the rented sector, in that there are surpluses in parts of the north and shortages in parts of the south.

Mr. John Powley (Norwich, South): My right hon. Friend makes a valid point about the social changes that have taken place. Does he agree with the view that I have formed over the past five to 10 years, that one of the problems is that we are a long way from making the most efficient use of our housing stock, in both the owner-occupied sector and in the public rented sector? In some cases one or two people occupy three-bedroom houses, and such inefficient use of our housing stock is part of the problem.

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend is right. I shall later cover that ground. The first thing to do is to make proper use of the houses that we have. The crucial difference is that there is a healthy market in one sector, the owner-occupied sector, but not in the other.

Mr. Roberts: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ridley: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman, but it will be the last time. He is rather keen to jump up and down.

Mr. Roberts: The Secretary of State talks about owner-occupied houses. Is he aware that fairly new estates of 30 to 40 houses built about a year ago by Wimpey in my constituency on land provided mainly by the local authority are standing empty because people have had to default on their mortgages as a result of sudden unemployment and hand in their keys? House prices are falling in that area because of unemployment. Do the Government not have some responsibility for those houses standing empty in the owner-occupied sector? Do they not have a responsibility for that kind of homelessness?

Mr. Ridley: I do not know the houses that the hon. Gentleman speaks about. Policies should be directed to bringing empty homes in the public and private sectors back into use.

Mr. Allan Roberts *rose*——

Mr. Ridley: I think that the hon. Gentleman must have St. Vitus's dance. If he would sit quietly for about 10 more minutes he might learn something.

The market for owner-occupied housing is thriving and growing. Since 1979, over 2 million people have become owner-occupiers and 65 per cent. of houses in England are now owner-occupied. Under the next Conservative Government we hope that between 70 and 75 per cent. of households will be owner-occupiers. That is 1 million more home owners. That healthy market simply does not exist in the rented sector in this country. It exists in other countries.

The private rented sector in Britain has diminished by 75 per cent. since 1950. Everyone knows the reason for that, except apparently the hon. Member for Copeland, who was unable to reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow). The hon. Gentleman exhibited extraordinary evasion. He said that he would answer my hon. Friend later, but he did not do so. The reasons are the effects of 58 years of Rent Acts in destroying the economic case for investment in rented accommodation. That is the reason, not the reason given by the hon. Member for Copeland. The private rented stock has deteriorated and dwindled. There are now over 500,000 empty properties in the private sector, many of which could and would and should be used for rented accommodation. This has been allowed to happen because the Opposition have never dropped their vendetta against the private landlord. They have a heavy responsibility to bear. The problem of homelessness is part of it and should be laid at their door.

Dr. Cunningham: In view of what the right hon. Gentleman has said, will he explain why the fastest decline in the private rented sector occurred after the passing by a Conservative Government of the Rent Act 1957? That measure decontrolled rents and led to Rachmanism. That led to the biggest decline in the private rented sector.

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman is often rusty on these matters. Rachmanism was caused by the Rent Acts, not by decontrol. He should know that. The decline has been continuous since 1919. At some times it is faster than at others.

Mr. Marlow: Is it not possible that my right hon. Friend is right in his answer, in that in other countries in the European Community there is a large private rented sector without any Rachmanism?

Mr. Ridley: Rachmanism is about ending tenancies that are controlled in order to make better use of property by selling it in a buoyant market. If tenancies are not controlled, Rachmanism cannot happen. The results of the Opposition's doctrinaire approach that all housing should be provided by the state, by central and local government, have become clear even to them.

They have begun to acknowledge the immobility, the soullessness and the misery of the municipal tower block and the monolithic council estate. I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) for his courage in recent speeches in trying to put people's needs in front of the ideology of public ownership. I hope that the majority of his colleagues will come to agree with him. Young people looking for jobs or starting out, people who are not in priority categories and have not spent time on a housing waiting list, have virtually no chance of finding rented accommodation.

Moreover, conditions are often bad. Much of the public rented stock is in poor condition because the rent paid is not adequate to pay for the maintenance and repairs that are needed. There is a chronic lack of mobility because there is no market. Many council estates add bad and insensitive management to bad and insensitive architecture —a grisly legacy of the 1960s and the god of municipal social engineering. There is, thank goodness, an emerging public consensus that the experience of public sector building for rent is that much of it has been an expensive failure.

Despite the fact that the Labour party recognises that public sector provision and management are often inadequate, its answer to the problem is to throw more public money at public sector house building. The hon. Member for Copeland did it again today. This is simply nonsense, and it is nonsense for three reasons. First, as I have said, in many areas there is a surplus of council housing, not a shortage. Secondly, we must learn from the mistakes of the past. Lack of choice in the public sector is just as off-putting to people as is the poor quality of much of the rented stock. The combination of the two makes people feel trapped and they wish to escape. The dominance of public rented accommodation in some areas has driven out the enterprising.

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Fulham): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ridley: I shall give way once. I have more to say and I wish to let other hon. Members have an opportunity to take part in the debate.

Mr. Raynsford: If the right hon. Gentleman is in favour of choice, will he accept that the 7,000 families in bed-and-breakfast hotels would like the choice of a rented council house? They would have that choice if the Government allowed the councils the money to build houses.

Mr. Ridley: I should not have given way, because I was just about to deal with finance and that would have answered the hon. Gentleman's question.

Public renting in some areas has driven out the enterprising. It has driven out those who create jobs and those able to exercise housing choice. It has contributed to the social imbalance and decline of inner-city areas. More council house building is not the right solution.

Thirdly, the hon. Gentleman, as always, puts politics before arithmetic. There never could be enough public capital for a massive programme of council house building, on top of the need to repair all the council-owned properties that have fallen into disrepair. Additional public capital becomes available where councils have sold dwellings to tenants. The policy of selling council houses to tenants has generated £10 billion for reinvestment in the stock. The hon. Gentleman is wooing Tory local councils by promising to let them spend their accumulated capital receipts.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): Why do the Government not do that?

Mr. Ridley: I must tell the hon. and learned Gentleman that the greatest receipts do not correspond to the greatest needs. The friend of the hon. Member for Copeland, Mrs. Margaret Hodge, the leader of Islington council, to whom he referred today — someone with whom I am not always in full agreement — pointed out the folly of the hon. Gentleman's ways in an article in January's edition of *New Socialist*. The article said:

"The Front Bench's attitude is unhelpful. They mean to retain the extensive capital controls of the 1980 Act and simply to allow Councils the free use of capital receipts. As it is the low spending, low need and mainly Tory authorities which hold capital receipts they would get the first bite of a fixed spending total."

That is quite correct, and that is why, within the total provision for local authorities for housing investment of £2·922 billion next year, we are continuing to maintain the proportion of accumulated receipts that councils can spend at 20 per cent. per annum. This enables us to keep allocations higher and target the money to areas of higher need in the inner cities, where the need is to maintain and repair the existing stock. Those with the receipts can use them over time, but we have put the high need areas first. Inner-city authorities can improve their entitlements by selling houses to tenants and by releasing land to private developers, but too many are reluctant to do so.

The hon. Member for Copeland, despite the pressures on him, has not proposed an end to the controls on borrowing. He knows that to do so would wreck the economic strategy of his right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). Allowing councils free use of capital receipts would inevitably increase borrowing, because most of the capital receipts have already been used to repay debts or to lend internally. That means that if authorities with receipts use them there will be less within the borrowing ceiling for everyone else. The hon. Gentleman ought to know that. Indeed, it must be awful to have to learn one's mathematics from Margaret Hodge. I am sorry for the hon. Gentleman.

[Mr. Ridley]

The planned level of capital spending by local authorities has been increased by £390 million over this year's plans, partly because of the increased receipts under the right to buy. There is £75 million available for Estate Action next year—an increase of £25 million. It has a specific remit to tackle the disrepair and improve management of the most difficult inner-city estates. We are giving the Housing Corporation a gross allocation of £705 million next year, which will allow it to give approval to some 22,000 new homes for rent and for sale. Within that, its allocation for new fair rents and shared ownership projects in housing stress areas are being increased by 9 per cent. to £390 million, and we have asked it to give priority to help for homeless families and people looking to move for jobs.

I come back to the point that the problem of the rented sector is the absence of a market. Demand is not constrained by price, and supply is not directly related to demand. Under these circumstances, the substitute for the market is waiting lists and queues. Housing is no exception.

I must tell the House about when I bought a shirt in Moscow. There is only one shop in Moscow that I was allowed to go to, and when I arrived there I had to queue for 20 minutes. When I reached the head of the queue I was asked, "What sort of shirt would you like? You can have a large or small one." I said that I wanted a large one. I then went to the bottom of the next queue and queued for a further 20 minutes. When I arrived at the head of the queue I was given a docket, and I paid the specific number of roubles for the shirt. I then had to go into a third queue, and when I got to the head of that queue 20 minutes later I exchanged the docket for the shirt. That is what happens if there is not a market.

The economy of planning and allocation, which the Opposition always favour, is inefficient. It means that people have to wait. It means that people do not get what they want because there is no choice. In housing the problem is more serious. People suffer more if those who manage the system add to the inefficiency of the planned economy their own peculiar brand of inefficiency which the Audit Commission has found in certain authorities run by the hon. Gentleman's friends.

Such a system also means rules. Politicians must categorise and judge priorities between those who are genuinely homeless, those who have been a long time on the waiting list, those who are intentionally homeless, and those who do not fall into priority need categories. There has to be rationing. It is impossible to have a system where large numbers of people can demand a free home, more or less where they like, and be entitled to get one immediately. That is why we need more hostel accommodation. We need it so that those who manage the public rented stock can put people in temporary accommodation while they assess their need for housing. We also need it so that people who are not in priority need categories at least have the opportunity, so far as possible with the present crazy rented system, to find accommodation.

Within the Housing Corporation allocations we have given an extra £20 million specifically for new schemes, mixing 30 per cent. grant with private finance, to build self-contained units for families in bed-and-breakfast accomodation, and young job movers. This, together with a £10 million of challenge funding, should generate £100 million of housing investment. My hon. Friend's announcement of last Thursday that we are prepared to approve similar schemes for local authorities' funding of housing association schemes in co-operation with the private sector will enable councils further to facilitate that sort of development.

I must express astonishment at the fact that the hon. Member for Copeland never mentioned the Rent Acts, particularly when my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne pressed him on the matter. I am astonished that he did not turn his guns on the way in which certain local authorities manage and administer their responsibilities under the homelessness legislation. In 1977 the House gave local authorities the responsibility for housing the homeless. The vast majority carry out that function efficiently and well, but the greatest problems are here in London, and those problems are compounded by the inefficiency of certain local authorities, especially the famous eight Labour boroughs. They will be recorded in Labour folklore in the same way as the Tolpuddle martyrs, the Shrewsbury three, and now Kinnock's eight; dented shields and all. They are not carrying out their duties to house the homeless effectively because of their gross inefficiency, bad management and misuse of resources.

The hon. Gentleman spoke at the weekend on his visit to Leeds about "statutory minimum standards" and his "Quality Commission". What is the point of that if it is not to deal with Kinnock's eight? He should stop beholding the mote that is in his brother's eye, and consider the beam that is in his own eye.

Dr. Cunningham: The Secretary of State is wrong. I made no reference to statutory minima. The right hon. Gentleman is quoting someone else's speech. As the right hon. Gentleman is referring to the Audit Commission report, may I refer him to page 15, in connection with money for housing in London, where it says:

"Expenditure on housing improvements in London needs to be increased, yet capital allocations for housing to local authorities in Greater London have fallen from £1·5 billion in 1979-80 to under £500 million last year; and London's share has fallen from 35 per cent. to under 30 per cent."

That is what the Audit Commission says about the right hon. Gentleman's policies on housing finance in London.

Mr. Ridley: It is extraordinary that the hon. Gentleman does not know his own policy document. I read the Labour party's "Future of Local Government" and quoted precisely from it.

Mr. Allan Roberts: It was the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham).

Mr. Ridley: There are so many dogmas that I might have been mistaken about which was which. If it was not in the hon. Gentleman's speech, it was in the Labour party's policy document. It does not matter which: the hon. Gentleman cannot get out of it.

The hon. Member for Copeland talked about resources and quoted from the Audit Commission's report. There are massive resources, but they are being misused. For example, in September last year, in Tyne and Wear 128 households were in temporary accommodation, 49 of them in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. At the same time, there were nearly 6,296 empty council houses.

Moving to London, let us look at the record of Kinnock's eight. The House should listen. In Islington

there are 2,271 empty council-owned properties, 5·5 per cent. of the stock — the eighth worst record in the country. Hackney has 3,111 empty properties, 6·8 per cent. of its stock—the fourth worst in the country. The hon. Members for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) are here. Newham has 2,420 empty council-owned properties, 7·8 per cent. of the stock—the second worst in the country.

Mr. Heffer *rose*——

Mr. Ridley: I shall not give way. How can Labour Members complain about homelessness and about there being nowhere for people to go when all those grossly inefficient Labour councils are keeping all those houses empty?

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West) *rose*——

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South) *rose*——

Mr. Ridley: I shall not give way. These councils take an average of 20 weeks, going on for half a year, to re-let houses, compared with authorities elsewhere with similar problems which take on average between nine and 13 weeks, and even that is too long. Wandsworth takes only three weeks. The hon. Member for Copeland says that these councils are short of financial resources.

Dr. Cunningham: No, the Audit Commission says that.

Mr. Ridley: I do not care who says it. Quite apart from the hundreds of millions of pounds——

Dr. Cunningham: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ridley: No, I must get on.

Dr. Cunningham: Give way.

Mr. Ridley: I give way for the last time.

Dr. Cunningham: As the Secretary of State does not care about the first reference from the Audit Commission's report, perhaps he will care about the second, in paragraph 58 of its conclusions, when, referring to inner London authorities, about which the right hon. Gentleman was talking, it said:

"Inner London authorities cannot be expected to tackle their local housing problems without at least unfettered access to future capital receipts, the ability to fund capital expenditure from revenue and reasonable confidence about the level of borrowing approvals over the next few years. Additional borrowing will also be necessary".

Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that recommendation by the Audit Commission?

Mr. Ridley: It is a mistake. I am coming to all that.

Dr. Cunningham: What is the answer?

Mr. Ridley: May I be allowed to make my speech and give the hon. Member for Copeland the answer in what I shall say? The hon. Gentleman wants me to give the answer before I give it. That is ridiculous. He says that councils are short of financial resources.

Dr. Cunningham: The Audit Commission says that.

Mr. Ridley: I accept that the Audit Commission says that those councils are short of funds.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Do not quote it at us again.

Mr. Ridley: I accept what the hon. Member for Copeland says, that the Audit Commission says that the councils are short of financial resources. Quite apart from the millions of pounds that those councils could save if they eliminated inefficiency, and quite apart from the £20 million that the Audit Commission says they spend on "gesturing and zealotry", they have borrowed enormous amounts of money through creative accounting devices. They are now starting to pawn the council tenants' lavatories and bath taps. Ealing has pawned them for £30 million. How can those councils be short of money if they have done that? It is rich for the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook to accuse the Government of the "economics of the pawnshop." That is what happens in Kinnock's eight.

Those councils have allowed rent arrears to build up uncontrolled until they average 26 per cent. of their annual rent bills. I concede that these are some of the authorities that face the worst problems, but that means that they should be more than averagely competent in managing them. Even with the massive creative accounting resources at their disposal they seem incapable of tackling the real management task of housing people under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977.

Every night in London about 5,000 households are accommodated in bed-and-breakfast accommodation, yet there are 113,000 empty council-owned properties in England, nearly 28,000 of them in London. Why are they not being used? There is also money available in our housing allocations and through Estate Action to enable councils to bring empty properties into use, yet Lambeth and Brent have turned down special help from Estate Action to ease their homelessness problem. The one significant contribution that the Labour party could make to solving the problem of homelessness is to tell their friends in local government to stop their political interference and let their officers get on with the job of managing properly. The Labour party if failing the nation by its approach to homelessness. Indeed, it just does not care.

In the long run, we must create a market in rented housing based on a private sector response to demand. The interest is there. The resources are certainly there. With record levels of fixed investment in the rest of the economy generating economic growth, it is tragic that the rented sector is still the poor relation. The demand for rented housing is certainly there. The will is certainly here among Conservative Members. For the sake of all those who are looking for rented housing, I pray that the Labour party will shed its ideology and rise to the challenge. If the Labour party does not do so, we shall go ahead without it.

5.27 pm

Mr. Reg Freeson (Brent, East): We have listened to a rather sad speech. I do not intend to follow it. It would be extremely difficult to do so and to comment on all the detailed convoluted nonsense in the speech. I shall, however, pick up some of the points that were made towards the end of the speech, because they are directly relevant to a matter on which I wish to concentrate.

The Secretary of State referred to Brent as an example of what should be done—and is not—to help homeless families. I am afraid that the right hon. Gentleman is not up to date. I shall pick up some of his points, in which he was not only not in full knowledge of the facts but in which he contradicted statements issued by his Department. The right hon. Gentleman referred to the Estate Action programme, which has been rejected by Brent. Perhaps he will therefore explain to the House, to me and to Brent

[Mr. Reg Freeson]

why press releases have been sent to me by the Government, as well as by Brent council, announcing the receipt of several million pounds jointly negotiated between Brent council and the Department of the Environment for just those special estates.

It is about time that these exaggerations, inaccuracies and misleading statements by the Government should cease, because they are a total denial of what is happening. The millions of pounds are being negotiated and they will be applied as the Secretary of State's Department and my town hall have told me.

In Brent, 800 to 900 families are in homeless family accommodation. The bulk of them are in bed-and-breakfast hotels. They have the "roofs over their heads" to which the Secretary of State referred earlier. Whatever may be the social causes of that homelessness, which the Secretary of State rather peculiarly sought to put to the House, there are answers to it now. Whatever the causes of homelessness, those answers consist—if the Secretary of State will listen to these important points, whether or not he will act upon them—of providing the capital and the revenue resources as well as good management to the local authorities concerned to provide the dwellings that those homeless families require.

The plain fact is that, in the local authority and housing association sectors, there has been a reduction of 40 to 50 per cent. in the capital required to build new homes and to purchase and modernise old rundown empty dwellings, including many Victorian dwellings in my borough and elsewhere, convert them into decent modern dwellings and rehouse homeless and other families. That capital is not being made available.

Reference has been made to the large number of empty dwellings. I do not know what the up-to-date figure is, but those dwellings are certainly not to be found wholly on those estates which the Secretary of State wrongly stated would not be improved by my local authority with the help of the Department of the Environment. They will be. However, scores of dwellings are standing empty and are deteriorating week after week, month after month and in some cases year after year, because the Secretary of State's Department will not give the local authority concerned permission to undertake the works on them because it considers that the unit costs are too high.

No matter how many times professional officers revise the schemes and put them forward, they are rejected. The schemes relate to single dwellings and to whole blocks of flats in my constituency that are standing empty and rotting. All that is required is for the DOE, with the Minister's permission, to put a stop to this disgraceful bouncing of schemes, month after month and year after year, and to get those dwellings put into decent condition and used for homeless families whose number is growing.

I shall now refer to one specific area of housing policy and to the somewhat misleading statement that was made last Thursday in the House by the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction. I am glad to see that the Minister is now taking his place. In the first part of the statement, he said that he would introduce legislation to enable local authorities to do what the Housing Corporation already does in a few schemes—that is, to marry housing association grant to private capital and so draw in private capital to public housing. But even that aspect of the legislation that the Minister announced last Thursday was not accurately described.

The scheme will be a revenue scheme and not a capital grant scheme related to private investment. It will involve annual revenue moneys, and I have yet to see how that can be related to housing capital allocations, as the Minister then described; but no doubt we will learn more. However, I do not want to concentrate on that but on the main burden of the Minister's statement and the consultative document on the proposed legislation that he placed in the Library and which I have read several times.

It is already quite clear that, as a consequence of the statement on the proposed legislation, which announced a deadline at midnight last Thursday against any further private capital schemes being negotiated by local authorities, there will be a major reduction, not increase, in private capital coming into rented housing through the agency of housing associations and local authorities. My local authority — which is much criticised by the Secretary of State — has, like many others, negotiated over months with housing associations and with private sources of finance about £100 million-worth of guaranteed private money to be injected into housing association work. The Minister is putting at risk schemes that have been freely, sensibly and imaginatively explored negotiated by housing associations and local authorities throughout the country.

On Monday I had discussions with a welfare housing association which wanted to put up sheltered housing for the elderly. It cannot do so, although the plans have been approved, because the capital allocated to my borough by the Government through the Housing Corporation is not enough to allow it to proceed. Therefore, I discussed with the welfare housing association alternative ways of handling the financial problem. One of the ways that I discussed with the appropriate officer in the town hall was the possibility of the local authority giving a guarantee for a private loan to enable the association at least to buy the site which now stands a chance of being put on the market for private purposes in an area which is in great need of such welfare housing. If the welfare housing association does not obtain that site by March, it will no longer be available to it despite all the work that the association has done over many months to prepare that scheme for elderly people. Because of the midnight bar, the welfare housing association cannot get the local authority to negotiate that loan by way of a guarantee.

I shall give another, bigger example. Recently, in my borough, we have formed, on the initiative of two or three housing associations, building societies and the council, a housing trust called Homelease. Its purpose is to create, as it is entitled to, a trading company to buy private properties on the market that are in need of modernisation, repair and conversion so as to take families out of bed-and-breakfast hotels in Paddington and rehouse them in permanent accommodation. The housing trust required a guarantee to get the private funding. It was estimated that about £37 million had to be borrowed over the next three years or so to provide about 150 dwellings per year, decent family flats, for homeless families.

That is now at risk unless the agreement that the housing trust managed to scrape through by midnight on Thursday stands. Unless that stands, the housing trust cannot proceed and the whole exercise that took about 18

months to negotiate is at risk of collapsing. Even if that immediate scheme does not collapse, any future proposals will become subject to risk.

Two or three other housing associations have done the same thing. That scheme is not singular to Brent. It has been going on in London boroughs and cities such as Sheffield and other boroughs in a big way. It is something to be applauded, not to be knocked on the head and restricted as it is by all the conditions which have been laid down in the consultative document. I have read that document and it has been read by the National Federation of Housing Associations, by housing directors and building society representatives and others with whom I have been in touch. They have read it and have said that the criteria that the Government are introducing under the new control will make it extremely difficult — that is putting it mildly — for the schemes that have been negotiated to operate.

What is even more important at this stage is that it has killed off the morale of professional people who have spent weeks and months, and in some cases even years, negotiating such deals. What does the Minister or the Chancellor of the Exchequer — he is the man really behind this—think is going to be the effect on people in the private sector who have spent months of professional officers' time negotiating schemes of this kind, which have now been blocked? I too have been involved. We were fooled.

Last Thursday's statement was complicated, and when we got to the end I said to an hon. Friend beside me, "That is the key." The reality is not the liberalisation of local authority rights to put public money in with private money. The real and central theme of the statement and the legislation that is proposed is to stop local authorities and housing associations doing what they have freely negotiated to do, which is to get private money in on top of their public sector finance. I hope, no matter how strongly I am speaking now, that the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction and other Ministers — I do not blame the Minister entirely; the Chancellor is behind it—will change their minds.

If they now have to commit themselves to the policy contained in the statement last Thursday at least let them adopt a liberal approach. If they do not, no matter how slow it may be in coming—it is a complicated subject to make a quick drama about—there will be a justifiable explosion of anger in the housing association movement, the building societies and other financial institutions which have willingly gone along and wanted to participate in and produce these joint schemes. For heaven's sake, let us get some sense and get away from the stupid Treasury ideology that drove the Department of the Environment to draft that statement last Thursday which will kill off the provision of housing for the homeless rather than encourage it.

5.42 pm

Mr. Timothy Raison (Aylesbury): It is over 10 years since I took part in a housing debate in the Chamber. Listening to the right hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Freeson) brings a strong sense of deja vu and deja entendu. I remember that at one time I was a shadow spokesman on housing and the environment and the right hon. Gentleman was the Minister for Housing and Construction. I remember before that the protracted battles over the Housing Finance Act 1972 and I caught echoes of his familiar voice and ideas in what he said just now.

The right hon. Gentleman has been excessively crabbing about what the Government have been doing for the housing associations this year. I will not follow up his comments in detail but in the magazine *Voluntary Housing* of January this year there is an article entitled "Review" by Mr. Best. It says:

> "The best news about funding through the Housing Corporation next year is that the mainstream fair rent programme will be bigger."

He then goes on to say:

> "in place of 14,400 rented homes in 1986-87, associations in England will provide some 18,320 homes for rent . . . The Housing Association Movement will easily clear its 'base line' of 20,000 rented homes next year."

It cannot be said that the magazine, which after all is produced by people who know the subject, takes such a gloomy view as the right hon. Gentleman.

The picture today does not suggest that the overall state of our housing is in decline.. The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) tried to say that it was so but the figures do not bear that out. There is a steady excess in the number of dwellings over the number of households. That has been maintained, as the recent figures and social trends confirm. Overcrowding has declined and amenities have improved. The number of houses with a bath or shower has increased. In 1979, 95 per cent. of houses had a bath or shower and by 1984 it was 97 per cent. The number of houses without central heating fell from 45 per cent. to 34 per cent. over that period — and so on. Clearly, there has been a steady improvement in the overall availability and quality of housing.

Mr. Allan Roberts: If that is the case, can the right hon. Gentleman explain why the Building Employers Confederation, not known for its support of the Labour party but rather for the Conservative party, wrote to us in a briefing for the debate today:

> "There has also been a marked deterioration in housing conditions."?

It says that there are

> "only 200,000 starts per year — a cumulative shortfall of some three quarters of a million. As a result of this shortfall there has been a marked increase in homelessness. In England alone it now stands at 94,000 families."

The Building Employers Confederation could hardly be accused of political bias.

Mr. Raison: I accept that its political leaning is in our direction, but it has an obvious interest in providing more buildings. Of course it will produce arguments to support that point of view.

Although I believe that the general picture is one of improvement, we all recognise that there are severe specific problems that must be tackled. The anxiety about homelessness, which has been considerable for some time, was obviously brought to a head, perhaps in an emotional way, at the sight of people living in cardboard boxes during the freezing weather conditions and so on. That is an important part of the subject of the debate and we would be wrong to shrug it off.

As I understand it, figures show that last March about 14,400 households were in temporary accommodation. As we know from the figures, there is a steady rise in acceptances as homeless. In 1978 53,000 households were accepted, in 1984 83,550 households were accepted and the figure for last year seems to be over 100,000. Of course that

[Mr. Raison]

is a substantial figure, but most people would say that even more worrying than acceptances—after all, they were people who were housed—is the unknown number of people who were not eligible to be treated as homeless but who, nevertheless, were homeless. When my hon. Friend the Minister replies he may be able to give us more detail than I have been able to discover about the extent of the problem. We know that it is there, and we have to face it.

We know that it is a remarkably difficult problem. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, at the heart of this lies social change, changes in patterns of social behaviour. It is no good trying to duck that fact. The figures that I use are from the second quarter of 1986. They show that, among the homeless households accepted, 41 per cent. were cases where parents, relatives or friends were no longer able or willing to accommodate the people concerned. A total of 20 per cent. stemmed from the breakdown of relationships with partners. I do not know the figures for those who were not accepted but we can see something that must concern us and which is a difficult problem to tackle.

I do not think that we can say simply that everybody who becomes homeless, for whatever reason, has an absolute and total right to a house. The Opposition motion puts forward a programme designed to ensure that everybody is housed. I am not clear whether they are saying that there is either an absolute right to housing or an absolute duty to provide housing for every person. Perhaps we will hear more about that.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Yes.

Mr. Raison: The hon. Gentleman, who is apparently a power in this realm, says, "Yes"—that the Labour party does say that.

Mr. Roberts: The Labour party believes that a decent home is a right, not a privilege, and that it should be provided so that it is available for everybody in the way that health care and education should be available. It is not a case of being able to buy if one is rich and being homeless if one is poor. I can assure the right hon. Gentleman that when rich people have marital problems and separations it does not result in their becoming homeless.

Mr. Raison: We want to know, and perhaps we will discover from the debate, whether, when the hon. Gentleman says that the Labour party believes that everyone has a right to housing, it means to enforce that by a statutory right to housing, or what I suppose is technically more feasible, a statutory duty to provide housing for every person, whatever their conditions, who applies for it. I do not know whether it is Labour party policy. It is not enough to get up and say in a generalised way that everybody has a right. If the Labour party means that, presumably it will require, as I have said, either a statutory right comparable to the right to buy a council house or a statutory duty on local authorities to provide housing for everybody come what may.

Mr. Allan Roberts: In the Labour party's policy statement, "Homes for the Future" there is a whole section on the right to rent as well as the right to buy. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman should read our policy documents as assiduously as the Secretary of State does; he would then know that that was our policy.

Mr. Raison: If the Labour party has adopted the absolute right that I have suggested, the hon. Gentleman will find that he runs into great difficulties of cost and common sense. He would be embarking on an open-ended commitment which, in reality, it would be impossible to fulfil and which will, therefore, join the ranks of Labour's broken promises without doing much good for the people it is supposed to be trying to help. I do not believe that that is the answer, any more than I believe that we should regard housng as a kind of general social service. Obviously, there is a social service element in housing policy, but we should make much more progress if we considered housing primarily as an economic commodity which can be provided through the market rather than something to be regarded as a social service. That has been the experience of recent years and we should be foolish to move away from that. However, we have a problem and we must face it. The only answer to homelessness and the other remaining housing problems has much to do with finding ways of increasing the available housing stock, especially in places where it is most needed.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment was absolutely right to say that the impact of rent control legislation since the first world war has made life very difficult, although there were admirable motives behind such measures. We cannot read accounts of life in Victorian England and not be struck by the fact that one could always rent a reasonable house. There was no hassle about it. That facility has been destroyed by successive legislation. It is important to try to get back to that picture.

My hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction and his predecessor have introduced various measures designed to liberalise the private rented market. I welcome those moves, but I think that we all accept that they have not solved the problem. We hope that the Government will introduce bold measures. People often say that we must wait for a consensus, but if we wait for a consensus, especially if we wait for the Opposition, we shall be well into the 21st century before anything is produced.

The Government must be bold. They must forget the fears of Rachmanism, which was a phenomenon of 30 years ago. We must take our courage in our hands and try to provide what many recognise as the most flexible form of housing. Therefore, I look forward to hearing my hon. Friend's reply to the debate, when I hope that he will be able to give us some encouragement.

Mr. Winnick: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Raison: No; I must get on.

The key to our housing policy in the next decade must be flexible housing. The tremendous triumph of the sale of council houses during the past few years showed boldness. Many people were very dubious about that bold policy, but I hope that that success will be copied in the private rented sector. However, I recognise that such a radical reform will not solve the immediate problem in the next few years. There are people who badly need rented housing of one kind or another. Of course, it is the homeless who must inevitably fall into that category. That leads us to the two questions of council housing and housing association housing.

I agree with the long-term objective of moving people out of council housing, provided that is what they want.

We should not go so far as to dismiss council housing as a useful vehicle for providing new housing in the immediate future. Some parts of the country with housing needs are not stocked with old Victorian houses that can be divided, sublet, and so on. Aylesbury has virtually no residue of that kind of housing and there is little alternative at present to providing council housing for people who have that kind of need. I do not feel any deep abhorrence when I look at the council houses in my constituency. I do not object to the fact that the council has been providing new housing in my constituency. We should look at the matter pragmatically, rather than get caught in some kind of ideological hang-up.

We should look more towards housing associations to fill our housing needs. I welcome the step taken to provide a mix of housing association money with private sector money. Progress has been made in Wales in particular to that end. I think that the idea that housing association money can be stretched much further through that kind of partnership, with private sector housing money coming from the building societies and elsewhere, is of great importance.

Mr. Pavitt: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Raison: No.

Nothing in housing will be a cure-all. The formula of the 30 per cent. element will work only in areas where there is some flexibility and the ability to meet higher rents. The January issue of *Voluntary Housing* made it clear that it is not appropriate for every part of the country. Nevertheless, what is being done is most exciting and positive.

Again, Mr. Best says:

"The combining of public and private finance has long seemed to us to be a key to getting more out of the tax-payer's contribution. This breakthrough is a vital starting point."

It seems that we have something which my right hon. Friend has done a great deal to stimulate, and I give him my full backing.

There is a specific and serious problem of housing within the overall picture of a general improvement. We shall not solve that problem unless we get to grips with renting. The reform of the private rented sector is a crucial element but what I have said about the housing associations would make a substantial difference. I believe that the policies of my right hon. Friend point in the right direction, and I hope that he will be able to press on with them as rapidly as possible.

5.57 pm

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): I commend the Labour party for the serious terms in which the motion is couched. I regret that it did not draw a better response from the Secretary of State. The Government's action is not only wholly at odds with expressed Government aims in housing but is also completely baffling even within Conservative philosophy.

Housing has suffered a cut of 60 per cent. That is the highest cut of all in real terms over the past eight years. I cannot understand why a Government who believe in good housekeeping would let the fabric of housing in this country decline so much that it requires far more money now to restore it even to minimum habitable standards. People have to try to cope with the deteriorating fabric of their accommodation. They feel hopelessly inadequate when they have to try to deal with it out of their own resources. It has become a serious social and financial problem. Each cut increases in real terms the amount that will eventually be required to restore housing to any kind of reasonable standard.

The Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction is aware of the problem of Reema buildings. Leeds has the largest number of such buildings, but around the country there are about 15,000 such dwellings. One of the problems is that no two blocks are exactly the same. That causes additional difficulties. Thousands of people still live in such houses, but we do not yet have a solution to the problem. If those houses have to be demolished, that will put further pressure on an already overcrowded housing market. So far as we can see, no effort is being made to solve the problem of housing and to consider whether the cuts will cause more expenditure later.

All parties are concerned about the number of empty houses at this time of housing need, and we are seriously hampered by Government policies. For example, the limit of 20 per cent. of capital receipts for reinvestment makes it difficult for local authorities to solve their own problems out of the money that they have gained from council house sales. One of the ways used by the Government to persuade reluctant Labour authorities to sell council houses was to tell them that the money would be available for their own capital spending, but that did not happen.

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): Does the hon. Gentleman share the view of the September 1984 Liberal assembly? Would he deny the right to buy for those entering into a coalition, or does he share the view of the Government and of his hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Hancock) that that freedom should continue?

Mr. Meadowcroft: I hope that the House accepts that I am a fair man in these matters. I shall deal with the intervention of the hon. Member for York (Mr. Gregory) when I come to the question of rented accommodation. If he feels that I have not, no doubt he will remind me.

In addition to the problem of the limitation to 20 per cent., we must consider the wholly inadequate housing investment programme allocations. I do not accept that the Dutch auction is the best way of dealing with HIP allocations; it can mean that councils greatly overbid because they are trying to get a higher allocation. Nevertheless, it is perfectly clear that the amounts being made available in areas of great housing need are simply inadequate. A further problem was the announcement last week of still further restrictions on private cash coming into that sector.

An article in today's edition of *The Independent* makes the point that the alliance-controlled authority of Tower Hamlets has been prevented from introducing a scheme that would have made some impact on the problem by housing 600 homeless families. That scheme has been caught by the Minister's midnight deadline of a few days ago. It is ridiculous for Ministers to express their worries about housing by making arbitrary decisions and introducing midnight deadlines, when many local authorities are trying, with the best possible motives, to solve their problems by drawing on private money.

Mr. Allan Roberts: The hon. Gentleman referred to Tower Hamlets being under Liberal control. Does he agree with the new alliance policies on homelessness in Tower

[Mr. Allan Roberts]

Hamlets? In future, offers of accommodation for homeless families will be made irrespective of specified areas of choice.

Unlike other families, homeless families will be housed above the fourth floor in high-rise blocks. Furthermore, the existing standards governing the number of people per dwelling will be ignored, with the result that more people will be occupying each property.

Does the hon. Gentleman accept the alliance policy of making homeless families—most of them Bengali—live in high-rise flats above the fourth floor in overcrowded conditions that other families do not have to suffer? History has shown that it is in such flats that people are most likely to suffer racist attacks. Is that a good way of dealing with the problem?

Mr. Meadowcroft: None of the proposed ways of dealing with the problem of homeless families is ideal. However, I do not accept that there is anything to be proud of in the legacy left by the previous Labour council. The immediate solution to a huge problem may not be ideal by any means, but it may be the best available.

The hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) should realise that the fault does not lie with my colleagues in Tower Hamlets. They are rate-capped by this Government to the tune of £124 million, of which their officers now tell them £24 million will be required in the next year to house 1,500 homeless families.

Mr. Pavitt: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meadowcroft: I have given way to the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts).

Mr. Allan Roberts: The right hon. Gentleman does not want to answer the point.

Mr. Meadowcroft: I am happy to answer the point. Twenty per cent. or more of Tower Hamlets' total resources is to go to house 1,500 families, so of course the council is keen to find a solution. The *Independent* article states that over 600 of those families—*[Interruption.]* I shall certainly not give way to the hon. Member for Bootle if he continues to chat away so discourteously.

Tower Hamlets had a scheme that could have housed more than 600 families, but that has been stopped by the Minister. If the council is forced into schemes that are less than ideal, I sympathise both with the council and with the families involved.

Mr. Pavitt *rose*——

Mr. Allan Roberts *rose*——

Mr. Meadowcroft: I give way to the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Pavitt).

Mr. Pavitt: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way. Before he was diverted by my hon. Friend the Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts), he made a powerful point about the arrogance shown by the Minister when at 4.30 pm last Thursday he set a deadline for midnight the same night. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Freeson) told the House, I managed to get the only available copy of the document in the Library to Brent by two minutes to midnight so that the year's negotiations for the housing assocations—which have been praised by the Government—could be signed before the deadline came into force.

Perhaps when the Minister responds to the pertinent point made by the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) he will explain why he gave only seven and a half hours notice. Why were the housing associations, housing corporations, and housing co-operatives, all of which were affected, not given more time to follow up their negotiations?

Mr. Meadowcroft: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's remarks. In addition to answering that point, will the Minister tell us whether he will give his consent for schemes such as the Tower Hamlets scheme? Will he regard such schemes sympathetically?

The Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction (Mr. John Patten): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. I am loth to display signs of the Bootle syndrome.

I, too, have seen the serious report in that eminently serious newspaper, *The Independent*. Is the hon. Gentleman aware that I have already looked into the matter and that this morning my officials spoke to council officers in Tower Hamlets? Is he aware that the scheme was some distance away from signature? Is he further aware that my officials have asked the officers of Tower Hamlets council to keep in close contact, so that we can see whether or not we can give consent to a modified form of the scheme? I am sure that he recognises that we are being eminently reasonable.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Reasonable, but not eminent, I should have thought. I appreciate what the Minister has said. It seems that elections work wonders.

A further huge housing problem is that of system building and high-rise dwellings. I am not desperately concerned at this point to say whose fault it was, but there is no doubt that for some years Governments of both colours put financial pressure on local authorities to build. I have often found it rather odd that local authorities that have paraded their independence and sought desperately to remain independent of central Government have allowed themselves to be forced into such building. Now they say, "We were not really independent. We were forced into building by central Government." It is a shame that more authorities did not hold out against building. It is not merely a question of hindsight, because some authorities saw well ahead that the outcome would be disastrous.

For posterity, let me quote a report from Leeds which goes back to 1906. Alderman Lupton, the Liberal chairman of the then housing committee, which was known as the unhealthy areas committee, wrote:

> "The Committee consider that land is so easily attainable at a low price within a mile of the most crowded parts of the city, that it is quite needless to introduce flats . . . into Leeds; whilst there are objections to them on the score of want of privacy, as well as considerable difficulty in giving proper exercise to young children, who cannot come down from the upper storeys in high buildings, and are therefore shut up in the dwellings whenever their mothers cannot look after them. The same objection applies when one considers the case of the old and infirm"

We discovered exactly those problems 70 or 80 years later and we must face them still. The buildings are still with us in many respects—if not on our skyline, then in our ledgers where the debt charges will remain for many years to come. That applies particularly to the impossibility of coping with deck access dwellings, of which many still remain.

Men and women in local government and in central Government, with the best of intentions, but still to disastrous effect, destroyed much improvable housing and replaced it with dwellings that undermined neighbourhoods and dispersed communities. For every three terrace houses demolished in Leeds, only one could be put back in the same place. People were spread around and had to travel greater distances so that communities lost much of their ability to manage themselves. There is no doubt that a policy of more gradual renewal, and the replacement of houses that were incapable of improvement, rather than their demolition, would have been far better.

One of the problems that came out in the Secretary of State's speech is that the Government always deal with units and bricks and mortar. They do not deal with homes. If one confuses houses with homes, one will never get the housing problem right. It is not just a question of building units. People must belong to a community. Bricks and mortar do not make a home. The solution to the problem must be based on all types of tenure, and not limited to either the public or the private sectors. The Centre for Environmental Studies report on the outer estates—one of the most optimistic documents for a long time—shows us how to deal with the legacy of the answers to the problems of the 1930s and 1940s, which have led to our current problems. Stockbridge village is one example; it has its problems but no doubt it will be improved upon in the next experiment of that type involving— *[Interruption.]* There are other examples as well, such as east Glasgow.

It is ironic that a memorial service was held today for Lord Stockton who, as Minister of Housing in 1954, was responsible for building 310,000 houses, of which 220,000 were council dwellings. After that time, there was a progressive switch from public sector building to private sector building. The disparity was not picked up by the Labour Government and building by Labour authorities tailed off, even into the 1970s. It is a pity that we do not have the same drive to make sure that a variety of housing is available as was shown in 1954.

The Conservative party regularly tries to make a simplistic equation between empty properties and homeless people. Many of the empty properties are simply unlettable. When I served on Leeds council for many years, in a three-party committee meeting the housing managers would provide a list of individual properties empty for more than three months. Committee members questioned why individual dwellings were on the list. The vast bulk in my area were Reema-type maisonettes. However desperate the people were, they would not accept them.

There is a mismatch in the housing area. The hon. Member for Bootle referred to the problems of Tower Hamlets, with its 1,500 homeless families. As the families have an average of five children each, the empty properties are generally smaller and are not suitable for them. Because of that mismatch, it is simplistic to link the statistics. We should not be throwing around figures and trying to link them; to solve the homeless problem we need to provide a variety of housing and choice, rather than simply forcing people into a particular type of tenure in a particular place.

There is an escalator in house: buying trends. Young people in Leeds buy a small back-to-back terraced house when they are first married. However, as they become better off, they might move to a through terrace or even a semi-detached. Later, when the children have moved away, they could go back to a smaller house. If one takes a piece out of the escalator, especially if it is the first step, people cannot get on it. That is the problem today and a change of policy is needed to deal with it. If we are to alter this awful categorisation of public and private, we need to make sure that houses are not identifiable as public or private. However, we have to deal with the attitudes of some developers.

I recall being part of a three-party committee that had discussions with developers in an attempt to persuade them to build a large estate of houses, with the object of the council then buying back 40 per cent. of those houses, scattered throughout the estate, to let to council tenants. It was hoped that in that way, the houses would not be identified as private or public. However, the developers would not do that, because they said that they would be unable to sell the private housing. I did not believe it, but that is what they said. The most they would agree to was to build separate cul-de-sacs of houses with separate access roads. If the Minister wishes to abolish that distinction, he should do more to persuade developers to be more socially oriented.

I have not yet dealt with the question raised by the hon. Member for York on the right to buy. It has been as much a problem for our party as for the Labour party, because once a right is given, it is difficult to take it back. It would have been easier not to give the right in the first place. I guess that that is why the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) has decided that the right to buy must continue. The Alliance agrees that the right to buy will have to stay, but we want to give a greater variety of discounts to local authorities with particular needs. That is a sensible policy. Because of the right to buy, there are fewer good rented properties for those in greatest need.

Constituents tell me that they are desperate to get out of their awful housing in awful areas, but that the best council housing has been sold, especially on the modern estates. Poor people are stuck in accommodation. That is wrong. Local authorities should not simply sell their houses without regard to need, but should endeavour, when adhering to Government policy, to focus on the housing needs within their authorities.

Mr. Gregory: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for seeking to clarify the incredible motion put before the Liberal assembly in September 1984. However, he has not come clean; he is still fudging the issue. Is he saying that a tenant who has purchased a property under the right to buy will then be denied that right by a Liberal council? The Liberal leader in York, which is not far from the hon. Gentleman's constituency, has said that he will steal back those properties because they should be in the public sector. Will the hon. Gentleman denounce that Liberal leader?

Mr. Meadowcroft: I would want to know the precise circumstances in which that statement was made, and I would do nothing that would undermine a colleague. I am anxious to discuss with York city council the effects of the right-to-buy policy in its council estates and whether, in fact, we should focus the policy in a different way for York, rather than applying the blanket policy throughout the country. I repeat that the right to buy will remain.

Mr. John Patten: When I reply I shall certainly remember that the hon. Gentleman has been courteous enough to give way to me twice. */Laughter/*. I dare say that I shall regret that pledge.

The hon. Gentleman is the alliance spokesman on this matter. Is he saying that the SDP has joined the Liberals in stating that there will be not a full-blown right to buy, but a policy of allowing local authorities to decide who shall or shall not buy? Will he give a straight answer?

Mr. Meadowcroft: I stress again that the scale of discounts will focus on the different needs of particular authorities. That is not abolishing the right to buy. We must be careful to make that distinction. If the Minister can afford it, I will sell him a copy of the book in which the policy is set out */Interruption./* I am surprised that he does not have it. */Interruption./* I hope that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will allow me injury time to compensate for these interventions.

We do not intend to view the right to buy in the way that the Government view it—namely, virtually giving away the houses. In a recent court case in Leeds, the recorder said of an estate that had been offered for sale:

"Dare one use that terrible expression, is it a working class, rather than a middle class area?"

A housing official replied:

"It depends what you mean by middle class. Moortown Estate tends to be an area where people buy council houses."

The judge said:

"It's not like Seacroft where you get flats boarded up"

The official replied:

"No. That's a different kettle of fish".

That is intolerable. The difference is that there is a variety of rented accommodation around the country and a blanket policy will not suit all the different authorities. Therefore, we must be more sensitive than the Government in applying the policy.

I shall move on quickly now, as other hon. Members wish to speak—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] At least I have support for something. Market forces cannot deliver housing to meet the individual needs of the people. It was interesting that, during questions, the market Conservatives sitting behind the Minister asked for an alteration in planning regulations to enable local authorities to prevent housing being built for a particular sale that was able to command a price on the market rather than to meet the need in the local authorities. It is important for us to accept that market forces will not solve the housing problem.

There is a need for the third sector in which housing associations can draw in private money and, with a modicum of subsidy, can ensure that rents are fixed at reasonable levels. That could provide a great part of our housing stock.

Renovation must continue in ways that are sensitive to the needs of different areas. When improvement grants were available, it was quite amazing how owners were able and felt it worth their while to put in the rest of the money and improve their houses. That has been eroded over recent years and owners can no longer afford to put money into their own housing stock. Schemes such as the "staying-put" scheme of the Anchor housing association have done a great deal with the small amount of money that is being made available.

Those resources often come from people liberating the money tied up in their houses. I hope that it will be possible to liberate the capital that people have in their houses by flexible schemes from building societies, and that they will be helped and encouraged by the Government.

Finally, I should like to speak about bed-and-breakfast accommodation and the problem of homelessness. There is no way that the present policy is in the slightest way acceptable. It is a bizarre commentary on the Government's failure that this is not strictly a financial problem. The cost of providing homes for people who are in bed-and-breakfast accommodation would be less than the cost of that bed-and-breakfast accommodation. It would be hard to imagine a greater indictment of the Government than the fact that they find it impossible to find a way of bridging that gap. Alas, we have come to accept the inevitability of bed and breakfast as accommodation for homeless people. That is absolutely intolerable and the Government must find a way to link the resources put into that with decent housing for those people.

I have no doubt that when the hon. Member for Perry Barr replies, in his genuine manner, he will continue down the road that he has taken during recent months and be sensible and pragmatic about housing policy. Although he is making a genuine and brave attempt to update Labour philosophy, there is still the problem of the local authorities through which he would have to administer housing policy. The prodigal son may well come and say, "Yes, my party has sinned and wishes to change its ideas about housing." However, those amongst whom he squandered his inheritance in the past are still there. The difficulty is that the Labour party's ideological commitment to one type of housing is detrimental to the housing scene.

As an example, one of the cries of Liverpool council is that it has been defending homes and jobs. However, Liverpool now has 10,000 fewer council tenancies than it had when the Liberal party was in control. The hon. Member for Perry Barr should take note of that statistic.

We should ensure that housing resources come from different sources, and that we deal with the problem sensitively and efficiently. The housing units that are available are more important than the ideological background from which they come. This is a crucial and serious problem that needs all our pragmatic resources to cope with it.

6.23 pm

Mr. Humfrey Malins (Croydon, North-West): I suspect that those of us who have the honour to represent inner or outer cities find that housing is the major problem that we come across. In our correspondence and at our surgeries, the vast preponderance of worries and problems arise in that area.

Homelessness is on the increase. Certainly in my borough of Croydon, of which you have such intimate knowledge, Mr. Speaker, homelessness has been on the increase in recent years. However, there are different sorts of homelessness. It ranges from those who literally have to sleep on the streets, to those who have no home in the sense that they sleep in short-term hostels, and to those who are in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. I share the sentiments that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State expressed when he said that social changes have led to increased pressure on housing, and especially to homelessness.

I should like to talk, first, about bed-and-breakfast accommodation. In so doing, I shall try not to make any party political points, because the problem crosses London and political parties of differing complexions. However, the common factors are squalor, misery and depression, wherever one might be.

About three years ago, I went to see a family who were living in a bed-and-breakfast hotel in Croydon. Four people lived in one room, which was about 10 feet square. There was a husband, his wife and their two daughters who were aged about nine and five. They had been there for months. The room was not only their bedroom, but their living room, playing room and eating room. It was their entire abode.

The circumstances that led to their being in that accommodation are not important. The fact is that they were there, and had been there for some time, and their life there was miserable. The father told me that because of their situation the marriage was under strain, the children were not performing well at school and there were possible signs of delinquency. It was difficult to be surprised at what he said. The rent for the room was £105 a week, yet the DHSS was paying about £157 a week. The landlord was making an exorbitant profit, and somebody was not doing very well out of it.

I hope that Opposition Members do not think that I am making a party political point. All I am saying is that here in London there are problems, which I recognise as severe, but they are not limited to that hotel. I have seen many others like it, and people who have to live in the knowledge that the next day will be just as grim as the day that they have just gone through.

I wondered how on earth decent standards could be enforced upon such hoteliers. I took the matter up with my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Dr. Boyson), the then Minister for Social Security, and asked whether, apart from paying out the money, the DHSS could enforce standards of accommodation. I think that the answer was no, because at that time those matters were the responsibility of the local housing authority.

I went to the local housing authority in Croydon. Incidentally, I should add that Croydon currently does not use bed-and-breakfast accommodation, much to its credit. The housing officer told me that the position was complicated because all the legislation appeared to give the housing authority powers, rather than duties. He could not quite understand—I paraphrase what the officer told me—the complexities of the legislation. In practice, it was almost impossible for a local authority to insist on minimum standards. Later it was confirmed to me that that was the case. There is no absolute duty on anybody to enforce minimum standards.

Ever since then I have tried to campaign, not only that bed-and-breakfast accommodation should disappear, but that there should be minimum standards that can be enforced by somebody against the providers of that bad accommodation, the profiteering landlords.

I should like to move away from the issue of bed-and-breakfast accommodation and to talk a little about other issues in Croydon, where great contributions to housing are made. We should not forget the contributions of the voluntary sector, the local authorities and, indeed, the Government. I am referring to those who live in short-term hostels, and in general they are young, single people.

In Croydon, the Association for the Young Single Homeless is supported by a variety of means. Urban aid was a great help and something for which many people have been grateful. There is also the Young Men's Christian Association and the Croydon Housing Aid Society. Many of these voluntary set-ups provide good, short-term, individual, clean hostel rooms for people who do not have a permanent home of their own. Some thoroughly good people work in that area; and they all deserve the thanks of us all.

Finally, I come to those on the streets, and it is difficult to know exactly how many there are. Nightwatch, a group in Croydon run by John Taylor, offers advice to people who live on the streets. It does a soup run, taking soup at night to people who do not have a bed to go to. One night during the worst of the weather—I had fixed the date before the weather changed—I went out with him and a local clergyman, Francis Pole, to see who was sleeping rough. Funnily enough, there were not many; perhaps only 15 to 20. They were in a different category from those about whom I have been speaking and can best be described—I do not mean this unkindly—as tramps and down-and-outs. I hope to goodness that something can be done for them — the local authority in Croydon is looking into this — and that their numbers do not increase.

I shall end by shifting my ground slightly. Many of us in London feel that the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 and the Housing Act 1980 have not helped. The requirement to give special priority to those considered to be vulnerable, for example, can cause unfairness. I sometimes deal with cases, for example, of a girl with a child who has just been evicted from her parents' three-bedroomed house. Unless I am mistaken, such a girl is meant to get priority treatment, but that is grossly unfair. It reflects the sad trend in society that families often do not take responsibility for their own, as they used to do. Perhaps it is a sign of the times. Too many of us think that the state is the great provider, and not enough think that families have some duties.

I have asked many questions and I appear to have no answers. I certainly have no easy answer to the bed-and-breakfast problem, but I wish to goodness that we could open up the private sector. I am acutely aware that people who own houses might let them if they thought that they could get a decent return on them.

Mr. Winnick: The hon. Gentleman should not spoil a good speech.

Mr. Malins: It is kind of the hon. Gentleman to say that, but I am not spoiling it. Properties are empty and landlords may let them. How can we shift people who are in bed-and-breakfast accommodation into private rented accommodation?

Mr. Winnick: What about council houses?

Mr. Malins: I shall stick to this one point. At present a fair rent is established, but that is no good to a landlord who seeks a 10 per cent. return. Is there any way in which empty properties can be let to a family and two rents can be fixed? Perhaps the DHSS could pay the fair rent, which is low, and money that was used to pay for bed-and-breakfast accommodation could be transferred from DHSS coffers to pay the private landlord an economic rent. In that way he could make a decent profit.

Private landlords are greatly discouraged from letting because, when the rental goes wrong, regaining possession

[Mr. Malins]

through the county courts is expensive, slow and a waste of time. I have no answer to the question, but it seems incongruous to have people in bed-and-breakfast accommodation on the one hand and many empty properties on the other.

I have raised problems, some of which exist in Croydon, but nothing that I have said should detract from my tremendous admiration for what the Government have done about home ownership. Homelessness and bed-and-breakfast accommodation are genuine problems placing great strains on families. All hon. Members on both sides of the House should strain every sinew to ensure that we never need bed-and-breakfast accommodation again.

6.34 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): It is a great pity that the Secretary of State was not present to hear the speech of the hon. Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Malins). His sincerity was impressive as he spoke of the reality and savagery of homelessness.

At the end of the debate, we shall leave the House and go home to clean beds, where we will be warm. Presumably, we shall not face children who are suffering from being jammed into one room or mothers who are on large doses of tranquillisers, and we shall not be trying desperately to keep a marriage together in intolerable circumstances. But that is what many people face today.

It is absolutely incredible that the Secretary of State can come to the House and say, apparently seriously, that these problems are caused by changes in social conditions, yet feel that he has no involvement in or responsibility for the changes in housing policy and in the policies of local authorities.

When the Government came to office in 1979, my borough, which does not suffer from the extensive difficulties suffered by inner London boroughs, could offer council accommodation or some hope of it to the people on its waiting list. Not more than 1,000 families were on the whole waiting list for every different type of problem. Today we have more families than that on the urgent waiting list alone. Those families can demonstrate immediately social conditions which make it essential for them to be rehoused and know that the problems are so urgent that if they are not solved, their children will produce immediate and plain symptoms of that deprivation. Housing has a direct effect on the health of a family and society as a whole.

There are now no ways in which housing authorities can operate flexibly. They do not have an easy, efficient way of managing their housing stock, and those on their waiting lists suffer considerable anxiety from not knowing how long they will be there. In my area, both families and the single homeless have virtually no hope of being rehoused, despite the tremendous efforts made by some voluntary societies.

Tonight I wish to make one specific point. An effect of social deprivation, especially in housing, is that children run away. Not far from here, in any of the main London stations, groups of voluntary workers seek late at night to help those who have run away from problems at home, whether from parents or institutions. The Children's Society's central London teenage project cannot produce exact figures for the number of children who have run away, but it has asked each chief constable how many runaways come from his area every day. The Children's Society estimated from the data that it gathered that 75,000 children under the age of 17 were real runaways each year.

We cannot say what becomes of those children; no Government statistics label them adequately. The problem of invisible children is even greater. They have run away from various correctional institutions and are labeled "absconders". Many are never registered under any known institutional figure, so we cannot know how many of them come to large cities every year. It is certain that these children face great moral and social problems when they become homeless. They are not receiving support or help from any kind of governmental or local institution. If they are lucky, they are found by representatives of the local voluntary associations.

However, there is no sign that anyone is making an attempt to deal with the problems of those who have voluntarily or involuntarily become homeless. Many turn to shoplifting and theft, and an increasing proportion are turning to child prostitution. When we think of Victorian England and what happened then in terms of housing, we should remember that the Victorian society tolerated child prostitution and was prepared to accept the conditions under which many working-class people had to live.

It was very easy for the Secretary of State to make the kind of speech that he made today, a speech so arrogantly patronising that I am astonished that he felt able to stand at the Dispatch Box and deliver it. It is not enough to remember the homeless simply at the time of a general election. It is certainly not enough to remember the homeless only when we are seeking a way to berate local authorities and trying to shift the responsibility from central Government to locally elected representatives.

We need a housing policy which will urgently house people, but not in any tatty bed-and-breakfast establishment which can be sold from one proprietor to another for indescribable amounts of profit, irrespective of the human lives contained within those sad walls. We need a housing policy which accepts that many people will never be able to buy their own home. Those people have a right to a decent home and some form of stable life within their own four walls. They will not get that unless the Government cease to talk in such arrogant and unacceptable terms and begin to put money, effort and real commitment into rehousing those saddest people of all, those who tonight will not have a home of their own.

6.42 pm

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Nottingham, North): I hope that the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) will forgive me if I do not deal with her remarks. I want to comment on the remarks of the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft), the alliance spokesman on housing.

As we sat with bated breath, the hon. Gentleman announced the alliance policy on the right to buy. I was dismayed to hear that the alliance proposes a policy whereby councils could juggle with the right-to-buy discounts. That would cause much concern in cities such as Nottingham. If no discount was stipulated, that could enable a local authority that was hostile to the right to buy, to adopt a policy of ignoring discounts. That would be to the disadvantage of council tenants. I listened to the alliance policy with the greatest dismay.

When I considered the Opposition motion tonight, I was reminded of the saying, "People in glass houses should not throw stones." Rarely have I seen a motion more likely to draw attention to the conflicting views of the Labour party than this.

The first part of the motion refers to the objective of providing

"a fit home available to buy or rent."

The motion continues to consider the combination of "private and public provision." I congratulate the Opposition on seeing the light of that combination which has been so successfully deployed in Nottingham. On the approaches to Nottingham by Trent Bridge, there is a site which lay derelict for many years. The site was unused and an eyesore to everyone who entered the city. Thanks to an urban development grant of just under £500,000 from the Government, the site has been transformed. Nicely landscaped modern housing was set out. An old warehouse was converted into flats and the development is a perfect example of the combination between the private and public sectors.

Opposition Members may say that that is exactly what they are advocating. Unfortunately, Labour's prospective parliamentary candidate for Nottingham, South has criticised this combination of private and public funds. He announced grandly to the people of Nottingham that private developers should not profit at public expense. It appears that the Labour party in the House is saying one thing and the activists outside are saying another. We are seeing the iron fist of the activists covering the soothing velvet words of the Opposition spokesmen.

Mr. John Patten: Does my hon. Friend also recognise that the comments of the Labour party candidate reveal a yawning gap between himself and Nottingham city council? The council is a keen applicant for and recipient of urban development grant, which can be used to bring about such public sector and private sector co-operation. There are clearly many differences within the Labour party in Nottingham.

Mr. Ottaway: I agree with my hon. Friend. The Labour candidate's comments reveal the credibility gap between the activists in the constituency and the spokesman in the House.

The latter part of the Opposition motion refers to the

"decline in the overall quality of the housing stock and failing to increase it at a rate sufficient to meet the needs of the people of Britain."

There is a large empty site at present in my constituency that used to be occupied by the Basford flats. In the early 1980s, it was realised that there were defects in the Basford flats in common with so many high-rise flats elsewhere in the country. It became obvious that the flats would have to be demolished. I did not criticise the decision to demolish the flats. They were unpleasant to live in and it was hard to find tenants to occupy them.

My objection is that private developers offered to buy the flats from the local authority, lock stock and barrel, for nearly £1 million. They undertook to demolish and rebuild at private expense. However, the Labour members of the local authority refused that offer. The site was demolished at public expense and that cost the ratepayers and taxpayers nearly £1 million. That site is still empty. Opposition Members may have heard me refer to this site before. I referred to it in 1983, but it is still empty today. Although one or two small houses have been built on one corner of the site, there are enormous acres of land in the centre of Nottingham which are empty and unused, purely for dogmatic reasons. The tragedy is that the ratepayers will have to continue paying for the site until the year 2030. When the site is eventually redeveloped at public expense, the ratepayers will have to pay a second time.

Hon. Members who represent midland constituencies may have received in the past two days a brochure from a developer about the development of the Wymeswold airfield. That is an admirable scheme in which an old airfield in Leicestershire is to be developed to provide the kind of village that we are all so keen to see developed in the midlands. The brochure is accompanied by a question and answer sheet that contains a small section entitled, "Why is this development needed?" The answer states:

"Although there had been major efforts by both public and private sectors to renovate the inner areas of Leicester, Nottingham, and Derby, these alone cannot provide for all the land required for new housing or the variety of housing environment necessary to give house purchasers sufficient freedom of choice. As a result there is constant pressure for the release of 'green field sites' in north Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire. If this pressure is not satisfied in an environmentally acceptable fashion it could lead to the loss of good agricultural land and areas of higher landscape value to urban sprawl."

Thanks to the opposition of Labour councillors from the city of Nottingham to private development, pressure is being brought for agricultural land to be released. That flies in the face of the words of the hon. Member for South Shields (Mr. Clark) when he spoke during the private notice question before this debate. He criticised the Government for their policy on agricultural land, but developers in the midlands are having problems finding land to develop because of the policy of the Labour council in Nottingham. We have discovered that there are no fewer than 800 acres available for development in Nottingham, but the local authority is blocking that development.

It does not just stop with the unused land at Basford or with the fact that the ratepayers will have to pay twice for the redevelopment of the Basford flats. The city has a modernisation programme of council flats that are about 30 to 40 years old. This is welcomed by everybody, but unfortunately the work is being done painfully slowly because there is no cash to pay for it. The local authority admits that if it had sold these flats to the private sector, there would be the cash for the modernisation programme, which would be completed by now. These inconsistencies in the Labour party's policy continue.

The problem is not just the building of the housing but its quality. Recently around the edge of the city has been built the north-west Nottingham outer loop road. People who live in the countryside suddenly found a main road going through their back gardens. That is a fact of life —such things sometimes happen. However, one would have thought that the local authority would provide noise insulation to the houses affected by the road. Where it has an obligation to do so, it has provided insulation, but those of us who have studied the noise insulation regulations will know that local authorities have discretion sometimes as to whether they provide such insulation. Nottingham has refused point blank to exercise that discretion in favour of my constituents who live by the loop road. They are having to live daily with the traffic noise that hitherto was not there. The council is happy to spend money on offices and tarting up the market square. It is happy to give money to the Campaign for Nuclear

[Mr. Ottaway]

Disarmament, but when it comes to a genuine issue with which local authorities should be dealing, it will not touch it with a barge pole.

I can give the Labour council a small pat on the back. Many people have spoken about the homeless, a subject about which my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Malins) knows a great deal. There are many problems with homelessness, such as family splits and increasing demand, and the city of Nottingham council is active in the bed and breakfast market and is doing a rather good job. I also congratulate it on the night shelter it has developed. This allows the down-and-outs to turn up in the evening and have a bed at a low price—lower than the social security payment.

I referred to planning aspects when I spoke about the Wymeswold development. It is not in the interests of the nation to let the land become a concrete jungle. In my constituency there is a half empty industrial estate located one mile from the motorway. Next to it is an empty site with planning permission for housing. We want to try to provide incentives for people to get up the M1 and use the housing available in Nottingham. One can buy a house in Nottingham for £12,000, so why is it that the entrepreneurs of today will put their factories down the M4 corridor when there are sites in the midlands? I do not know the answer to that—perhaps it is that the golf clubs in Surrey are better than the golf clubs in the midlands.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): What about the north-south divide?

Mr. Ottaway: It is not the north-south divide—it is inner poverty against outer poverty. It is an illusion to think that it is the north-south divide. We want to lift the pressure on developed areas and encourage development in the under-developed areas such as Nottingham.

The Labour party's motion encourages the use of market forces. It rather suggests that statutory regulations are succeeding where market forces have failed.

Many a person in Nottingham is trying to find somewhere to live and cannot, simply because there is not enough rented accommodation. We have to repeal the Rent Acts so that we can free the rented sector to let the flow of rented property come on to the market. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction on what he has done with shortholds. He has taken a positive step in the right direction, and I encourage him to go the whole way and repeal the Rent Acts.

6.54 pm

Mrs. Renée Short (Wolverhampton, North-East): It is a pity that the Secretary of State did not hear the speech made by the hon. Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Malins). He might have learnt one or two salutary facts about the housing situation had he done so. We did not hear much from the Secretary of State except the usual Tory speech, overlooking the problems and the needs of the large mass of people who look to Government and local authorities to provide decent housing for them. It is now estimated that we have 22 million ageing houses, many of which need to be replaced. To keep pace with deterioration and demographic changes, we need 250,000 new houses a year.

In 1979, the last year of the Labour Government, we built more than 250,000 houses. From 1974 to 1979, the average was over 300,000 a year. That is a record that this Government have never been able to equal. Under this Government, the figure has fallen to below 180,000 a year, which shows the shortfall in newbuild. We are not building enough new houses or refurbishing the older houses that could be made habitable and attractive if we spent the necessary money on them. Much of our older housing stock no longer satisfies. It is without modern heating or proper insulation and is neither safe against water penetration nor proof against damp. Those houses need money spent on them to make them habitable.

Many local authority and private houses are just not good enough by today's standards. Local authorities pay out much money to house people in bed and breakfast accommodation in miserable conditions and at high cost, and much of that accommodation is sub-standard. The Government have the gall to blame local authorities for leaving houses empty, when under the present financial arrangements, local authorities do not have the money to repair and modernise their old houses. The Government also insist that local authorities should sell houses to sitting tenants. They promised that money from sales could be used for newbuild and modernisation, but the Government are blocking the use of the proceeds to improve matters. Will the Government allow the release of this money and allow local authorities to carry out urgently needed housing repairs?

Not building enough houses leads to artificially high prices for both old and new property, and badly affects the building industry. Research and development suffer severely, and morale is affected, particularly in the building materials supply industry. Civil engineering construction has also declined, and that, combined with the serious plight of housing has led to a further grievous decline in some parts of materials production. As we all know, if we do not have enough raw materials, we cannot build.

The cement industry is an example. It has suffered not only from the reduction in building activity but from imports of subsidised Greek and Belgian cement, with which we cannot compete affectively. I have raised the matter of imported cement with Ministers over the years, and none of them are willing to take action about it. The Government seem utterly incapable of dealing with these imports or of taking any steps to resolve the problem. Subsidised Greek cement is distributed here to the detriment of our cement industry.

Our industry, alone among all European cement manufacturers, has a progressive attitude to research and development in the construction industry. The Cement and Concrete Association's laboratories, maintained by the industry itself by a levy on every bag of cement sold, have contributed greatly to research in the building industry.

Courses in their college are highly regarded by the construction industry. Many colleagues in the building group from both sides of this House have seen the work at Wexham Springs done by the CACA. The college, I am informed, will be shut down because the restrictions imposed by the Government and because the lack of work in the industry now compel a reduction in these activities. This will affect not only the job situation here, but, eventually, the earning capacity of the industry abroad.

The Minister should let us know that he intends to save this CACA college, which has greatly helped the training of engineers and builders.

Mr. John Patten: I thank the hon. Lady for allowing me to intervene in her speech. Is she not already aware that in the south of England the work load for the construction and house building industry is at the 1979 level? Secondly, is she not also aware that the cement industry—I and my right hon. Friends have tried to help it through action in the European Community by stopping the import of over-competitive Greek cement, to put it politely—is also suffering as a result of a certain number of structural changes in the construction industry? Builders are using concrete less and other forms of material more. There are structural changes as well as economic changes under way.

Mrs. Short: We have gone through all those economic changes over the years. We are using bricks less. The brick industry was in difficulty because more concrete and steel were being used. Of course there are changes in that area, but the Government have to take that into account in deciding its policy on subsidies and encouraging building. That still does not answer my point — why are we allowing imports of subsidised Greek cement? Surely it is not impossible for the Government to make such decisions. The Government's responsibility for research and development is also under threat. The Building Research Establishment has been subject to a series of Government investigations aimed at reducing state support for their work.

This has led to a continual undermining of the morale of BRE staff, of scientists and engineers, many of whom have very high international reputations in their own fields. The Government are treating the Building Research Establishment with contempt. The BRE now finds it difficult to recruit and very difficult to retain staff. The latest reports, produced at the instigation of the Secretary of State, has a series of recommendations to make the BRE more commercially minded. They recommend the practical elimination of all their work on geotechnics or soil mechanics, the science of foundations, a field in which the BRE enjoys a particularly high reputation. It also happened to be an area where the BRE has developed a very effective consultancy business earning considerable amounts.

The Government also ought to face the fact that the BRE is not only a centre of excellence for research but is primarily of value to the public, not only as a watchdog over the activities of a very highly competitive industry but also as the only unbiased source of advice for all Government Departments that engage in building. The BRE has investigated the Ronan Point collapse, the high alumina cement difficulties and many other problems, and their reports have been accepted by the Government. The BRE must be maintained by public funding and must not be forced to commercialise. I hope the Minister will reply to these points in his winding-up speech.

Finally, there is the much disputed policy introduced by the Government to compel consulting engineers to engage in a Dutch auction in respect of fees. Instead of the long-established practice of fixed fees based on a proportion of the contract cost of the job, we now have a free-for-all where, for example, the PSA, a Government authority, is compelled to accept the cheapest offer irrespective of merit or experience. This will mean, in the industry as a whole, less time being spent on quality of design and more on cutting corners, which means more risk and less innovation.

The consulting engineering profession is a high earner of foreign currency, some £500 million per annum, and is responsible for large contracts abroad. Its effectiveness abroad depends on a viable base at home. The Government are eroding that viable home base and are putting in jeopardy the work that they are able to do abroad. The viability of our building and civil engineering industries is crucial to our country and to our people. I urge the Government to change course on their disastrous policies. I hope that next time the Secretary of State addresses the House on the work of his Department he will make a much more constructive, effective and hopeful speech.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before I call the next speaker, I repeat what I said at the beginning of this debate, that if we could limit speeches to 10 minutes between 7 and 9 o'clock, every hon. Member who wishes to take part in the debate will be called.

7.8 pm

Mr. Tom Sackville (Bolton, West): Mr. Speaker, I sought to catch your eye in order to express my amazement at the Labour party's refusal to recognise some of the real causes of homelessness. The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) failed to mention—and his hon. Friends failed in their attempt to silence my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State when he tried to spell out —the fact that very real changes have taken place in our society. His failure must cast doubt on the credibility of everything else that he said. The decline in the stable family has been the major cause of housing shortage.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): I regret to interrupt the hon. Gentleman at the beginning of his speech. We do not dispute the causes; nobody does. The Secretary of State said that he does not want to overturn the changes in policy which had brought about some of those causes. All we are saying is that the Government should adjust their policy to meet the facts of the situation.

Mr. Sackville: There was a certain amount of barracking and noise from the Opposition Benches when my right hon. Friend attempted to spell out one of the main reasons for the acute housing shortage.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Sackville: No, I have just given way, and I will carry on.

In my constituency in Bolton some half of council housing allocations involve single mothers with children. This immediately raises the question of what housing arrangements have been made by the ex-husbands who are the fathers of those children. A certain number of them would be occupying council property, thus doubling at a stroke the number of housing units required. Marital break-up is not the only social change with serious implications for housing. There are too many cases of teenagers abusing the public housing system by leaving home quite unnecessarily and occupying yet more of the council housing units available.

I came across a case in my constituency of two teenage girls who managed to spin a yarn to the housing

[Mr. Sackville]

department of their bad relationship with their father and secured the tenancy of a flat. Their parents were taken completely by surprise and were absolutely furious that the girls were offered a flat in an area which was famous for crime and drug abuse. Surely that sort of behaviour and that sort of scrappy policy by local councils does not help.

I have even heard, as perhaps other hon. Members have, of girls who have apparently become pregnant with the sole purpose of getting a place at the top of the council housing list.

Such behaviour exacerbates the situation further. I am not advocating any formula to get around the problems caused by the decline in morals and family life, but to pretend that these factors are not a major cause of housing shortage is to fail to recognise reality.

The Labour party likes to explain the whole problem in terms of unemployment and lack of resources. Of course I do not pretend that unemployment does not severely exacerbate the problem, nor do I pretend that infinite resources would not help, but we need to consider very carefully how resources, if infinite, would be used by councils. Public funds should not be squandered on councils which persist in maintaining unbelievably inefficient and ineffective direct labour organisations whose repairs may cost twice what an outside contractor would charge for the same job.

That leads me on to the stark choice which faces many young couples, between owner-occupation and getting a mortgage or securing the tenancy of a council property for which the administration and maintenance costs may be frightful, where the smallest repair may take months to get done and, when it is done, it is done so badly that it needs to be done again. The lack of a private rented sector, which has been mentioned by many hon. Members, is deplorable. We are probably the only country in western Europe or, indeed, in the West whose politicians have inflicted such a state of affairs on its citizens.

Mr. Winnick: What the hon. Gentleman says about the private rental sector is untrue. Why does he not ask the question of his right hon. Friend? If the rents legislation is so bad, as the Secretary of State has confirmed, why do the Government not repeal it? Should not the people in Greenwich and elsewhere be told that if the Government are re-elected—which they will not be—they would do away with security of tenure for many people in the private sector?

Mr. Sackville: No doubt the hon. Gentleman will have a chance to put that question to my right hon. Friend. If he listens to the rest of my speech, I shall address some of those points.

We have to ask how we are to start gettng desperately needed investment into the private sector. There are problems with overnight decontrol of rents. It is for that reason that the Institute of Rent Officers has just published a report in which it proposes an interim measure as a new system of control. Surely the problem is that to provide the confidence to motivate institutions to invest long-term in new or renovated private rented accommodation, we need to find a system for which there is a modicum of cross party agreement. What investor will put money into a housing project with the strong possibility staring him in the face that the return on his investment will be halved after the next election?

The institute suggests that the present complex rent-fixing formula be replaced by a fixed percentage return on capital value, reviewable at fixed intervals. Surprisingly, this would not increase or decrease by very much the current average rental levels in most areas,. but it would give both landlord and tenant the certainty they need. My hon. Friend the Minister of State should consider that proposal carefully. I believe that it represents a constructive way forward.

7.13 pm

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): If facts and figures are not available to support one's case, one is prejudiced. We have heard it suggested by the hon. Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville) that some of the problems of homelessness and housing shortage are caused by women getting pregnant on purpose in order to be allocated a house. That is the kind of rumour-mongering that we expect from Conservative Members.

The hon. Gentleman and the Secretary of State for the Environment seemed to suggest that the reason for the shortage of decent accommodation to offer to the homeless is that there has been an increase in homelessness as a result of family breakdown. My experience as a councillor and as a Member of Parliament, and before that as a social worker, is that many family breakdowns are a direct consequence of homelessness and inadequate housing, as well as other social conditions. To deny that is to ignore the reality that poor people have to suffer because of a shortage of housing.

If rich people — Secretaries of State, Cabinet Ministers and people who own their own businesses— have marital problems, they do not have to queue up at a housing department to try to get an offer of accommodation; nor do they have to go into bed-and-breakfast accommodation. They have enough money to look after themselves, so marital breakdown does not present for them the same social problem.

I am pleased to have confirmed by Conservative Members their desire to get rid of the Rent Acts in order to free the private rental sector from control. I have heard it all before. I came to the House in 1979 and was a member of the Committee that considered what is now the Housing Act 1980. All the arguments were rehearsed by Conservative Members. They said that all one had to do to solve the housing shortage was to create conditions in which it was easier for landlords to get rid of their tenants, to destroy security of tenure and to enable them at the same time to get a better return on the money that they had tied up in property by charging higher rents. They argued that more empty properties would come on to the market and that more would be built for the private rental sector. All that would solve the problem.

The Government set about doing that under the 1980 Act. About 200,000 tenancies were taken out of rent control. Under the fair rents system, more regular reviews were introduced to enable landlords to put up rents. The concept of the short tenancy was introduced. If a developer wants to build a house or a flat for private renting, anyone can rent that property without any rent control of restrictions if it is a short tenancy.

Then there was the Government's three-card trick, their piece de resistance — the shorthold tenancy. Under its provisions, if anyone wants to rent vacant accommodation, he has security of tenure only for the one, two, three or five years for which the agreement runs. The landlord

can then get rid of the tenant at the end of that period. According to Tory Members in 1980, that provision would bring a flood of empty property on to the market and would solve the problem, but that did not happen.

Even if rent controls are abolished, if security of tenure is done away with, and if landlords are allowed to charge whatever rent they want, there will still not be an increase in the supply of private rented accommodation. The Housing Act 1957 proved that. As soon as security of tenure went, the owners of private rented accommodation got rid of the tenants. They did not relet the properties, but sold them into owner-occupation to make a capital gain. That always happens when one gets rid of security of tenure. Following the lifting of restrictions, the amount of property available in the private rented sector goes down, not up.

Unless there is a massive shortage of accommodation to rent in the public sector, whether housing association or council property, and unless it is difficult to become an owner-occupier, people in their right mind will not rent from the private landlord who is offering the more expensive alternative without security of tenure. If someone can gain access to subsidised council housing, or to subsidised housing association property, that will be better for him. On the other hand, he could become an owner-occupier and get income tax relief on the interest paid on his mortgage. It is a strange system that operates at the moment. It is based on the assumption that the richer someone is, the more help he needs with his housing. The Government give the rich more income tax relief; the bigger the mortgage, the more income tax relief one gets.

Both public sector housing and owner-occupied housing are subsidised. If a person is sensible, he will want to get into one of those sectors rather than rent from the private landlord who, free from any restrictions, will always offer a dearer alternative to what is offered in the other tenures—unless the private landlord is subsidised as well, and not even the Secretary of State for the Environment has suggested that. I am sure that the spending of Government money on subsidising private landlords is not even being considered by Conservatives for their next manifesto. So whatever restrictions are lifted, unless we scrap the policy of subsidising the other sectors and get rid of mortgage tax relief and any form of subsidy for public renting, there will never be any growth in the private rented sector.

That is why the hon. Member for Bolton, West is totally wrong, because in every other Western country, including the United States, there is no private rented sector to talk of. There is public renting or owner-occupation on a large scale, depending on the nature of the subsidy and how different kinds of tenure are given Government assistance.

Let us put to the electorate at the next election the Government's policy of decontrol, forcing up the rents of private tenants and getting rid of their security of tenure, and on the other hand Labour's proposals which are: the right to buy for the private tenant—the Government believe in it for the council tenant and we will introduce it for the private tenant; facilitating the transfer to socially responsible ownership; requirements for the public rented sector to meet the needs of those now dependent upon the private landlord; closing Rent Act loopholes in the form of bogus holiday lets, using licences instead of tenancies, and other fiddles that enable Rachmans to exploit tenants; introducing regulations to stop the exploitation of service charges; repealing shorthold tenancies; giving the right in law to an effective and efficient repair service for tenants of private landlords; and making provision for full information about the name of the landlord and other matters to be shown on the rent book. Many people in my constituency do not even know who their private landlord is and cannot find out. At least a person in a council house knows who to blame if the repairs are not done. We also propose stiffer penalties and more adequate safeguards against harassment and illegal eviction, and a duty on landlords to ensure the safety and welfare of the tenants.

I make no apologies for being on the side of the tenants and not on the side of the landlord who wants to profiteer out of those in housing need in the way that even Conservative Members have described. Between 10 and 12 per cent. of the population of this country still rent from private landlords. They are the worst housed and the most disadvantaged of any sector of the housing market. The free market will not solve any of their problems, but will make them worse.

Turning to what the Government have done in the public rented sector, one sees that housing has been cut back more drastically than any other area of public spending. Since 1979, the housing programme has been devastated by a 75 per cent. cut in real terms. This has damaged private as well as public sector housing because of the lack of improvement grants, home loans and other things, and brought about some of the worst conditions in our housing stock, public and private, for many years.

Housing has also been subject to annual fluctuations. It is impossible for local authorities to plan ahead, and that is against the background of massive and growing waiting lists. The number of people on local authority waiting lists has risen from just over 1 million in 1979 to 1,350,000 in 1986-87. Over 250,000 households registered on these waiting lists are overcrowded. There are a further 250,000 elderly people, and 14,000 disabled people, requesting more suitable accommodation. A further 420 households are having to share accommodation.

It is said that there is a surplus of housing. The Secretary of State for the Environment said that there was not a shortage of houses. He went on to talk about there being a shortage and its being a problem, and then he mentioned that the people and the jobs were in one place and the houses in another. He talked about houses standing empty in areas where there was a surplus because there was no employment and people had moved out. He produced figures about houses standing empty, which are not houses but flats in tenement blocks which people have moved out of and which councils want to knock down and replace by council houses.

Let me take the example of Sefton, the local authority that covers my constituency of Bootle. Its housing investment allocation for 1987-88 is £5·188 million. It has not built a council house for seven or eight years. That is just about a housing manager's pocket money to deal with the odd environmental improvement. We cannot give improvement grants but there is this wonderful scheme for home insulation introduced by the Government, which has suffered a 60 per cent. cut this year. The local authority has only £64,000 to spend. By the middle of last year it had spent £206,000 on home insulation schemes. The Minister is now threatening to change the scheme, but before he does that it will have spent the £64,000.

Mr. Heffer: Will my hon. Friend contrast that with what has happened in the city of Liverpool, where in three

[Mr. Heffer]

years the authority has built 4,240 houses, improved houses and flats to the tune of 4,541, and taken out of old tenancies — that is, tenements, flats and maisonettes — 4,900 people? Despite all those efforts there are still 18,000 people on the waiting list, of whom more than 9,000 are in the private sector and are in real difficulty. Some of them bought houses on the basis of the Government's policy and then discovered that they were getting pushed out of them because they could not afford to keep up the payments.

Mr. Roberts: The hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) said that there were 10,000 fewer council houses in Liverpool now under Labour rule than there were when the Liberals were in power. That is true, but those 10,000 were the tenement blocks that people would not live in. Many of them were standing empty and the Labour council has knocked them down and replaced them by decent low-rise housing. That is what we want to do. It is not possible to denigrate the public rented sector by picking on examples of the worst kind of high-rise flats built in the 1960s. There are thousands of decent low-rise council houses all over the country, built over the years in which people like to live. Conservative Members boast that people are buying council houses and say what a wonderful scheme it is, but they then say that no one wants to live in a council house. They cannot have it both ways. We want to build decent low-rise council houses, with gardens for people to live in; houses that families and single people can enjoy.

The hon. Gentleman the Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Malins) poignantly described the conditions in which homeless bed-and-breakfast families live and said that he did not know what the solution was. The solution is to build decent low-rise council houses with gardens and rehouse the homeless families. If the Government made the housing investment programme allocations available to meet the needs, the local authorities would rise to the occasion and build the housing.

It is not public money that is involved. What is necessary is permission for the local authorities to borrow. Why should local authorities not borrow money to build capital assets? The money that they owe on those capital assets is always less than the value of the assets. Rent payments increase with inflation as the years go by. They are in exactly the same position as the owner-occupier borrowing money through a mortgage to buy a house. The Government would rather borrow money through the public sector borrowing requirement to pay the equivalent of the weekly food bills, to pay for bed-and-breakfast accommodation and to pay the unemployed their social security benefits than allow councils to borrow to build council houses.

We had the statement last week by the Minister, not trying to stop local authorities borrowing money to build houses, but trying to stop a local authority acting as a guarantor for a housing association to borrow money to build houses to rent. Eighty-one houses that would have been built on the St. Ambrose site in Netherton in my constituency will not go ahead because of that decision. It was not a loony Left council. Sefton was loony Right until last May, and now it is balanced and very moderate. It was negotiating to build for the first time some houses that it could let and manage which has not happened since 1974 when the Tories took power in the newly created Sefton, but that has now been stopped.

The Park Lane estate is in my constituency. The Government claim that they have no responsibility for empty properties and homelessness. The fact is that 400 dwellings were built for sale by Wimpey on land allocated by the local authority, and 40 of them are now empty, in some cases because the people have been made unemployed and cannot afford the repayments and have had to move out, but also because, although the scheme at first was a good one, with no deposit and a 100 per cent. loan to help people on lower incomes to become owner-occupiers, and although the people moved in, house prices have plummeted in Sefton.

House prices are going down on Merseyside because of unemployment. No one can afford to buy the houses. A house is worth what one can get for it on the open market. If there are no jobs and no one can afford to buy, house prices go down. There were employed owner-occupiers, school teachers, in these houses, who saw the equity in their property going down, and who could rent more cheaply or buy a house more cheaply in some other part of the country. They handed in their keys and said, "Keep it. It is not worth it any more." This is a direct result of Government policies, which have brought about unemployment, causing houses to stand empty and creating homelessness on Merseyside.

The home is the central part of the fabric of our society. That is what the Secretary of State forgets. It is not just bricks and mortar. The home should meet two criteria. It should be a place where individuals and families can be themselves, for better or worse, obtain peace and security and flourish, both mentally and physically. The home should also be an effective base for daily living, providing rest and relaxation; a place where we gain mental and physical strength for participating in our highly pressurised and competitive society. Families nagged by insecurity, overcrowded, so that they live with constant strain and tension, missing any kind of privacy, surrounded by dampness and infestation by such things as cockroaches, which spread disease, living in physical danger because of the unfitness of the property and cheated of the necessary facilities that others take for granted are, in my view, homeless. This is what creates the social conditions, not the other way around.

7.31 pm

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): The Chair has obviously seen the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) and me as some form of two-step, since only last week the hon. Member followed me in a debate and tonight I return the compliment. I will come later to his near-pathological hatred of renting, but I have some sympathy for one or two things that he said.

I welcome the debate as the first of what I hope will be several housing and homelessness debates in the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless, a major United Nations initiative. The relevant motion recognising it has been signed by more than 250 right hon. and hon. Members. I believe that, in signing it, they recognised that the responsibility was not only global but very much concerned with the state of housing and the homeless in this country. Of all the many statistics circulating, simply to note, as the campaign does, that half a million elderly

people are currently living in accommodation unfit for human habitation will serve to remind us that in this area at least we have much to do in this country.

Comment has been made about bed and breakfast and, in fairness, there is little if anything to split the parties on this issue. Certainly, I have heard the Minister say how much he would like that sort of accommodation phased out, and I know that Opposition Members too wish to see it go. Although the way in which we do this will create some differences between the parties, it ought not to do so, because each of us can see how at the moment the practice is contributing to much bad housing and helping only a few rich landlords and property owners.

On all these issues, we are talking of extra money—there is no question of that. I hope that my Government recognise that some of the problems will not be resolved without the injection of money in various ways. I include in that the question of private renting. I want to see us take the same imaginative and crusading approach to homelessness as we have taken for some time to unemployment. There is not just one answer but a whole series of them, and we must be prepared to try a whole series, even if one or two prove not to be as effective as we hoped. It is too easy at times to find ourselves arguing either for private ownership or for council renting while forgetting that this creates the very sterility which has bedevilled much of our discussion in recent years.

In opening the debate, the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) mentioned the short-life use of a number of empty council properties. I hope that he is right: they should be used. We should be very much concerned that a number of other councils, Conservative, Labour or whatever, should use short-life property—that which is bound to be redeveloped in due course. There is a proper form of licensing agreement available and widely in use. There is a good book on it from Shelter which I can recommend and which gives some short-term assistance, particularly for young people. It is not a long-term answer, but we are talking of the better use of all resources including short-term property.

As others have done, I would urge my Government, since they have announced that the "movement requirements", if I may so call them, attached to board and lodging will be abolished next year, to go the whole hog and abolish them this year. They do not help to solve the present problem.

If I had not done so before the debate, I must now recognise that there is still a sustained resistance to private renting among Labour Members. I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) who, in a comparatively short period, has shifted Labour Front Bench thinking quite a lot and made it much more realistic—if I do not damn him with faint praise—than it has been for a number of years. But at the heart of it we still have to cope with the attitude which can be exemplified by the speech by the hon. Member for Bootle. I read from the *Financial Times* today:

> "The Labour-led Association of Metropolitan Authorities is threatening to boycott housing associations which compete to buy council housing following a decision by a consortium of five housing associations in Telford, Shropshire, to bid for 9,000 houses being offered for sale by the new town's development corporation."

Nothing better demonstrates the sort of thing that I mean. With the exception of the far Left of the Labour party, most hon. Members on the Opposition Benches accept that one is entitled to make a profit on the selling of goods and services and, as an individual, from one's labour. I cannot see why, provided that we have checks on the quality and calibre of landlords, it should be inherently wrong to make an equal profit on renting.

The consequence of that attitude and of our lunatic voting system, which means that there is still a chance of a Labour Government being elected, is that even if we were able to bring in legislation to encourage an increase in private renting, it might well be rendered largely inoperative, as in the case of shortholds, because the Labour party has made sure that it would not be effective, since landlords would not dream of acquiring property for renting if there were threats of a future Labour Government rescinding the legislation.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Will the hon. Member accept that if private landlords are always making a profit on renting accommodation, they will always offer a dearer alternative? People will only take that alternative if they are forced to do so because they cannot get access to any other kind.

Mr. Squire: I do not accept that, for a number of reasons. I accept that it is not simply a question of passing legislation and that one must examine all financial angles and different forms of tenure and money coming in; but I do not accept that a private landlord will automatically charge more.

Turning to the alternative which people face at the moment in the council sector, from both points of view—that of the nature of some of the councils themselves and that of the surroundings in which they find themselves—"that report", as it is now becoming known, of the Audit Commission made it clear that the eight authorities in question are spending more within their housing departments than comparable authorities outside, because when it comes to repairs, and the money that is going in to maintain the stock, the figures are frighteningly bad. If I were a tenant and had a choice between living in some of that accommodation or in private rented accommodation, I would by no means be as certain as some Opposition Members seem to be that, invariably, council accommodation would be better.

However, it is more than that. Within the last couple of days we have had reports about no-go areas. Is it in some 70 zones around London that the milkman and the postman are afraid to go? What sort of life is that? It is all very well for the hon. Member for Bootle to say that we designed something wrong and are all at fault because we did not get it right last time, but basically it will be all right if we get the design right; he forgot for the moment about the money. But it is not just that, because who is to say that the same mistakes, or different mistakes, will not be made next time round? The environment for the people in those areas is every bit as bad as, and in some cases much worse than, it is for people in private rented housing.

To believe that council housing represents a panacea relative to privately rented housing is to fly in the face of a lot of our experience. I read in the newspapers—and, of course, I believe everything that I read there—that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is likely to turn down the Tillingham hall development. That is not far from me. Of course he cannot comment on that now. Despite what appears to be a unanimous clamour—at least, he must think it is unanimous—urging him to reject the development, some of us believe that further development is essential.

[Mr. Squire]

We do not talk of concreting the entire area from London to the coast, because that would be insane, but we recognise that in the fairly short time since 1976 the green belt has almost doubled in the metropolitan green belt. Those who say that we must preserve the green belt at all costs must recognise that at present we are doing more than preserving it. We have a green belt and green braces and for all I know other green things to go with them. The green belt is not in danger. However, in the home counties and in the south and certainly in my area, it is nearly impossible for many young people, especially young married people, to buy homes. Hon. Members will know that I draw a distinction: in order to be able to buy a home couples are forced to have two separate mortgages, even though they will live together. If they marry, they are hit by the rules.

I encourage and welcome all signs of industry and employment coming to the midlands and the north and I applaud that when it happens. The reality is that demand is in the south-east and it is not sufficient to say that people who wish to be housed must go to the inner-city areas. Many of them will not do that, and even if they did, that would again create massive high-density housing in the inner-city areas, thus giving rise to the slums of tomorrow. We do not want that. We must seek a balance.

I urge the Minister to recognise that, if the market is to be a key force and if it demands that in terms of employment and family links people must live in certain areas, we must go some way towards meeting those demands. I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Minister of State on a number of interesting initiatives that he has taken in recent months. I look forward to many more directed at tackling this, arguably the greatest problem that we face.

7.43 pm

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Fulham): It is appropriate that the debate should be taking place at the beginning of International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. It is sad that in this year, far from seeing progress to reduce homelessness and to respond more effectively to the human miseries experienced by the homeless, we will see, at least until the general election, an ever-increasing upward spiral in the number of homeless people and, secondly, more people recorded as homeless than at any time since records began shortly after the end of the second world war.

Thirdly, we will see more single, homeless and childless people — whose needs will not be recorded because official records do not cover most of them — without a home than at any time in recent years. Fourthly, we will see more homeless families in bed-and-breakfast hotels than at any time in our history. The Minister and the Secretary of State should ponder my fifth point, which is that we will also see fewer new homes for rent built in Britain than in any peacetime year this century.

By any criterion, that record of the Government — which is coming home to roost in, of all years, International Year of Shelter for the Homeless — is disgraceful. It is symbolised more than anything by the rise of the bed-and-breakfast hotel. The speech of the hon. Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Malins) was interesting and many of us listened to it with a great deal of sympathy and respect. It was interesting to note that the scandal of bed and breakfast is now widely recognised by people of almost all political persuasions. That should be so, because the evidence is overwhelming.

Yesterday I attended the launch of a new report by the West London Homelessness Group. That report identifies the appalling living conditions in the Thorncliffe hotel near Heathrow, where hundreds of families are living in squalid and overcrowded conditions. They are subject to racial and sexual harassment and abuse and their cooking facilities are hopelessly inadequate. The bathrooms are described by residents as dirty, stinking and terrible and the toilets are described as dirtier than those in Piccadilly circus. It costs a lot of money for the privilege of living in that sort of accommodation.

The irony is that this year we will spend more public money than ever before on subsidies to some of the greediest, most evil, most exploitative landlords in Britain. They are literally exploiting the misery of the homeless and doing so — this is the extraordinary comment — by courtesy of Her Majesty's Government, who through the DHSS will be paying the great bulk of the bill. I recognise that that is not the Minister's Department. The DHSS may not be able to pay rates to those local authorities that are owed large sums; my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) appropriately identified that in his speech. However, the DHSS is providing large sums of public money to keep homeless families in squalor.

Surely it ought to occur to the Secretary of State, if he ever gets together with his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services to discuss these things, that it would be economically more sensible, let alone socially more desirable, to spend some of that money on building houses for homeless people rather than using it to keep them in squalor at public expense.

According to an answer given by the Minister, it costs far more to keep homeless families in bed-and-breakfast hotels than to provide them with brand new houses. According to the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction in an answer that he gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), the average cost of keeping a homeless family in a bed-and-breakfast hotel is some £30 per household per day. That figure should be engraved on the Secretary of State's heart. Some £30 per household per day works out at £12,000 a year, and the average cost, allowing for all debt charges, management and maintenance, of building or acquiring a new council house in Greater London is between £5,500 and £7,000. It is not just socially disgusting, it is economically lunatic. It is an illustration of the loony Right ideology that is motivating the Government's housing policy.

The Government's hostility to public enterprise is matched only by their hostility to mixed public and private enterprise. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Freeson) so ably illustrated earlier in the debate, last week, in a fit of ideological lunacy, the Government stopped councils, housing associations and private sector agencies providing for homeless families new homes to rent that are cheaper and better than bed-and-breakfast hotels. The Government have stopped one further initiative by people who care and are trying to provide decent homes for the homeless, rather than leaving them languishing in bed-and-breakfast hotels. The Government are failing abjectly in the responsibilities, perversely stopping people who are trying desperately to respond to

the dreadful housing crisis we face. The numbers of people who are suffering in bed and breakfast are growing alarmingly.

We learned quite a lot from an extraordinarily bizarre and inadequate speech by the Secretary of State about the ideology that is responsible for this misery. We learned, by the terms of the amendment proposed by the Government, of their hypocrisy. The amendment refers to re-establishing a right to rent — a quite extraordinarily brazen claim by a Government who have presided, during their term in office, over the sharpest decline in rented housing opportunities in Britain's history.

In the past seven years, 900,000 homes have become unavailable to rent. Never before has there been such a loss of rented accommodation. It is the Government's responsibility, and it is sheer hypocrisy to talk about re-establishing a right to rent. Only a Secretary of State as insensitive and ignorant as the present one could pretend that that dramatic decline—the 900,000 loss of homes to rent—has not contributed in some way, let alone been a significant contribution, to the rise of homelessness.

The Secretary of State talked highly selectively about some of the social causes of homelessness. He ought to have referred to his own Department's statistics on homelessness, from which he would have learnt about the reasons for homelessness. He would have learnt that disputes with relatives and friends are the largest single cause of homelessness. If he studied the figures and reports that have been written by many eminent academics who have studied the problem, going back to the period when John Greve conducted probably the best survey of homelessness in London some 20 years ago, he would know that often losing a home in a friend's or relative's flat is the last stage in a long cycle of insecure homes or limited opportunities. In addition, the homeless person constantly faces his inability to get and pay for secure and stable housing. The Secretary of State would realise, if he had studied such reports, that the shortage and loss of rented housing was a contributory factor.

Mortgage arrears, which the right hon. Gentleman strangely and curiously forgot to mention among the causes of homelessness, have risen from 4 per cent. when Labour left office to 12 per cent. currently—the largest escalation in mortgage arrears that we have ever seen. The Government are responsible for that. About 20 per cent. of homelessness cases are those of people being evicted from private rented accommodation or losing a service tenancy. That fact might cause the Secretary of State to ponder whether encouraging more insecure lettings on the private rented market might contribute to greater homelessness.

If the Secretary of State started thinking seriously about some of these issues, he would not make, as he did, the extraordinarily bizarre and inaccurate claim that there was no shortage of housing. Only someone who did not consider the geographic and tenure imbalances that exist so chronically in our society could say anything as insensitive as that. We all know that it is of no possible use to someone who is seeking a rented house, and can only afford to rent, to be confronted with houses for sale. The cheapest possible price option in my constituency starts at around £70,000. Ordinary single people and young couples have no hope of buying houses at that price. If there are empty houses for sale in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts), they will not help people in London. It is those imbalances, in particular the chronic shortage of rented housing, that lie behind homelessness in Britain. That is something that any sensitive or serious Secretary of State should recognise.

If the Secretary of State thought about this problem more seriously, he would not resort to trotting out the weary old claim about empty properties being the key to the whole problem and saying that, if we can get empty properties back into use, there will be no problem. Empty properties are unacceptable in all tenures. Something must be done about the problem. In the public and council sectors, inefficiency is unjustified and action must be taken to encourage councils to bring empty properties back into housing use. Ideology is also unjustified. The largest number of empty properties in the public sector in my constituency were deliberately left empty by a Tory council which was reserving them for sale and not allowing them to be rented to people in need. We have seen that in other Tory authorities, and I hope that the Secretary of State will condemn that lunancy from the Right.

Mr. Tony Banks: The other point that needs to be drawn out is that, although the Secretary of State mentioned 28,000 empty properties in the public sector, in the private sector in London there are 94,000 empty properties.

Mr. Raynsford: I was about to come to that point, but first I was going to refer to Government Departments. The Secretary of State, who referred to motes and beams, should, when considering the responsibility for empty property, recognise that Government Departments have the worst record — 6·5 per cent. of empty property in London is owned by Government Departments, compared with about 3·5 per cent. owned by local authorities.

I visited some empty Government-owned properties near Didcot, a Ministry of Defence site. There were empty houses there that have been rotting for years, yet in that area the local authority has 50 families in bed-and-breakfast hotels. Why is the Secretary of State for the Environment not talking to his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence and getting those homes into use for homeless families in that area?

In the private sector in London there are 93,000 empty properties, some of which have been empty for an extraordinary time. In the borough of Kensington and Chelsea I recently saw properties which had been empty for 20 years. That borough has the highest number of empty private properties of any authority in London. It is matched only, in terms of numbers, by Westminster. Those are two Tory authorities with a shocking record for empty private properties, which they have tolerated for far too long. When will the Secretary of State take action with those authorities to get these empty properties used by homeless people?

The Secretary of State may claim that the key to the problems is a relaxation of the Rent Acts, but if he seriously thought about the issue, he might realise that history is not with him. History shows that the decline in the private rented sector began before rent controls began during the first world war. The private sector was already declining in the early years of the century. He would also realise that in the years after 1957, when a Conservative Government sought to reduce tenants' security, there was the fastest ever decline in private renting. Those inconvenient facts do not tie well with the Secretary of State's ideologies.

Mr. Marlow: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Raynsford: I am coming to an end. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will be able to respond later.

Those inconvenient facts might interfere with some of the quaint ideas of the Secretary of State. I am sad that he is leaving the Chamber, because I was about to refer to his quaint comment that somehow the private rented sector was a key to ending queuing. Has the Secretary of State no experience of the degrading queues that all too often apply when people are looking for private housing? Does he know of the experience of so many desperate people who scour the newspapers looking for flats to rent? Does he know of the rush to get to the property first, to join the queue, only to find that there are 10 people in the queue? Does he know of the degrading experience of the person who has ready money in his pocket, who is able to jump the queue because he can offer the landlord cash in advance—key money—to get in, even if it means that the family in front of him in the queue will lose the home? Does he know of degrading experiences of queueing that are associated with private rented housing? All his responses show the insensitivity, the ignorance of real experience and the adherence to quaint and ancient Victorian values that characterise the Government.

The Government's record is appalling, and the sooner they are swept away by a Government who will do something about Britain's housing crisis, the better.

7.59 pm

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): Adequate housing is a vital tenet of modern life, and I welcome this debate. Conservatives have developed policies to cope with rapidly changing situations brought about by greater mobility and the breakdown in the family life. But throughout the debate so far, the Socialists have failed to distinguish between "need" and "want". They cannot distinguish between the two words. Consequently, housing lists are grossly distorted and do not reflect need. In the other states of the European Economic Community, young people are encouraged to stay at home with their parents until they can support themselves, secure their own accommodation or get married.

Mr. George Park (Coventry, North-East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gregory: I have just started to develop this argument. You will learn a lot if you sit on the Benches and listen.

Mr. Winnick: "You"?

Mr. Gregory: Britain, on the other hand, is isolated from the rest of the EEC in that respect. That system would release more resources for those in genuine need and reduce the burden on the state. In direct contravention of supporting the family, Socialist councils such as York are openly changing their waiting list system artificially to bring in youngsters who would otherwise live at home.

Why do councils not ask for evidence that applicants on a housing list can not obtain accommodation on the open market? In other words, do applicants have the financial ability to obtain a home on the open market, or do they require the state umbrella? I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will consider the possibility of asking by circular each local authority to require evidence from anyone going on to a housing list that a minimum of two financial institutions, such as building societies, have turned down his request for appropriate loans or funds. In other words, it must be shown that the applicant's resources are inadequate. Applicants can then go to the local authority and say that they are in need of the state umbrella.

Futhermore, waiting lists should be examined by independent consultants to find out how many applicants are still seeking state accommodation and are in genuine need. Circumstances change, yet names remain on the list to justify over-staffing by Left-wing councils and to give distorted figures to the Government.

Labour never sheds its deeply rooted opposition to the spread of private property, especially through home ownership. The Conservative commitment to the right to buy—strangely missing from Opposition speeches—and to the continuation of mortgage tax relief is absolutely clear. Those two pillars of our housing policy have played a crucial part in the massive extension of home ownership since 1979. Credit should go to the Government for the fact that more than 2·5 million more families have become owner-occupiers under this Administration. That means that 55 per cent. of people in Great Britain were in owner-occupation when Labour ended its disastrous period of office, but now 64 per cent. of the population are owner-occupiers. This is a popular policy which will succeed even more as that proportion increases. After all, fewer people are throwing money away on rent. They are making an investment that will increase in value with time and prevent families from being dependent on the state.

Labour has slightly shifted its ground, aware of the vast popularity of this policy. It has moved from its 1979 and 1983 positions, and now Labour Members are having to condition themselves in local elections to fudging it—they have well and truly got a fudge—by returning the right to buy to the councils. In reality, as I have challenged in York and elsewhere, when there is a Socialist council, it means that big brother always knows best and will snatch back property when it comes on to the open market and will stop the right to buy. I hope that the Opposition, when they get the chance later in the debate, will come clean and assert that that is the reality.

The Leader of the Opposition remains wedded to a Socialist past. Addressing the national housing and town planning conference in Bournemouth last October, he sneered at ownership and the

"freedom and dignity it brings".

He continued:

> "That sort of fundamentalism which treats possession of private property not as a desirable economic and personal asset but as a condition of liberty is a form of primitive religion."

The 64 per cent. of the population who own their properties are totally out of line with the Leader of the Opposition. That number will increase.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gregory: You will have your opportunity later.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The hon. Member must not keep bringing me into these matters.

Mr. Gregory: Thank you, Sir.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hope that the hon. Gentleman recognises that he should not address the Chair as he did.

Mr. Gregory: Those millions who have exercised their right to buy profoundly disagree with the Leader of the Opposition. Despite Labour's fudge at its 1985 conference to give tenants the option to sell, more than half of Labour's new prospective parliamentary candidates oppose the right to buy.

In September 1984, the Liberal assembly came down with a policy on similar lines to Labour's with its intention to remove the right to buy. The big brother of Socialism will deprive ordinary tenants of a basic right and even claims the first option in any sale. That is clearly state theft.

How far are local authorities helping to explain home ownership so as to release resources to those in greatest need? Two ways can be explored. The first is an annual advice to each tenant, setting out the relative costs of purchasing against the costs of continuing to rent. That should not be difficult, with the computer skills in local authorities. Few tenants realise how cost-effective it is to purchase. But when challenged to undertake this — I challenged York city council—in its peculiar document, which is entitled "In Touch" but which is out of touch, Labour tried to put the relative figures so that council tenants would know both. The council could not even get its facts right, which is hardly surprising in view of the Labour leadership there. The council deliberately took not average figures—the figures that anyone would expect from a reputable authority — but figures from a particular district in York. The council took a two-bedroom property in Chapelfields district, a noted Labour area, where the average rent was £12·69 a week. But that was not the average rent of York city council, and the council knew it. If it could meet the challenge, the average rent was £12·27. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will take the opportunity of accepting the invitation to compare the cost of renting with purchasing over a 20-year period. I hope that those in the small group who are still renting their accommodation will again look at the figures.

The second way in which home ownership can be explained is by proper marketing. A great many local councils are not giving local estate agents or in shops in the local premises information to sell to tenants under the right to buy.

Empty council accommodation is a scandal. We have heard this evening of some 113,000 council dwellings that stood empty in April last year. That is 2·5 per cent. of the total English council stock. York is not one of the worst offenders. It has 71 empty properties, but 20 of them have been vacant for more than a year. That Socialist council has even had property void since October 1982—more than four years. Hon. Members should consider how that accommodation could have provided a real umbrella for the homeless.

Indeed, I have received inquiries from and been visited at my surgeries by potential tenants who would like to take over the oldest property they can find and redecorate and refurbish it. In return, the local council would have the benefit of the rent. But still tonight, as we hold this debate on the homeless in society, that property is void. The Audit Commission has rightly drawn attention to the number of voids. I wish that more local authorities would adopt the Commission's recommendations for good management practicn e as set out in its two publications: "Managing the Crisis in Council Housing" and "Improving Council House Maintenance."

Priority should be given to those groups in special need, such as the homeless and the disabled. I applaud the Government's increased resources for housing capital investment which is some £390 million over that planned for 1986-87. The assistance directed through the Housing Corporation——

Mr. Park: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I thought, Sir, that you had appealed to hon. Members to confine themselves to 10-minute speeches.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Mr. Speaker made such an appeal but, of course, that is not a point of order. Hon. Members must make a judgment about the length of their speeches.

Mr. Gregory: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The more interruptions that occur the more the time available for the debate will be reduced.

The assistance directed through the Housing Corporation through about 81 projects for new fair rent and shared ownership, as well as the corporation's new temporary accommodation policy, will be of real benefit. Furthermore, urban programme grants can be used for innovative house projects, including the provision of hostels.

Councils must explore the full range of options open to them to maximise their housing resources and to introduce private sector capital. In particular, councils might well look further into the possibility of meeting the needs of some of their single and elderly waiting-list applicants by encouraging the private development of smaller, lower-cost homes, although of course not all applicants can be helped in this way.

Local authorities might also examine houses in exchange for land schemes, which have been successful in the past, and building under licence. It should be remembered that any capital receipts achieved through building for sale or under licence can be reinvested in full. Furthermore, since the enactment of the Building Societies Act 1986, these financial institutions are permitted to build. That was their original role and it should help inner-city renewal.

The Housing Corporation's programme for 1987-88 is of interest with regard to mixed private and public finance schemes. In the first instance, it is targeting about £20 million of public resources towards helping homeless families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation and to assist job movers. In that regard, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will hold discussions with the appropriate Minister at the Department of Health and Social Security to remove the difficulties that landlords have in opening accommodation to those who are in bed and breakfast accommodation.

Last Saturday at my surgery I received a deputation, not for the first time, from landlords and landladies who provide that necessary service. Yet the problem that they face is that their tenants, who are on supplementary benefit and need board-and-lodging accommodation move before the landlords have had a chance to receive payment. Clearly, if we are to continue to open up rented accommodation for those purposes, two Giro payments need to be sent, one to the applicant and the amount for the board and lodging to the landlord. If we do not act on that in an administrative capacity soon, the amount of available accommodation will clearly dwindle.

[Mr. Gregory]

I mentioned the Housing Corporation's programme. I understand that an allocation will be available in the north-eastern region for "challenge funding" for which the corporation will be inviting housing associations to compete in proposing mixed finance schemes that meet urgent housing needs.

For those without their own home, the problems that arise through inefficient work under home improvement grants sadly occur too frequently. I well recall the announcement made last November by the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction about our expansion of repair and improvement agency services which meets half the costs of a new £6 million scheme. Care and Repair Ltd. and the National Home Improvements Council are free to decide which schemes should be established.

Mr. Winnick: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I implore you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to take into consideration the fact that a number of hon. Members on both sides of the House have been sitting throughout the debate. You made an appeal, Mr. Deputy Speaker, like the other occupant of the Chair, for hon. Members to try as far as possible to limit their speeches to 10 minutes. It is obvious that the hon. Gentleman is trying to take up half an hour and to deprive other hon. Members of the opportunity of taking part in this debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: So long as the hon. Member for York (Mr. Gregory) does not stray out of order, I have no power to curtail the length of his speech. However, I hope that he will have regard to the appeal that has now been made twice from the Chair—by Mr. Speaker and myself—to be brief and to give other hon. Members who have sat here for a long time the opportunity to take part in the debate.

Mr. Gregory: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am also mindful of the fact that the last Labour Member who so spoke took up considerably longer than I have already done, as did the previous Labour Member.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not make such an allegation, which is not accurate. I hope that he will bring his speech to a speedy conclusion.

Mr. Gregory: Care and Repair Ltd. and the National Home Improvements Council are free to decide where schemes should be established. I hope that more councils will attract these organisations. I look forward to a countrywide network of centres being established this year which will offer practical advice and help. We need councils to monitor builders and check their warranties so that taxpayers' money is spent efficiently. Clearly, if taxpayers' money is being put into home improvement grants, it is important that, wherever possible, effective warranties are investigated by local councils and that there should be a list of approved builders for such grants.

Let me address the question of the rental sector. The Government plan to match their right to buy with a right to rent. We have given an enormous boost to owner-occupation, but there is a minority that cannot afford that. They compete for a dwindling supply of private rented housing or go on long council waiting lists. Therefore, we seek to bring responsible landlords into the market by keeping security of tenure for tenants but moving to market rates. That can be achieved partly by creating a political climate in which building societies and housing associations are encouraged to build for rent. However, it is important to discuss this in the context of the DHSS on the bed and breakfast side and renting and letting of homes must be made respectable and not confined to councils with their elaborate bureaucracy. If that is secured, the Conservatives will be on the right road to obtaining the best housed nation in the Western world.

8.18 pm

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): If time permitted I would deal with a number of the points made by the hon. Member for York (Mr. Gregory) because he made many points that should be dealt with and attacked. However, I shall refer to just two of his points because, we should make it clear that his reference to the Labour party policy as being opposed to home ownership is simply not true. The Labour party's record for encouraging and developing home ownership over many years has been excellent, and our position on that remains the same and will continue to be so in the years ahead.

The hon. Member for York spoke about the limitations and restraint that he would put on people who were applying to go on council house waiting lists. Some of his suggestions were unbelievable and deplorable. I hope that when the Minister replies he will make it clear that even the Conservative party would not wish to move in the direction that the hon. Gentleman suggested.

Today's debate is on homelessness and the Government's record on housing. The subject of the debate is important and is one of the major issues facing the country at the present time. Everyone has a right to a decent home, whether that be rented or purchased. They should be able to keep their homes dry, warm and clean. That is a basic entitlement for every person living in Britain. The Government's record on that is deplorable and they will stand indicted and found guilty on housing alone when the election comes.

The Minister should convey to the Chancellor when he is considering his Budget the fact that if there is to be a reduction in the standard rate of tax, a large number of people, whether unemployed or whatever, will receive no benefit, and that if the standard rate is reduced by 2p in the pound, the majority of ordinary working people will receive only a few coppers a week in their pocket while it will benefit the wealthy considerably. That money, the equivalent of just under £3 billion, should be used to deal with the problems facing us in Britain. It is obscene and wrong that a person who has a £30,000 mortgage and is paying tax at the standard rate should be paying a higher mortgage monthly repayment than a person who manages to benefit from an income tax rebate at a higher rate because his income is higher. That is nonsense. Mortgage tax relief should be limited to basic rate taxation.

I believe to some extent that the Government, through the DHSS, are forcing people into multi-occupied properties and bed and breakfast accommodation. That is not the best type of accommodation or in many cases the most desirable. However, I know from people in my council area that even if the council offers them council accommodation, they are unable to obtain single payments for such basic items as a bed or gas cooker if they are single. Therefore, they are forced to remain in that sort of accommodation. However, it would be cheaper and provide them with a far more decent home if the single

payment was to be given. The Minister and the Department of the Environment need to speak to the Department of Health and Social Security to persuade it to move in that direction.

On Friday we shall debate a Bill on multi-occupied properties. That will provide an opportunity to debate in greater detail the problems that arise in some such properties. I say "some", because some are well run but many raise serious questions. In my constituency in the Calder ward such accommodation causes considerable concern to the councillors, and to the Top O' Town residents association. It is also a matter of concern for the Daneshouse ward councillors and the Daneshouse residents action group.

The major problem of housing in Burnley is slightly different from that in many other areas. One thing that I have learnt since I have been a Member of Parliament is that we need a much more flexible approach to housing throughout the country. We have a surplus of housing stock of about 6 per cent. in the public and private sectors, and that arises because of the decline of the manufacturing industries and because of the many people who have left the area. Some 5,000 people have moved away from Burnley in the past five years. That is a serious problem. It creates problems different from those that exist in other areas. If a person owns a house in the private sector and is fortunate enough to be able to receive a grant to improve it, the value of the house hardly increases because values are deflated as a result of the surplus stock within the area.

When the council considered this year's housing allocation it issued a statement. That statement was made by the chairman of the housing committee, Councillor Bradshaw, and it was unanimously agreed by members of all parties on the council's housing and community services committee. The members of that committee expressed their serious concern at the fact that the council's allocation represented only 32 per cent. of the amount that the council sought. They believe that they should pursue the issue in every possible way. The bid submitted was for £10,742,000. The council received an allocation of £3,431,000, which included £47,000 for loft insulation. When one realises the problems we have within the area, one can see that those allocations are deplorable.

Burnley has a housing stock of some 37,842 houses and within that, 1,344 are classified as unfit, 1,379 are classified as fit but lacking basic amenities, and 9,286 are classified as non-substandard dwellings but in need of renovation and much money being spent on them. The council has tried to meet the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction, either in London or in Burnley. He has not been able to meet the council's request to date. We believe that the problems are serious.

The council is looking, in the first instance, to the private sector where one would have thought that this Government would at least have been a little more willing to meet the council and try to deal with the problems. We realise that Ministers are busy people, but we hope that he will continue to consider the problem.

The point that I have made on many occasions is that one has only to have one house in a long terrace become derelict or go into decay—many of our terraces run the full length of the street — and that can spread and ultimately one will be looking not at improvement but at demolition, not just of one house but a whole block. Many of the stone houses built towards the end of the last century and the early part of this century are basically good houses and are well worth saving and improving.

The borough council would love to be able to attract people into the area to take up the surplus property but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) so rightly said, there is the problem as to what we would give people for jobs if they came to the town.

Those are the problems facing us. There is much more that one could say, but I believe that the housing problem in Britain under the present Government continues to become more critical. They are not taking the necessary action and when the general election comes the people of this country will show what they think of the present Government's policies on housing.

8.28 pm

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I am pleased to follow the speech of the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) for whom I have a great deal of respect. However, he would not expect me to agree with all his remarks, particularly his last few words.

I shall start by putting the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) out of his misery. I do own a few properties, a very few properties. The second initial of my name is "R", but it does not stand for Rachman. Just because some people treat their tenanted property appallingly, it does not mean that everybody does.

I intend to be fairly brief. It is not my intention to give way because I know that many Opposition Members want to speak. If there is a general consensus that I should give way on a point, I shall give way but otherwise I shall plough straight on.

There is a great, and I hope growing, amount of common ground on the subject of housing and there is certainly a great deal of common concern. In the past few years, one of the successes has been the large increase in the number of people who are able to own their own houses. I do not believe that that is a Conservative or Socialist thing; people who vote Labour enjoy owning their properties just as much as those who vote Conservative. There is a great deal of satisfaction, pleasure and creativity in which people can indulge if they own their properties.

I do not wish to discuss the reasons for home ownership or the financial aspects involved, but, generally, it is considered by many hon. Members to be a good thing that people should own their properties. It is also good because local authority housing, in most areas, costs the community money. If people own their properties, it does not cost the community to the same extent.

Despite the increase in home ownership, there is a need for rented accommodation. It is a large and significant demand. Although it may be declining slowly, it will always exist. There will be a demand for rented accommodation from elderly people who do not want the responsibilities or problems of home ownership. They did not have those problems when they were younger and they certainly do not want them now.

There will also be a demand for rented accommodation for people moving out of institutions into care in the community. I am aware that in parts of Northampton—not the part that I represent—there are people who have been moved out of institutions into care in the community. There is a great deal of concern that those people are being exploited. I am not sure whether that is so. There is

[Mr. Tony Marlow]

concern that properties for such people should be properly regulated. Those who regulate are also concerned that they do not have the power to regulate on small properties. However, they are aware that if they were over-zealous in their regulation, the availability of property might clam up. Therefore, we would be in a worse situation.

It is sad that we have not got this area of rented accommodation right. It is vital to provide adequate accommodation in this area and we must get it right.

As my right hon. Friend explained, there is a demand for rented accommodation from broken families. There is also a demand for rented accommodation on the grounds of mobility. Some people like to live, work and stay with the family in the area in which they were born rather than move around the country. Other people, because they are adventurous and want a particular job or wish to move, need such rented accommodation. At the moment, a scheme is operating among councils for people who wish to exchange from one area to another. At present, that scheme is not very good and we need a more positive approach to this problem.

We need rented accommodation for those people who do not want to buy property. Not everybody wants to be a property owner and have the responsibilities that go with it. Thus there will always be a demand for rented accommodation.

My hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory) said that demand and need are not the same. I know that many of my constituents take the view that there are those who get married when they are young and feel that they are immediately entitled to a house. However, when my constituents were younger they knew they needed a house but thought, "We will not get married until we get a house." Also, some young girls believe that if they become pregnant the council will take them off the dole queue and provide them with a property. I am not absolutely sure that their needs — that is how they describe them — should be met overnight. That is a grey area. I do not believe that we can fulfil everyone's requirements as soon as they make them known. Some priorities do not rank as high as others.

How will we satisfy the needs? I am not sure that there is common ground about this, but I feel that one of the greatest environmental disasters that has happened in this country since the war has been the massive expansion of council accommodation—the tower blocks and some of the disastrous estates that were built about 20 years ago. It is generally becoming recognised that this was a mistake. We destroyed homes and we built slums. The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) spoke about the days when we built a larger number of houses, but we destroyed homes. A measure of the success of a housing policy is not necessarily the number of houses that are built or the amount of money that is spent but the number of decent houses available for people to live in. We should move in that direction.

There has been much criticism — I know that the Labour party has been strongly critical and it may well have good reason — of the private rented sector. The Labour party will be aware that in other European countries, in Germany and France, there is a large, strong, powerful and well-regulated private rented sector. People get a lot of satisfaction from renting that accommodation. The quality of property in the private rented sector in France and Germany is no worse than the quality of property in some of the inner urban areas of Britain. The rented sector in Europe is a success story, and we should move in that direction.

How will we satisfy the demand? One of the problems has been that, in the rented sector, there has been a virtual monopoly. I think that most people would agree that, in some sensitive way, we should try to tackle that monopoly. There will always be a great deal of local authority housing. Some local authorities are good at managing their housing, but some local authorities, as Opposition Members know only too well, are not good at maintaining properties and looking after their tenants. It is the tenants who suffer and the ratepayers who have to pick up the bills because of the councils' inefficiency.

Mr. Tony Banks: The hon. Gentleman is being very moderate!

Mr. Marlow: I believe that the hon. Gentleman wishes to contribute to the debate, so I will leave him in peace.

One of the means of satisfying demand has been housing associations. They have done some very good work, but they do not solve all the problems and they are not totally virtuous. Some housing associations have a tendency to a degree of extravagence, and the fees that are raised by some people are quite high. Not far from here, a church was converted into 18 units with an average of about one and a quarter bedrooms in each unit. The conversion cost was £70,000 per unit. That is a lot of money, especially when one considers it was two years ago.

How will we encourage the private rented sector? At present, there is a haemorrhage in the private rented sector. The reason is obvious. If one owns a house with a tenant in it, and if the tenant moves out, that house has a freehold value. If another tenant is put into the house, the value of it immediately falls. I do not know how we will solve this problem, but solve it we must. The returns on maintaining a house in the rented sector must be equal to the returns on selling that house. That will ensure the maintenance of a large part of the rented sector.

Many councils face the problem of empty properties. We want more efficient councils and we want those with problems to sort them out. I was pleased that the hon. Member for Copeland said that he is trying to provide advice and assistance to those local authorities that are presently facing problems. There are also a large number of vacant properties in the private sector. We know why they are vacant. If they are vacant, such properties have a value. If there is a tenant in that property who may never get out, the value is automatically reduced. That is a problem that we must solve. We need rented accommodation to be available. In the interests of the people we all represent, we must get our heads together over this subject and not keep fighting about it.

There is one point I wish to make of a different nature. It concerns the so-called north-south debate and the cost of property in the south-east. The hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Raynsford) said that that was a great problem for some of his constituents who wished to get on the first rung of the housing ladder. It is true that in London the cost of property is extortionate. Perhaps we need to develop the system of shared ownership to enable such people to get on the first rung of the ladder. Families live in London and when children grow up they need accommodation.

My right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food have spoken about changing the planning regulations. There is a feeling that there will be a move into the green belt. I believe that that fear is mistaken. However, I do not believe that we should encourage a large-scale expansion of housing in the south-east of England. The cost of housing is high in the south-east, the cost of labour is high, but the availability of such labour is low. In other parts of the country with severe levels of unemployment, housing and labour exist and it would be far better to move the jobs to where the people are rather than to move the people to where the jobs are.

Mr. Tony Banks: How would the hon. Gentleman do it?

Mr. Marlow: If we build houses and factories in the south-east of England and decamp people from the rest of the country, we will certainly not be able to do it. However, if we restrict and restrain, to a certain extent, the development of housing, plants and factories in the south-east as the economy expands — it has been expanding over the past five years — people who want labour and want to set up more facilities will have to move where the housing can be bought and where labour exists. In that way the recession will be removed from the north and north-west of England.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West) *rose*——

Mr. Marlow: I am always tempted to give way to my hon. Friend because he makes the best interventions in the House but I said to Opposition Members—all of whom are keen to take part in the debate—that I would make a short speech. I have made that speech. All that I am trying to do is to implore, at the end of my speech, that it is in the interests of all our people who are quite entitled to their totally different views that we get our heads together a bit more than we have done in the past.

8.40 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): The contribution of the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) was uncharacteristically measured in tone. One could almost describe it as the new moderate Marlow. If the hon. Gentleman does not watch it, he may be in difficulties with some of his more Right-wing colleagues.

The debate reflects the acute housing crisis and the growing homelessness. That is reflected in the contributions made by Labour Members. We had a disappointing and dreary speech from the Secretary of State which in no way recognised the acute housing problem and the crisis that exists in the country. Leaving aside the compliment that I have just paid to the hon. Member for Northampton, North, the only speech from a Conservative Member which understood and appreciated some of the problems that my hon. Friends and I are trying to explain was that made by the hon. Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Malins), 80 per cent. of which I tended to agree with.

Much of the problem that we face arises from the Government's determination on taking office nearly eight years ago drastically to cut public spending on council housing. Between 1979 and the publication of the latest figures there has been a 65 per cent. reduction in public housing expenditure. That explains the present housing crisis, the long waiting lists, the bed-and-breakfast scandals and the position of so many people about whom my hon. Friends, such as my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) spoke who tonight will not have a home to go to.

That is the situation that we face and to which, unfortunately, the Government seem so callously indifferent. We now have the lowest number of council house starts in peacetime. It is expected that the number of new council dwellings started during the current year will be fewer than 30,000.

I agree that there is a consensus of a kind between hon. Members on both sides of the House that a relatively large number of people still require rented accommodation. Perhaps my hon. Friends and I would put that figure somewhat higher than would the Government, but as my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Raynsford) pointed out, the rented sector, and certainly the public rented sector, has been drastically reduced. Many people who are not especially dogmatic on the issue of whether council dwellings should be sold, understandably feel that if the policy is to sell off existing stock, at least we should make sure that that stock is replaced. Of course, that has been far from the Government's policy.

The consensus that does exist goes only as far as recognising that there remains a need for rented accommodation. The fundamental divide between the Government and Opposition Members relates to whether the supply of that rented accommodation should come from the public or the private sector. I am convinced that the possibility of any large-scale revival of the privately rented sector is remote, even with deregulation. When Conservative Members say that all was more or less fine in the past and that the present situation has been caused by the Rent Acts, they should recognise that the houses in which so many of our fellow citizens lived — at the beginning of the century 90 per cent. of our people lived in rented accommodation—were little more than hovels. That was why the slum clearance and redevelopment programmes took place so many years later.

I advise the Minister that he should bear in mind that some hon. Members — I am one — served on local authorities in the London area when the Rent Act 1957 was taking effect. Even with the housing problems that existed then we had to give priority to people who were, in most cases, being legally evicted because of that legislation.

The Labour party must warn existing private tenants that if the Government deregulated the private sector, even if such deregulation is limited to new lettings, unscrupulous landlords—there will be plenty—will try to ensure that the sitting tenant who currently enjoys protection is thrown out, by one means or another, because once that accommodation is empty it can be sold or let at an exorbitant rent.

What is so important, and what Ministers will not accept, is that a deregulated rented sector, by which I mean one in which there is no security of tenure and no limit on rents, will not be any good to those many families who desperately need accommodation. In many cases, they will not be in a position to pay such rents and they will not have protection. When the agreement, if there is an agreement, comes to an end after six months, a year, or even two years, what will happen to them? Even if there is a new offer, they may be asked to pay a larger rent which they cannot afford. What good is such a privately rented

[Mr. David Winnick]

sector without security of tenure or rent control? That is why I believe that what the Government intend to do will not benefit the many people who are waiting desperately for rented accommodation. I hope that the Labour party will make the position perfectly clear and warn tenants what is likely to happen if the Government are re-elected.

We need a substantial house-building programme. Much has been said about the poor quality of council housing in the past. I do not disagree with that. However, to some extent that is the fault of successive Governments, who forced and squeezed local authorities to build accommodation which, even from the beginning, would obviously be inadequate. I accept that, but that is not an excuse for not allowing local authorities to have the financial means to build accommodation. We must ensure that it is proper and good quality, low-rise accommodation. It is essential that that type of accommodation is provided by local authorities if we are to tackle the housing crisis that faces the country.

The housing investment programme allocation in my local authority of Walsall is only 80 per cent. of the sum that was provided last year. From 1987-88 we will receive £7,709,000, which is totally inadequate for the borough's housing needs. Money has to be spent from that HIP allocation on properties that are structurally defective, such as the Orlit, the Cornish Unit and the Smith properties. About £5 million will be spent over two years on such properties and that will have to come from a narrow and totally inadequate HIP allocation. Is it any wonder that for eight years no council housing has been built in my borough? None at all has been built. Moreover, many properties that should be modernised, and others on which major repairs should be carried out, are not getting that work done on them because the local authority does not have the HIP allocation or the capital receipts to allow it to spend that money. That is why my borough is facing a difficult housing situation.

More than 1,000 people who have a medical recommendation are waiting to be rehoused in Walsall, apart from all the others on the waiting list. That medical recommendation is from the community physician. Very few indeed of those 1,000 people stand any chance of being rehoused in the near future. Many of them are elderly and have been waiting a long time for warden-controlled or OAP accommodation. Indeed, many will die before an offer comes from the local authority.

In my borough there are many families with two children who are living in multi-storey blocks and whose chances of being rehoused are remote. All they want is to live in a house with a garden, but they have to wait year after year because the local authority is not in a position to give them any assistance. That is part of the housing crisis that we face in Walsall.

The Tory Reform Group, of which the Secretary of State for Energy is president and four other Cabinet Ministers are sponsors, has sent a letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer saying that, instead of tax cuts in the Budget, money should be spent on essential needs. It mentions, in particular, housing and urban renewal. That reflects the pressure of opinion that much more needs to be done in housing construction and modernisation, and to end the scandal of homelessness and bed-and-breakfast hostels. Unfortunately, that opinion is not reflected by the majority of the Cabinet.

I hope that housing will be a major issue during the general election. It was not in 1983, and perhaps we must take some blame for that. We must ensure that housing and the needs of people who are desperately waiting for accommodation or to be rehoused are explained on the hustings. We must explain that for eight years we have had a Government who have been totally indifferent to the plight of people who have as much right as any of us to be adequately housed.

8.50 pm

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): I have listened to the debate for more than four and a half hours, and I shall not keep the House for too long.

The amendment in the name of the Prime Minister and her colleagues states that the House

"commends the Government for taking steps to re-establish the right to rent; recognises that further progress in increasing choice and supply depends on re-creating a market in rented housing and harnessing private sector resources".

The amendment also refers to

"widening the opportunities for home ownership".

I wish to refer to the right to buy in connection with British Coal's sitting tenants. The Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction has sent a letter about the situation between British Coal and its tenants. It states:

"British Coal say that tenants have three months to decide whether they are interested in buying and at least three further months to make the purchase after the discounted price is notified to them."

On 3 December 1980, a constituent of mine applied to the Coal Board to buy his house. The machinery was set in motion, the evaluations were carried out and an application was made for a mortgage. Six years later, on 2 December 1986, that tenant was advised that his house had been sold over his head to a property speculator. Over years, not months, that person has been denied the opportunity to buy the property. If contracts had been exchanged, my constituent would have qualified for a grant under the defects order. Therefore, he has lost in every way. He cannot buy the house now because the new owner will not sell to a sitting tenant.

I hope that the Minister will investigate that injustice and put right the evils that have been created. My constituent is not the only one to have suffered. There are other cases where the Coal Board has denied its tenants the opportunity to buy properties.

Mr. John Patten: The hon. Gentleman has described what, on the face of it, seems to be a serious case. If he would give me all the details of that and any other cases, I shall look into them, as I am already doing for others who have passed me these details.

Mr. O'Brien: I appreciate that intervention and will ensure that the Minister receives the information.

On this estate of Coal Board houses there are 62 vacant properties out of a total of 220. They remained vacant some for over five years, so that British Coal could sell them en bloc to a speculator. That is not in the best interests of the tenants.

Shorthold tenancies are now developing. People must take a tenancy for only one year, although the shorthold tenancy agreement allows for five years. I do not know of one shorthold tenancy that has been extended beyond one year. That, too, should be investigated. It is a racket and works to the detriment of tenants and people desperately

in need of accommodation because local authorities lack the resources to build new houses. Will the Minister investigate those matters?

In areas such as mine, where industry has been devastated, local authorities need to build properties. We cannot rely entirely on private landlords. I hope that consideration will be given to the position in the north and areas of industrial dereliction.

8.56 pm

Mr. Timothy Wood (Stevenage): I shall intervene briefly, but pursue several points quickly.

The Opposition often argue that the Government have starved local authorities of money, with the result that there are great housing problems. In reality, all too often local authorities have taken pride in holding down rents, when in many instances a greater sum could be generated from rents and from taking advantage of both the income from the receipts of housing sales and the interest received on those receipts to improve and maintain property from the revenue account. The tragedy is that all too often local authorities choose to say, "We shall not cover ordinary routine maintenance from our revenue income. Instead, we shall endeavour to cover it eventually from capital spending." At the end of the day there is insufficient capital to carry out both essential maintenance and the house building that they may desire to pursue.

When I was involved in a local authority, I encountered that problem. The Labour opposition on the council repeatedly said that maintenance expenditure should be a capital item, not a revenue item. That had two effects: first, it deferred the evil hour when the work was paid for, so that the people of the future were paying rather than those of the present who were benefiting from the maintenance; and, secondly, it implied greater costs, which had to be covered at a later date.

The consequences of that for many local authorities are now evident. It is interesting to note that if we consider the statistics on housing maintenance and the outstanding costs for such maintenance, we see that the smaller rural authorities have taken more care per house and have maintained their homes better than some of the large inner-city authorities.

Council housing over the past 20 or 30 years has not been a great success. We have discussed at length this evening the fact that much of the housing produced over the past 20 or 30 years has not provided satisfactory homes, partly because of system building, and partly because of the destruction of communities. One of the major problems in many areas, particularly inner-city areas, is that we have not provided the necessary variety of tenure and landlord. I hope that in future we will endeavour to create a much greater variety of landlord, through housing associations and other imaginative schemes.

I agree with hon. Members who have said tonight that there will be a continuing need for rented accommodation, and I especially agree with the remarks by my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) in that respect. It is important that in meeting that need, we ensure that there is a considerable variety of tenure.

I have been involved with two new towns. I believe that one of the disadvantages of those towns was that so much of the accommodation was rented from just one landlord. In recent years housing associations have come to play a major role in providing housing accommodation in those new towns, and that is a boon for tenants. It has provided a much-needed element of choice. I hope that in future we will endeavour to increase the varieties of tenure.

I also believe that there is a need to edge up the rents that are paid. We have introduced what I believe to be a satisfactory and improved system for providing housing benefit to individuals in need. I believe that the case, therefore, for holding down rents is weak.

Mr. Charles Irving (Cheltenham): Does my hon. Friend agree that the two most important factors are that at present some 130,000 or 140,000 council houses and flats are deliberately being kept empty by rotten local authorities?

Mr. Freeson: That is stupid.

Mr. Irving: It is true, and the right hon. Gentleman knows it.

Secondly, does my hon. Friend agree that it is scandalous that many families are living in bed-and-breakfast accommodation, in some cases paying as much as £135 a week? Does my hon. Friend agree that much accommodation is available, but that because of bad management by many local authorities, it is not being put to proper use?

Mr. Wood: I agree that there is a good deal of bad management in that respect. With a greater variety of people providing homes, we will avoid some of the problems. I believe that the Government are working their way towards improving matters in that respect.

9.2 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I have sat through the whole of this debate hoping to make the case for the London borough of Newham and to describe the serious homeless problem in that borough. I have now been given two minutes in which to make that case. Frankly, that is beyond me. I cannot possibly do it. However, I will try to do it and I hope that the Minister will respond to my comments.

There are 47,000 unsatisfactory dwellings in Newham in need of substantial repair, the highest number in London. The position with regard to bed and breakfast in Newham is an absolute scandal. In 1983-84 there were 10 families in Newham in bed-and-breakfast accommodation and that cost £40,000. In 1985-86, the figure had risen to 107 families, costing the borough £587,000. Tonight, there are 370 families in bed and breakfast accommodation, costing an estimated £1·5 million. Newham has the fastest growing level of bed and breakfast inhabitation in London. Newham simply cannot deal with such a problem.

The Secretary of State made a speech of stunning complacency. He has no awareness of the housing problems in London or of the problems in Newham. He lives in a good, rich Tory constituency. The Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction, who is to reply to the debate, is a decent sort. I do not know what homelessness there is in Abingdon and Oxford, but I suspect that it is nothing like that in the London borough of Newham. I ask the Secretary of State and the Minister to come to the borough and sit with me on one Saturday morning at my advice surgery. They will begin to see, when all the statistics are shredded away, the real face of homelessness, hopelessness and poverty, not only in

[Mr. Tony Banks]

Newham but in all the inner-city areas. If only the Tories had that experience, they would not be so callous and complacent in their speeches.

9.5 pm

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): We have had an interesting debate about people and their homes. That is why the Press Gallery has been virtually empty for the whole of the debate. I missed two speeches this evening and I apologise for that. Of those I heard, only that by the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squires) referred to this being the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. If the opposition had concentrated on that issue, the Government would have sent the Minister for Overseas Development to answer the debate, because the Department of the Environment has virtually opted out of housing. We drafted our motion with care and precision because we wanted the Ministers responsible for housing to come to answer the debate.

The Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction has sent a letter to me and some of my hon. Friends, for which we thank him. It is a letter of considerable detail, concerning the sale of British Coal houses. As far as I understand it, there has been only one change in policy—the auctions have been suspended for the time being in certain circumstances. These have been going on for only a few months. Only a year ago I saw the director responsible for the sales policy, and there was no contemplation of the sort of auctions that have been going on in London hotels. People's homes have been bought and sold over their heads, and they have been given new shorthold tenancy agreements, at astronomical rents. I hope that this new policy has caused the Government concern.

One Conservative Member seemed to jest about the reference in the motion to "fit" housing. It is all very well to talk about units of accommodation, as the Secretary of State did, but we are talking about homes fit to live in. However the Minister may argue about the amount of money spent on renewal and improvement, the fact remains that Britain's stock quality is deteriorating. I do not want to abuse the House by flooding it with statistics, so I shall keep them as brief as I can.

There are three categories of fitness measure. There is unfit housing, housing that is fit but lacking a basic amenity such as hot and cold water or an inside toilet—although I fail to see how houses can be fit if they lack such amenities—and housing that is in need of renovation. In 1984 the number of houses in all three categories in England was 3,513,000. In 1985 it was 3,991,000, and in 1986, 4,045,000. That increase shows how the quality of the stock is deteriorating, but the Secretary of State made virtually no mention of this. It naturally follows that if building numbers and demolitions decrease, we need to repair and improve at a faster rate than we were before even to stand still. Instead, these figures show that we are falling even further behind.

The Secretary of State said nothing about the point raised by one or two of my hon. Friends on the position of first-time buyers. There has been reference to the impossibly high prices for first-time buyers in the south-east and the difficulty of youngsters being able to stay in the areas where they were born and raised. The Secretary of State virtually ignored this issue. In 1984 the volume house builders—the nine largest house builders in the country, responsible for 60,000 new homes each year, plus renovations—sold 60 per cent. of their output to first-time buyers, in 1985 they sold 40 per cent., and they told me yesterday that in 1986 the figure is even lower. There are many reasons for this.

Mr. John Patten: I spoke to the same body of people, and they are extremely interesting. Will the hon. Gentleman explain why, if their facts and figures are correct for the building industry as a whole, in 1985, the last year for which we have available statistics, there was a record number of 570,000 first-time buyers in this country, and the number will be higher in 1986?

Mr. Rooker: This group of the nine largest house builders, by and large were as a matter of policy providing considerable numbers of homes for first-time buyers. They are now concerned that they are able to provide even fewer for that market than before. The problems are many, notwithstanding the north-south house price problem and the issues of land availability and prices. These market-oriented companies say that with 63 per cent. conventional owner-occupation

"we are getting towards the top limit of those who can afford conventional home ownership."

We must have varieties of tenure, which must include a positive policy of housing for rent. Last Thursday the Minister spoke about the right to rent, but he excluded from that those who take up the new partnership rents. They will not even have the right to buy. The right to buy should not exclude the right to rent, and the right to rent should not exclude the right to buy, if we are to give people a variety of choice in their housing tenure — [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] For that reason we have gone out of our way to make clear to the Government on several occasions that we fully support the principle of shared ownership—which was invented by a Labour-controlled local authority in Birmingham—and assured tenancies.

We genuinely want the partnership arrangements to work. The Minister must be aware of the consternation that followed his statement last Friday among housing associations and above all among the financial institutions involved in some of those partnership schemes. I realise, as I said at the time, that his statement is for consultation. We will not make a knee-jerk reaction to it. The Opposition refuse to do that, but the Minister must be aware that his midnight deadline is causing problems up and down the land. I ask the Minister, while he is consulting on the issues, to reconsider whether he needed that midnight deadline last Thursday.

The potential Tower Hamlets scheme has been mentioned. I shall not go into detail, but the Minister must be aware of the great concern in the National Federation of Housing Associations and local authorities and other institutions. I ask him generally to reconsider that deadline. The Secretary of State claims, as does the public expenditure White Paper, that there is enough housing to go round overall. This is sc only if we count unfit housing as fit, if we ignore second homes, if we ignore people forced to share, if we ignore the need for empty housing for mobility, and if we ignore houses under major repair and reconstruction.

If we do not ignore those, there is no question but that in England and Wales there is a shortfall of more than 1 million homes. Is the Secretary of State saying that we should ignore all those factors? In addition, there are the

catastrophic implications of defective and system-built housing. It is estimated that in Birmingham half the 400 tower blocks will have to come down. They are 20 to 25 years old. A potential need for housing exists in all the categories that I have mentioned.

Although I have said that there are regional imbalances in the amount of stock because of depopulation, as my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) said, the shortage of good housing for the households that need them is a direct cause of the increase in homelessness. The Secretary of State gave a list of what he called social factors. He also said, to his credit, that he did not want to reverse the law that had brought about some of those social factors.

I am waiting for the first Conservative Member of Parliament to get up in this House and say that he wants to go back to the divorce laws as they were in the 1960s. None of them will do it. Therefore, it is no good Members complaining about breakdowns in marriages, when people are no longer forced to live together by law. The Government refuse to change their policy so that we have enough houses to take account of marriage breakdowns. Housing policy must not ignore the changes in social conditions that were mentioned by the Secretary of State, because if it does the implication is that the Government want to revert to unsatisfactory laws.

I made it clear in a recent letter to the Minister, to which I do not expect him to reply tonight, that we will not play the numbers game of setting targets. As we all know, the result of that in the past was shortcuts in design and production methods which led to structural and social problems in high-rise and system-built dwellings in Tory and Labour constituencies alike throughout the country. However, not setting a target is no excuse for not adjusting policy to fit the facts. The fact is that not enough homes are being built or renovated. I remind the House again that if it had not been for the catastrophic drop in new house construction since 1979 we would not have had this debate on housing and homelessness.

For every week since 1979 that the Government have been in power, 2,000 fewer new homes have been started than the average under the Labour Government. At the time, many of my hon. Friends and I criticised the levels under our Government, but since 1979, some 100,000 fewer new homes have been started each year. If the Tory Government had only continued with the average building programme of the Labour Government — I am not arguing about the mix—700,000 more new homes would have been built.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): Where would the hon. Gentleman build them?

Mr. Rooker: I shall come to that point. The implication is that there is a deliberate restriction. I remind the House that the best year for construction under this Government was 1983, when there were 217,000 new starts. That compared with 264,000 new starts in 1978, the worst year under the Labour Government. So in their best year the Tory Government managed to build 47,000 fewer houses than in the worst year of the Labour Government. I was asked where the houses would be built. I shall come to that towards the end of my speech. We keep hearing from Conservative Members that we should fill every derelict site with housing.

Several hon. Members have mentioned the problem of empty houses. I take second place to nobody in condemning authorities which leave houses empty deliberately because of inefficiency, but I lose my temper at such unreasonable interventions as that made by the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Irving) just after 9 o'clock. It is almost beyond belief that someone with his knowledge should have made such an intemperate intervention.

There are several reasons why housing is left empty, as we all know. Problems involving major improvements and repairs, transfer policies, tenancy turnover and allocation policy have all been identified by the Institute of Housing in a document published to give advice to local authorities. I repeat, as my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) said in moving the motion, that the worst landlord for keeping homes empty is central Government, with a figure of 6·3 per cent. in London, while for local authorities in London the percentage is 3·5.

Landlords may get sick and tired of the matter being raised in the House, but we have to put the other side of the picture. People who leave housing empty needlessly must be condemned. Before the Minister repeats the condemnation, may I point out to him that the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors recommends that 2·5 per cent. of houses should be empty at any one time to assist mobility? That does not figure in the calculations. Last year the Opposition gave the Government an opportunity to do something about it. We proposed that housing which had been empty for six months but which was fit and available for letting should be used by people on the waiting list who would simply write to the local authority and make an arrangement to pay the rent. The Government rejected the amendment; it was far too radical for them. We recognised the problem and tried to draft an amendment to meet the needs of the situation.

I made a list as Conservative MPs spoke of empty properties in the private sector and the public sector in their constituencies, and it does not make very good reading: private properties in Northampton, 2,100; York, 800; Bolton, 2,800; Nottingham, North—and certainly Nottingham as a whole—3,600. These are all very high percentages.

The hon. Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Malins), who made by far the best speech of any Conservative Members recognised the problem. In Croydon—where, of course, it is your local authority, Mr. Speaker—there are 3,300 empty properties: in the private sector 3·3 per cent., and only 1·4 per cent. in the local authority sector.

Why are they empty? The Minister will probably tell us that it is because of the Rent Acts. If the Government had the guts to get up and say that they were going to abolish the Rent Acts, we would know where we stood. Members of the Tory party say that they want to abolish the Rent Acts, but Ministers cannot quite bring themselves to say that. They know — and it has been said from these Benches—that the fastest fall in private rented housing followed the 1957 Rent Act. It disappeared at a faster rate from the time that Rachman was brought in that it had done before.

Local authorities are, of course, slagged off by Ministers all over the country, and one local authority was particularly slagged off by the Minister who will be winding up the debate tonight when, on Tuesday 20 January, he was interviewed by Nick Ross on "Tuesday Call". He had a go at Southwark, I understand, and made

[Mr. Rooker]

the point that Southwark had refused to accept money to improve empty properties and said that the council preferred either to buy property or to build it itself.

The Urban Renewal Housing Unit circular was sent to Southwark in September 1986. On 23 October the local authority wrote back setting out a scheme and inquiring whether it would be eligible for funding. It set out ideas for the acquired properties. It wrote again on 16 January 1987, three days before it was slagged off on the radio, regarding another of its initiatives to help the homeless. This involved the acquired properties, which again it had owned for some time. It agreed that all the properties should be let and allocated to the homeless. In response to that letter, the Estate Action team invited it to submit an application, which it has done.

Why, then, does the Minister go on the radio and say that this Labour-controlled authority has refused the money? We deserve an answer to that. The Minister obviously had some facts about Southwark of which I am unaware and which he used on 20 January. If that is so, I invite him to refute what I have said.

The obscenity of homelessness will continue if we do not have a change of policy. We have again had Conservatives—I cite in particular the hon. Members for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville) and Nottingham, North (Mr. Ottaway)—calling for the lid to be taken off rents.

My hon. Friend the Member for Copeland raised issues relating to Greenwich. It is not an unimportant area. It has a good mix of housing. As the Minister says, it has a well run authority that collects its rents and rates. In Greenwich this morning I saw properties belonging to Morden college which it is keen to sell. This is a private landlord which apparently did repairs only when the council issued a notice and the courts were involved. The trustees are all former lord mayors and aldermen of the City of London. Not much local content in the management there! The local authority cannot be blamed for that fiasco. The quality of the housing is poor. Now, at the end of the day, the Labour-controlled local authority is desperately trying to put packages together with the private sector, the housing associations and the financial institutions to buy up those properties so that they can be managed and repaired properly and provide good homes for local people.

What is wrong with that? The Minister will say that a private landlord will be lost. To the best of my knowledge, the arguments have nothing to do with the Rent Acts. The landlord has decided to sell. It obviously does not want to be a landlord. It obviously is not a very good landlord, and that is a damned good reason for making sure that it gets out of landlordism.

We have also had mention, in interventions in my own speech, of land. Without going into detail, which would be inappropriate at this time of night anyway, several hon. Members on the Government Benches have repeated in interventions and in speeches the idea that it probably ought to be natural that every square yard of derelict land in the inner city should be built on. We reject that. It is a ridiculous policy. The Minister has coined the term "brown land". We can have all the brown land that we like, but I still think that it would be wrong and grossly unfair to develop intensively all the inner cities.

As I said to the house builders last December, it is as unrealistic to claim that all inner-city derelict sites should have homes on them as it is to say that all newbuild should be green field sites. There must be a balance. We are opposed to urban sprawl, but this does not mean that where there is a proven need some of the green outer area could not be exchanged for green lungs in the inner cities. We should have these in any event, as a green belt without green lungs is one-sided and discriminates against those who live in the inner cities and cannot afford to use the green belt.

Mr. Squire *rose*——

Mr. Rooker: I have repeated word for word what I said to the builders and what was reported, yet we have had the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Planning, who I understand, was not well, appearing on television on 22 January and saying that I had said that we should build "all over the south downs". That was a lie, and I am still waiting for an apology from the Minister.

The result of some land policies is that builders are being virtually forced to go round the country—my own constituency provides a good example — digging up landfill sites 15 to 20 years old, which were filled without control so that no one can be absolutely certain what the sites contain, to provide building land. As the Minister well knows, because we have had exchanges at Question Time on this issue, there is a massive derelict land grant claim of over £500,000 for a 10-acre site in my constituency to dig up waste tipped 15 to 20 years ago.

The environmental services director of Birmingham is opposed to the idea root and branch, not only on environmental grounds, but and on the grounds of the health and safety of my constituents. However, the builders are virtually forced to consider such antisocial, retrograde steps. It would be a stupid to build on the south downs as it would be to have a policy that meant that builders had no device but to dig up that kind of land to provide houses. It would be absolutely ridiculous.

Mr. Squire: All I was going to suggest was that although the hon. Member was not in the Chamber at the time, if he reads the record he will see that what he said had been said by at least one hon. Member on the Government Benches.

Mr. Rooker: Yes, I regret that. I apologised for the fact that I had to leave the Chamber after the hon. Member had started to speak, and I apologise now for missing the speech of one of my hon. Friends.

Our motion was drafted with care and precision. It is both responsible and moderate. All that we ask is that it should be the policy of any caring and responsible Government to ensure that there are enough fit homes for all the households that need them. We require a change of policy to bring that about. If the Minister, in reply to the debate, answers no other question, I ask him to say whether he agrees that it ought to be an obligation on any responsible and caring Government to have such a target for their housing policy.

What we were treated to by the Secretary of State was a non-housing speech. The debate has been worth while if only to get that speech on the record. We had enough of it last Wednesday at Question Time, when the Secretary of State said that the Housing Corporation had been given money to run up hostels for the homeless, and when he also said that they were not really homeless but were just registered as homeless. It is true, of course, that the

100,000 registered homeless who were accepted last year and who are only the tip of the iceberg of people who are really homeless are not all on the streets without a bed, but does the Secretary of State not appreciate that if local authorities have to use so many of their vacancies to deal with registered homeless people, the ordinary tenancy exchange and transfer scheme will come to a stop?

That must be grossly unfair. The hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) who is not in his place, said that the tenants exchange and mobility schemes were not working properly. One of the reasons for that is that so many of the tenancy allocations are pre-empted by the need to deal with the registered homeless.

As we have said before, we want choice and variety and the freedom of choice to buy or rent. People should not be identified by income and status according to their tenure. That is the position that we are in today, and it has got worse under the Government. For the benefit of those hon. Members who were not present when the Secretary of State talked about the housing crisis and the rise in homelessness, I can tell them that he told us about Dick Whittington and shirt buying in Moscow. That was the main thrust of his argument. Housing policy is not safe in his hands. We require a change in housing policy, and for that reason we probably require another Secretary of State.

9.32 pm

The Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction (Mr. John Patten): I regret the attack on my right hon. Friend by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker). It marred an otherwise interesting speech. I am sorry that it shows — *[Interruption.]* Off go the Opposition, behaving exactly in the way that they did when my right hon. Friend made his opening speech, trying to shout down the person at the Dispatch Box. Shout away. It does argument no good, and it does no good to politics or to the reputation of the House.

There is one thing that I welcome in the Opposition motion. That is the recognition that better housing for the people of Britain can be achieved only by a combination of public and private provision. That represents a considerable move forward in Labour party thinking and shows that over the past seven years it has been prepared to think and move. I am quite prepared to take advice from the hon. Members for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) and for Perry Barr about how to do this better, because I too believe that in order to provide better housing and better social provision we need to learn from each other from time to time.

I shall begin with one announcement, one reminiscence and one prediction. The announcement, Mr. Deputy Speaker—I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, the slip is a result of all those years answering Adjournment debates. My announcement is about the Greenwich by-election. After listening to the elaboration by the hon. Member for Copeland of my part in that election, I and my diary secretary looked closely at my diary. I regret that I have no free time to visit Greenwich during the by-election campaign, although I expect I shall have to find time for a visit to central office for a re-education session in the cellars. That will undoubtedly teach me to be reasonable.

If the Opposition are prepared to pray in aid my qualified praise of a London Labour borough, I hope that they will equally pray in aid my strong criticisms of the housing record of many London Labour boroughs. If they are prepared to play it on one side, they should be prepared to play it on the other.

My reminiscence is about my brief time on Oxford city council when the Labour party was in control. I remember that in 1972 and 1973 people in the council began to foam at the mouth when we mentioned the right to buy. They thought that that was bad and impossible because tenants could never afford it and could never manage the housing stock. Some 15 years later we have consensus between the Labour party and the Conservative party about the right to buy. That is a good thing. I shall have more to say later about the alliance view of the right to buy because it is also part of the consensus. Suddenly in the last couple of years we have seen a considerable change and it is reflected in this interesting motion by the Opposition. It says that now we need mixed provision in housing and joint funding from the public and private sectors. That is good.

My prediction for the future, based on my reminiscence, is that in about 10 years Tory thinking and philosophy about the right to rent will be equally accepted by Labour Members, and that every strand of housing policy in Britain will follow the Tory lead.

The main sections of my speech will focus on three points. The first is homelessness, which concerns right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House. The second is the new role that I and my right hon. Friends foresee for local authorities and the provision of better housing — exactly the kind of better housing that we want in Britain. Thirdly, I shall end on the theme of the right to rent, which will continue to be important.

On the issue of homelessness, I was fascinated to hear the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison). He said that it was 10 years since he had spoken in the House on housing. I hope that it will not be long before we again hear his immensely wise voice, to which we listen with care. *[Interruption.]* Labour Members should not jeer at the founder of *New Society* who has had a deep and abiding interest in social trends in Britain. My right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury said—these themes were repeated by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville) and by my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Malins) in his excellent speech—that there are deep social issues which will have to be examined if we are to come to grips with homelessness in Britain.

It was good to hear from my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-West how good management in his borough had made it unnecessary for there to be recourse by the local authority to bed-and-breakfast provision. One should be as willing to praise local authorities, of whatever political colour, that manage their stock well—I share the view of the hon. Member for Perry Barr on this—as to condemn bad management in local authorities. It is good that the borough of my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-West has managed without bed-and-breakfast provision.

I wish that the hon. Member for Copeland had been present in the Chamber to listen to the speeches of my right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury and my hon. Friends the Members for Bolton, West and for Croydon, North-West. I am not criticising the hon. Gentleman for not being here because he has duties that take him to other parts of the House. Had he heard the detailed arguments which were put forward about the social reasons for housing, he and his hon. Friends would have had cause to

[Mr. John Patten]

reflect on whether it was wise to organise the totally unnecessary shouting down of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment during his introductory speech. That behaviour does rational argument and the political judgment of this place no good.

The hon. Member for Perry Barr gave me pause for thought about the relationship between Government housing policy and social trends in Britain. He listed a number of points, but one that he forgot was the radically and rapidly changing nature of household formation in Britain. Currently, households are getting smaller and smaller, and one would therefore expect to have fewer households but, by the early 1990s there will be a radical decline in the number of households in Britain, which will have an important effect on homelessness.

As my right hon. Friend rightly said in his opening speech, the causes of homelessness go much wider than the supply of housing alone. We need to improve our information about the homeless, why they have lost their homes, what are the best methods of providing temporary accommodation, and so on. We need to consider our policy in the light of that advice. That is why today we have let a contract for a major national study—exactly the sort of contract pressed on us by those interested in homelessness and by lobbying bodies—to be carried out by the university of Birmingham's centre for urban and regional studies. This will be the first comprehensive national study of homelessness since the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977. I think that it will be broadly welcomed.

We are taking a series of measures to deal with the problems of homelessness. In the short time available, I should like to mention two. First, the House will know of the important changes in the arrangements for funding housing association schemes which we announced before Christmas. They have been welcomed by the whole housing association movement. I have yet to hear a dissentient voice — indeed, I have heard far from dissenting voices in the National Federation of Housing Associations, the Housing Corporation, and others. We have allocated an extra £20 million to the Housing Corporation's spending programme specifically for use in schemes in which public and private money are combined. That is one of the themes of this debate.

A further £10 million is to be made available for such schemes from within the corporation's existing programme. About £30 million will be available for schemes in which no more than 30 per cent. of costs are met through grant, with the private sector making up the balance. That is exactly the type of co-operation between the public and private sectors that the Labour Front Bench wants. I welcome the fact that there has been no criticism of these schemes. For £30 million of public expenditure —this is the joy of the scheme—we shall be able to increase housing association investment by £100 million, which will be an enormous benefit. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment — the scheme's pioneer—and I want this fruitful co-operation between the public and private sectors to develop. This is a major breakthrough.

A key priority for the new funding arrangements—it may account for as much as half of the £30 million—is to provide self-contained temporary accommodation for homeless people who would otherwise go into hotels, hostels and boarding houses before getting the permanent accommodation that they need. It is important to remember that some 50 per cent. of those who are accepted as homeless go immediately into permanent accommodation. Everyone recognises that there will always be a need, however good the housing position becomes, for some temporary accommodation in which to house people in housing pressure areas, such as central London, pending permanent accommodation. That is precisely what the policy introduced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will do.

Mr. Raynsford: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that, although there is a need for temporary accommodation, the critical problem is the shortage of permanent housing to rehouse people from bed-and-breakfast accommodation? Why will not the hon. Gentleman accept the need for more permanent housing, including the leasing arrangements which he stopped last week, as announced in his statement, which is the way to tackle the problem?

Mr. Patten: Of course, in those parts of the country where there is housing pressure we need to increase the supply of housing. In many other parts of the country there is excess housing, as the hon. Gentleman, with his detailed knowledge of the housing world, knows. Big housing associations, such as the Hyde housing association and the Paddington Churches housing association, and 23 other associations are coming forward to carry out schemes in London. A wide welcome has been given to the housing corporations scheme.

Mr. Freeson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Patten: I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will forgive me, but I have only limited time.

Secondly, in August last year, we launched an initiative to use the resources for my Department's Estate Action team to bring empty property on council estates back into use for the homeless. We began by focusing on 14 London boroughs with particularly serious problems. Twelve of those boroughs have responded to the initiative. Two London boroughs, Brent and Lambeth, have refused to respond to the initiative offering Government money to bring back into use their estate houses to house the homeless.

Southwark responded to the homelessness initiative, but it wanted to spend its money on municipalised street properties and not on the council estates, despite the well-known criteria of Estate Action. I would apologise to Southwark if I thought that I had been unfairly critical of it on the Nick Ross programme. However, I do not think that I was unfairly critical.

Mr. Freeson: In view of what the Minister has just said, which was a repeat of what the Secretary of State said, will he explain to me why his Department has been issuing press releases — information has also been announced from the town hall—which specify figures that run into millions of pounds which the local authority of Brent had negotiated with his departmental officials for just such schemes in which he is saying they are refusing to participate? Will he explain that to the House?

Mr. Patten: The right hon. Gentleman is more than a little confused. I referred to the offer of Government money through Estate Action to house the homeless in

Brent through bringing back into use empty estate houses. That has been refused by Brent and Lambeth. I am not misleading the House.

First, I shall mention the new role for local authorities in dealing with housing problems, but not before I deal with the important point about Newham that was raised by the ex-chairman of the Greater London council, the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks). He gave me scant reward for my kindness in giving up three minutes of my time to let him speak, by calling me reasonable. What a sneer from such a quarter!

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West is worried about the position of the homeless in Newham. So am I. We share that worry, and that is why I am worried that Newham has 2,400 empty council properties. That puts Newham eighth in Britain in terms of the numbers of its empty properties and it puts it second in the percentage of its rented stock.

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Patten: No, I shall not give way. The hon. Gentleman has already had some of my time. He will have no more tonight, however charming he is. He needs to go back to Newham and tell it to begin to co-operate more with central Government to fill those 2,400 empty flats and houses.

Secondly, we need a new role for local authorities in housing as a whole. I sometimes think that if we could turn back the clock to the 1920s when Conservative and Labour politicians were starting to construct big council estates, and we could show them then where we have ended up, none of them would wish to have brought about the position that we see before us today.

What we need to do, just as we have managed to develop agreement across the House on a number of housing issues, is to begin to look hard at whether local authorities should regard their role primarily as being that of providers of housing—that point was made by my hon. Friend the Member for York and other hon. Friends—or whether they should be concerned with the co-ordination of housing in their area. Should local authorities develop their co-ordinating role to encourage developers and financial institutions to provide housing for rent, to make appropriate interventions by releasing land, by making grants available and to encourage others, such as housing associations and similar bodies, to take on the responsibility?

A number of enlightened local authorities are already doing that. In the long run, with the enhanced role that local authorities can have thanks to the announcements made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and others last Thursday, we can bring greater variety into the provision of rented housing.

That leads me to my third important theme, which is the right to rent and the need to re-establish some common sense in the private rented sector. Why is it that Britain alone in the western world has a private rented sector that is dying—1·5 million houses? We are losing 70,000 flats and houses a year and only 8 per cent. of our stock is privately rented compared with 30 per cent. in America, 33 per cent. in France and 45 per cent. in West Germany. In every other civilised country in the western world the private rented sector has an important role to play in the provision of housing. The big question we have to ask ourselves is why, uniquely in Britain, that provision cannot be made possible.

The hon. Member for Perry Barr reflected on what happened after the Rent Act 1957 and asked a couple of pertinent questions. The private rented sector has been in decline for 70 years. The rate of decline—this point has often been made in my hearing by the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) who was more moderate tonight than at other times, but I do not want to smear him—increased markedly in the 1950s and 1960s. However, the Opposition have the bizarre idée fixe that the Rent Act 1957 was the cause of the decline. There were two causes. One of the main causes of the decline was clearance. A high proportion of unfit houses in the 1950s that were demolished were homes built for private renting in the 19th century. The decline we saw in the 1950s and 1960s was part and parcel of the great clearance, which, incidentally, was also seen in public sector housing. The second major cause was the sale of rented dwellings into owner-occupation in order to fulfill the enormous demand at that time for home ownership. In retrospect, it can be seen that the 1957 Act could not possibly have stemmed that tide.

Mr. Rooker: The right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) is not in his place, but if anyone looks at the debate on the Second Reading of the Housing Bill in 1957, which he introduced from the Dispatch Box, one will see that he gave as the reason for taking the lid off rents the fact that it would increase the supply of the private rented sector. In fact, the opposite occurred.

Mr. Patten: I shall read the back numbers of *Hansard* as the hon. Gentleman recommends.

The Conservative party and the Government are determined to repeat the success that we have had in establishing the right to buy in Britain by re-establishing the right to rent. The right to rent means a better deal for council tenants, better and more local management and a breaking down of monolithic council housing departments. I have heard the Labour party Front Bench spokesmen criticise those departments just as much as we have. It means the development of new forms of management and choice and new forms of ownership. Above all, it means the development of greater choice.

The right to rent in the private sector, as opposed to what I have described for the public sector, means doing something about the appalling situation in Britain where we have housing needs and homelessness next to 540,000 empty privately owned flats and houses. We must do all we can. If someone came here from the moon or Mars and saw the housing need next to empty houses, he would say that we were mad. That is why we need to see much closer co-operation between the public and private sector. That means the sort of scheme that I announced to the House on Thursday, which I think has been misunderstood by the right hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Freeson).

I announced then that we shall give local authorities exactly the powers that the Labour-dominated and Labour-led Association of Metropolitan Authorities asked me to give it at the last Housing Consultative Council meeting. It asked for a power similar to that given to the Housing Corporation and housing associations to enter into negotiations with the private sector so that we can have reasonable mixed schemes. We have made it available to all local authorities and my right hon. Friend and I hope that local authorities of all political persuasions will in fact make use of it. However, the powers must be used appropriately.

[Mr. Patten]

Those powers are certainly not intended to featherbed the private sector, which I believe some of the prospective deals would have done because they would have led to an entirely risk-free investment by the private sector. New schemes will have to be submitted to my right hon. Friend for his approval. He must be satisfied that the local authorities' commitment is not open-ended and that the commercial risk of the development rests substantially with the private sector. He must also be convinced, quite rightly, that the housing will be managed and maintained by the private sector bodies concerned and not by the local authorities. By operating the scheme in that way, we will ensure that the housing that is provided is not a recreation of municipal housing by the back door, but the genuinely new sorts of mixed tenure that the hon. Member for Perry Barr said that he wanted.

The time will undoubtedly come when those schemes, after a year or so in operation, will be welcomed by the Opposition. They attacked the right to buy, but they now accept it. They attack the new form of joint funding that their colleagues in local government want, but in a year's time they will think it is a good idea. It will be the same with the right to rent.

I welcome the statement made by the hon. Member for Copeland on assured tenancies and I welcome the way in which the Opposition are moving forward on mixed funding schemes. I am sorry that the hon. Members for Copeland and for Perry Barr and other Labour Members are not prepared to take a long hard look at the private rented sector to see whether we can build some consensus. My hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), that great consensus politician, suggested that we should seek that consensus in this area. Perhaps we should think of a different name from "private rented sector", and then perhaps people would not be so agitated about it. *[Interruption.]* Opposition Members are excitedly discussing the ideas that I am putting forward, and I welcome their approach.

All the problems and opportunities that we have discussed bring us back to the central question of choice — something that has been missing from housing provision for too long. We are still too ready to substitute official choice for individual preference in the destinies of too many ordinary people.

I come now to a very important part of my speech. The hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) may well feel that he is being ignored and that the alliance has not had a fair crack of the whip in what I have said. I apologise profoundly. I wish to put on record, for the benefit of my right hon. and hon. Friends who were not present during his speech, what the hon. Gentleman said about the right to buy. The new housing spokesman for the alliance, speaking with the enormous authority of that position, has said that the Liberals and the SDP were no longer in favour of the full right-to-buy policy — *[Interruption.]* He said that they wanted to give councils, not individuals, the right to decide——

Mr. Meadowcroft: The Minister is an earnest seeker after truth. I repeat that we will retain the right to buy. Does not the hon. Gentleman realise that if the discounts cannot be properly targeted that will minimise the number of houses that are sold? It is the inflexibility of the Government's policy which unbalances the housing stock and minimises the number of council houses for sale.

Mr. Patten: The alliance parties do not like the right to buy. They want to give local councils the right to decide.

Mr. James Hamilton (Motherwell, North) *rose in the place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

Question put accordingly, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 200, Noes 268.

Division No. 87] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley, N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward

McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Winnick, David
Wrigglesworth, Ian

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. John McWilliam.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Ancram, Michael
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Farr, Sir John
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fletcher, Sir Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mather, Sir Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan

Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd and
Mr. David Lightbown.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

Mr. Speaker *forthwith declared the main question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this house welcomes the Opposition's long overdue recognition of the need to combine public and private provision in housing; commends the Government for taking steps to re-establish the right to rent; recognises that further progress in increasing choice and supply depends on re-creating a market in rented housing and harnessing private sector resources, and therefore rejects calls for more municipal housing which can only lead, as it has done in the past, to poorly managed, badly maintained unpopular estates provided at excessive public expenditure cost; and commends instead this Government's achievements in seeing one and a half million more homes built since May 1979, and in widening the opportunities for home ownership, so that there are now well over two million more home owners than in 1979, and in meeting housing needs in the most efficient and effective way.

Privilege

10.14 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): I rise on a point of privilege, Mr. Speaker, about which I have given you private notice, to seek your advice on a statement that appeared on the tapes of which I had given you a copy. The statement reads:

"Writs out over Zircon film. Writs sought by the Freedom Association were issued by the High Court tonight against eight people, including Labour MP Tony Benn and journalist Duncan Campbell, alleging a breach of Official Secrets Act over the banned Zircon satellite TV programme. The move was made by Norris McWhirter, the Association's chairman, following the showing of the banned BBC programme at a public meeting in London last night. Freedom Association said those named in the writs had been associated with the public showing of the film as speakers or organisers."

I appreciate that there is no right for hon. Members to be protected for what they do outside the House, and I spoke at the meeting yesterday before which the film was shown. However, three issues are raised that I should like to put to you briefly, Mr. Speaker.

First, under the Official Secrets Acts, prosecutions require the authority of the Attorney-General, and it must be a matter of concern as to whether the Attorney-General has given authority for me to be prosecuted. Secondly, what is the position if the writ is served in the Palace of Westminster? Thirdly, I am a member of the Committee of Privileges to which this matter has been referred. Under your ruling, Mr. Speaker, the Committee can, if it so decides, see the film. What is my position as a member of the Committee able to see the film under your ruling if, as occurred last night, I saw part of the film somewhere else?

I do not expect a ruling tonight, but I felt that I should bring the matter to your attention at the earliest possible moment. Perhaps at a later stage it might be possible for you to say something.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Gentleman has raised a matter about which I shall say nothing at the moment. I shall communicate with him later.

Prevention of Terrorism

10.16 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): I beg to move,

That the draft Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 (Continuance) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 27th January, be approved.

The effect of this order will be to renew the 1984 Act for a further 12 months from 22 March.

Since the House debated the similar order a year ago, there have been no major terrorist incidents on the mainland of Great Britain, and for that we should all be thankful—and grateful in particular to those who have worked tirelessly to keep us safe. The danger continues to hang over us—we should make no mistake about that. In Northern Ireland, terrorism continues to haunt the life of the Province, although the terrorist is no nearer reaching his objective, and fails to prevent the great majority of the people of Northern Ireland from going about their lives in peace.

The main change which has occurred in the past 12 months is the growing international understanding of the nature of terrorism, and co-operation in dealing with it. No longer, when European Ministers meet, is terrorism considered as something peculiar to the Irish problem or perhaps to the Basque problem in Spain. Regrettably, our partners, whether it be in France, Italy, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, all now experience within their own frontiers the particular horrors of terrorism and accept fully the need to co-operate in tackling it. Of course that co-operation is still imperfect. The change which has taken place shows how sensible the House was to accept Lord Jellicoe's recommendation and extend to international terrorism as a whole some of the powers which in the original Act were reserved for terrorism originating in the problems of Northern Ireland.

No one in this House disagrees about the distinctive evil of terrorism—the attempt to influence political thinking not by argument or persuasion but by killing, maiming or frightening innocent people. The argument in the House begins when we consider whether special powers are needed by the police and the Government in dealing with terrorism. I hope to persuade the House that this new order under the Prevention of Terrorism Act is a necessary part, although only part, of the armoury against acts of terrorism which can threaten a free society.

However, I shall not be satisfied simply to win the vote at the end of this debate. I would regard it as very serious if Her Majesty's Opposition were once again to oppose the measure. I hope the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) will have the wisdom and stout-heartedness to abandon the irresponsible precedent set since 1981 and go back to the much healthier situation which prevailed before that date, when Government and Opposition were able to agree on the basic elements of our response to terrorism.

The powers in the Act are exceptional, but as a counter-balance, the Act is subject to unusually close scrutiny and frequent review. Once a year, Parliament has the opportunity to decide whether the Act should continue in force. Moreover, the operation of the Act is closely monitored by an independent person appointed specially for the task. There cannot be many other powers under which decisions made by a Secretary of State are so rigorously brought to the attention of a person appointed by the Secretary of State, but independent of him.

I accept the wisdom which led Parliament to press three years ago for this independent review of the operation of the Act. The House was, I know, grateful to Sir Cyril Philips for his thorough study of the way the Act worked in 1984 and 1985. I know the House will be grateful to my noble and learned Friend, the Viscount Colville of Culross, for having carried out his task as Sir Cyril's successor so quickly and for making himself available to receive representations both in London and in Belfast.

I hope the House will welcome the publication of Lord Colville's report in plenty of time for this debate. He has visited a number of air and sea ports during his work, some of which have not been covered in previous reviews, to see the legislation in operation. As his report shows, he examined individual files on extensions of detention under section 12 of the Act and on article 9 of the order and exclusion orders and discussed the cases with officials and police, here and in Northern Ireland. His approach has been notably thorough. Those who are worried that the exceptional powers under the Act can lead to harassment and unfairness should find much to reassure them in the report of my noble and learned Friend.

I turn now to the two important and to some extent controversial powers under the Act, those of detention and exclusion. Lord Colville's report shows that in Great Britain 202 people were detained under the provisions of the Act in 1986, and 1,309 in Northern Ireland. This represents a decrease of 64 in Great Britain and an increase of 371 in Northern Ireland compared to 1985. On the mainland, as last year, about one quarter of the detentions related to suspected involvement in international, not Irish terrorism.

In Great Britain, just under a quarter of those detained were detained for more than 48 hours. In Northern Ireland, there were more detentions for a longer period; three quarters of the 483 detentions were for five days or more. But this year there has been less use of the whole period of detention permitted by the Act; whereas, in 1985, 54 people were detained in Great Britain for the whole seven days, in 1986 that figure was 25.

But of course numbers do not tell the whole story. I cannot give details of many of the cases which occurred during the year, because some are still sub judice, but I would like to point out one particular example of the use of these powers in respect of international terrorism. I choose this example because it illustrates a point strongly made by Lord Colville, although it is not an example he quoted—a point which I urge the Opposition to take on board.

The justification of these powers, as opposed to the ordinary powers of the criminal law, is that they enable the police to prevent horrors before they happen. In September and October of last year, six people were detained under the Act on suspicion of membership of the Abu Nidhal group, an international terrorist organisation. Five of the six have now left the United Kingdom. Three were deported and I agreed that a further two should be allowed to make a supervised departure. The sixth is still detained awaiting the outcome of a review by the three advisers. It is clear that, without the Prevention of Terrorism Act, the police would have had no power to detain these people.

[Mr. Douglas Hurd]

It is certainly possible that after a time there would have been evidence which would have enabled the police to detain, interview and perhaps charge the people. But I do not think the Opposition would seriously argue that the police should in such cases be content to wait until evidence became available. That evidence might well have taken the form of corpses, maimed bodies and devastated property. It is because of the Act, and because of the vigilance of the authorities, that we were able to be rid of this group before they did us any harm. I believe that must be right.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that the extension of the Prevention of Terrorism Act to include international terrorism is new? Secondly, will he explain exactly on what grounds those people were detained, so that we may judge whether they could have been detained under other powers in the criminal law or in immigration legislation? My belief is that the Government have extended the Act to international terrorism to justify legislation that does not stand up in its own right.

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Lady knows better than that. She knows that the extension of the powers to international terrorism was approved by the House in the 1984 Act as a result of Lord Jellicoe's review. It corresponds to something that is clearly a reality—that the threat of terrorism in this country is not now exclusively something which comes to us across the Irish sea. It involves a considerable range of threats of international terrorism. Mention of the immigration legislation in this context is frivolous. It is only under the Prevention of Terrorism Act that the police have the powers which are necessary to detain people of the kind that I have mentioned for the period which is necessary for questioning. I stand wholly by that point.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Does not the Home Secretary agree that, where a person travels on a non-European passport, and where a person is known to be associated with an international group which has terrorist connections, at the normal port of entry there is the right of refusal of entry?

Mr. Hurd: It is possible, and indeed it often happens, that the information which links particular people to a terrorist group becomes available after they have entered the country. That is the reality of the situation. The Opposition are beginning to wriggle uncomfortably under the fact that it is actually the powers of the Prevention of Terrorism Act——

Ms. Clare Short *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: No; I am not giving way to the hon. Lady again.

It is the powers which are available under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, and only those powers, which enable the police to detain and question people of this kind to the extent necessary to be rid of them, as in the case I quoted, and to prevent them from committing the horrors which otherwise they might commit.

I have made my point and I hold firmly to it. May I reinforce it by saying that Lord Colville made the same point in a different way in paragraph 2.27 of his report when he wrote:

"The powers criticised are pre-emptive."

This is exactly the point.

"If they did not exist the police would have to wait until the terrorists had gone far enough in the preparation of their plot to bomb or shoot for sustainable evidence of conspiracy or an attempt to be at hand. Presumably it is not suggested that they should be allowed actually to explode the bomb or fire the gun."

Unfortunately, that is exactly what is suggested by those who oppose the powers. That might well be the exact result of failure to renew the powers.

Ms. Clare Short *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: I shall not give way to the hon. Lady again. The hon. Lady showed a remarkable lack of knowledge of the sequence of events which led to the extension of the Act to cover international terrorism.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the Home Secretary confirm that immigration officers, if they have reason to believe that a person seeking to enter the country is not genuine, have powers to detain him for a period sufficient to carry out inquiries and any interviews that may be necessary? In what regard are the powers which he has advocated to the House dissimilar from the powers available to immigration officers?

Mr. Hurd: We are talking about the powers of the police to detain and question in connection with information about terrorism.

Mr. Bermingham: Why let them in?

Mr. Hurd: Because the information frequently becomes available after they are in. Hon. Members who are constantly urging that immigration officers should be more lax in the way in which they deal with these matters are in a poor position if they then say that they should be more strict. It often happens — or it occasionally happens — that foreigners are admitted on grounds which appear to be legitimate, and later it becomes apparent, from information which then becomes available, partly as a result of the increased international co-operation of which I am talking, that they are or may be engaged in terrorist activity, and that is where the powers of the PTA come in.

Lord Colville also sets out persuasively the kinds of circumstances which can justify the police applying for extra time to hold a detainee under the Act. The need to keep terrorist suspects separate, the need often to interview through an interpreter, the need to seek information from foreign police and security services are all requirements set out in his report, which Lord Colville found to be persuasive, and which I hope the House will agree are persuasive.

I come to the other controversial power under the Act —the power to exclude an individual from part of the United Kingdom. This power of exclusion is certainly extraordinary and severe. In his report last year, Sir Cyril Philips hoped that no new exclusion orders would be made, and this year Lord Colville — although his argument is somewhat different—also hopes that steps can be taken to improve port control so that the power to exclude need no longer be sought perhaps, he says, from 1988 onwards.

In operating this power case by case during 1986, I had Sir Cyril Philips' point very much in mind. Indeed, I hope that even without that I would have realised that the power of exclusion was of a kind which could only be used very sparingly in a free society. I will explain how it works. I

personally consider all applications made by the police for exclusion from Great Britain and I apply strict tests. I need to be satisfied that the individual concerned is or has been involved in the commission, preparation or instigation of an act of terrorism.

I would not make an order unless there is a clear indication that the individual is actively involved in terrorism or has been so, in most cases within the past three years. By involvement in acts of terrorism I do not mean that he or she has been seen in the company of known terrorists or has certain political views. I look at each application for indications of active personal involvement.

Using this strict test, I made nine new orders during the year in respect of people whom I considered to be involved in acts of terrorism connected with the affairs of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Is not membership of a known terrorist organisation sufficient?

Mr. Hurd: No.

Mr. Lawrence: Why not?

Mr. Hurd: In my view, it is not sufficient. I apply the test more strictly than that. I am talking about active personal involvement in terrorist activity, and I believe that is the right criterion for the use of this power of exclusion.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh) *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: I will give way shortly to the hon. Gentleman, who has a deep personal knowledge of this problem.

Most of the exclusion papers which come across my desk do not deal with applications for new orders. Most of them are reviews of existing orders. As a result of these reviews, 103 existing orders were revoked and 54 orders renewed. Whereas on 31 December 1985 212 exclusion orders were made in Great Britain, that figure had dropped by almost half by 31 December 1986, to 114.

This reduction came about partly because of cases where the police did not apply for renewal of the order, but partly because, as Lord Colville reports, in about half the cases I turned down police applications for renewed orders. That is because I am clear that this power should be used sparingly.

Mr. Mallon: Could I ask the Secretary of State how many of the subjects of the nine new orders, when returned to Northern Ireland, were charged or interviewed by the police and how many of them were charged with specific acts of terrorism in Northern Ireland? If they were returned to the Republic of Ireland, how many were there charged with acts of terrorism?

Mr. Hurd: That is a different point, if I may say so. It is a legitimate question, but the hon. Member is assuming that the power of exclusion is only applicable in those cases. I have set out clearly the criteria which I apply. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) has shown in his intervention that he thinks the criteria that I apply are too strict. The implication of the question of the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) is that they are not strict enough and that I should apply them only in cases where there is evidence capable of being produced in court. But I am freely saying that this is an exceptional and severe power, and I am saying and, I think, proving to the House that I use it very sparingly indeed.

As the House knows, there is provision for the individual concerned to make representations against an order, which is then considered by an independent adviser. During 1986, 13 cases were considered by the adviser and 10 people were interviewed in London or Belfast. I accepted the opinion of the adviser in all these cases and revoked three orders as a result.

As a result of this policy, exclusion orders now cover very many fewer people than before. I do not believe that this is a conclusive argument against continuing the power. It simply shows that the power has been used with increasing strictness. In plain terms, what we are mostly talking about, of course, is a power which could prevent or deter from travelling to the mainland people who intend to carry out terrorist attacks. That is different from saying that there is evidence which could be produced to charge them, either in the Republic or in the Province. It is one thing to say that this power ought to be used very sparingly. I accept that, and I think that I have shown the House that I do. It is another thing to be sure—I think that one has to be sure—that it can be done away with altogether. I do not at present accept that.

I am not at present convinced that, by enhancing port controls, we can provide an effective substitute for the power to exclude. What is at stake here, of course, is the safety of the whole community and I do not want to propose any change which would put that safety in greater jeopardy. I am prepared to accept Lord Colville's suggestion that we should look seriously and thoroughly at this possibility between now and the time when the order comes up again next year. I hope to discuss the problem with him very shortly and after that we will consider what, if any, changes can sensibly be made.

We shall in any case look sympathetically at some of the points about the detailed administration of the power which Lord Colville goes on to make—for example, the possibility of finding better ways of letting people know when their exclusion orders have been revoked or are being reviewed.

The Prevention of Terrorism Act is now over halfway through its five-year life. We shall have to consider before long what should take the place of the Act after it expires in 1989. Lord Colville may be right in suggesting that international terrorism is now so firmly rooted, contrary to the knowledge of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) who first interrupted me, that it is sensible to regard anti-terrorist legislation as a permanent part of our law, perhaps with special flexibility in measures affecting Northern Ireland, but the Government have not yet considered the long-term future of the Act, and we will, of course, keep the House informed of our thinking.

Meanwhile, it is essential in my judgment that the House passes this order and enables these powers to continue. It is essential not because these are attractive powers but because they are necessary for the protection of the community. The determination of the House to resist terrorism will be much strengthened if the Opposition this year could bring themselves to support the order; and I appeal to the right hon. Member for Gorton to do so. He was not, I think, in charge when his party first lurched into irresponsibility by refusing to support this order in 1981 and 1982. He could add to his reputation by rescuing it from that irresponsibility tonight.

[Mr. Hurd]

I commend the order to the House.

10.40 pm

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): This debate is about how we should fight terrorism. It is not about whether we should fight it. As the Home Secretary said, every hon. Member loathes terrorism and wishes to combat and destroy it. Every one of us detests the whole savage business of murder and explosions, hostages and ultimatums. All of us oppose trading with terrorists and making deals with them.

This debate does not take place each year so that one hon. Member or one party can prove that he, she or it is more anti-terrorist than another hon. Member of party. It takes place because the Government must prove to Parliament that there is a case for renewing a statute that will lapse unless Parliament agrees to renew it. In seeking renewal, the Government try to make the most of two contradictory arguments. Depending on the circumstances, they say that there is so much terrorism that they cannot do without the Act, or that at the moment there is so little terrorism that the Act has proved its worth. To put it another way, on the one hand they say that the Act is working so well that obviously we must keep it, and on the other hand they admit that the Act is working so badly that there is clearly an immense need for it.

The Home Secretary says darkly, and implied last year and this year, that if only we knew what he knows we would accept the need for the Act, but he never gives us conclusive, convincing information. He never proves that any of the much applauded successes by the police against terrorists could not have been achieved without this Act. When he says that the Act was used in such-and-such a circumstance, on so many occasions, he does not demonstrate or prove whether any other enactment could, in the absence of this Act, have been used just as successfully.

The right hon. Gentleman limply sought to provide an example relating to Abu Nidal, but his attempt to make that argument proved the point that I am seeking to establish, namely, that he cannot demonstrate that without this Act those persons would not have been dealt with.

Mr. Hurd: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kaufman: May I just finish this argument? Let us look at the matter of dealing with people at the port of entry. I said many months ago in the House that it is easier for an international terrorist to gain entry to this House than it is for an Indian grandmother to come to Britain for a wedding. That means that Indian grandmothers are excluded and this Abu Nidal lot can get in. The Home Secretary says that he does not have the powers under the Immigration Act 1971 to deal with such people when they have entered. In that case, I suggest that he consults a Minister who has more intimate knowledge of the Immigration Act 1971.

If police or immigration officers can swoop on an innocent man, pick him up on the street without telling his wife where he is, take him away and put him in a remand centre and question him—as happened to a constituent of mine—and if I am able to get him released only after much effort; certainly those authorities ought to be able to deal with people who come from a land from which terrorists are known to come and ought to be able to deal with them in a far more stringent way.

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman is being unreal and absurd. The idea that once people have been admitted to this country the Immigration Act 1971 or the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 enables the police to do what they have to do, which is to detain and question them, is simply unreal.—[AN HON. MEMBER: "Why?"] Because the powers do not exist to detain and question for seven days. *[Interruption.]* The more the Opposition barrack, the more they show their ignorance. These powers were necessary in this case and no other powers would have done the trick.

Mr. Kaufman: I suggest that the right hon. Gentleman takes a closer look at his powers in the Immigration Act 1971 and at the way in which those powers are exercised in an extremely rigorous way on innocent people, let alone people who wish to come here to blow up, maim and murder when they arrive.

We know two things. The first is that this is a temporary Act, and that even if it is renewed tonight and again next year it will fall two years from now. The second is that last year the Prime Minister said of the Act:

> "The Government believe that this legislation will be necessary as long as a substantial terrorist threat remains." —[*Official Report*, 24 April 1986; Vol 96, c.208.]

That was an absolute statement, far more absolute than anything that any sensible Home Secretary had ever said, and far more absolute than anything contained in Viscount Colville's report. On that criterion of the Prime Minister, if the Government were returned at the next election the legislation would be enacted all over again in precisely its present form, without the Home Secretary volunteering the kind of potential re-examination of exclusion orders that he mentioned in his speech.

Mrs. Clare Short: My right hon. Friend may be aware that I worked in the Home Office from 1970 to 1975. During the latter part of that time Viscount Colville was a junior Tory Home Office Minister of not much standing. The House should be aware of that when he is quoted as some great authority on the impartiality of the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

Mr. Kaufman: I shall always accept my hon. Friend's expertise on these matters. When it comes to matching her expertise against that of the Home Secretary, I shall place my money on her any day of the week. My hon. Friend studies the material and she knows about it; the Home Secretary reads a brief. However, I have to tell my hon. Friend that I intend to quote Viscount Colville in my own interest, and therefore I shall not dismiss him totally. I hope that my hon. Friend will accept that.

We know, because Minister after Minister in the Government has said it, that this is, in successive Conservative Home Secretaries' words, an "intensely undesirable Act" whose powers

> "infringe our shared concept of civil liberties".

They

> "make a considerable inroad into the civil liberties of which we are justly proud".

They

> "make sad inroads into our cherished tradition of civil liberties."

Last year, the present Home Secretary, when he asked the House for renewal, said:

"The Act makes substantial inroads on ordinary civil liberties."—[*Official Report*, 19 February 1986; Vol. 92, c. 415.]

Clearly nobody likes the Act, so can its continuance be justified by its achievements? We should look at the record and see what it tells us about the Act's achievements. Government statistics published last month demonstrate that, starting from the introduction of the legislation to the end of last year, 92 per cent. of those detained in Britain under the Act have not been subject to any charge. Only 3 per cent. have been charged with offences under the legislation, and 38 per cent. of those have been charged only with failure to co-operate with examination at the port, which is an offence created by the Act, rather than solved by it.

Viscount Colville points out in his report that the powers are under challenge before the European Commission of Human Rights at Strasbourg, and in July 1986 the commissioners ruled that the applications were admissible. One of the issues is the length of time that a person may be detained without being charged or released.

In his report on the Act, Viscount Colville supports the continuation of the detention powers. He says that it is a "simplistic" approach to seek to demonstrate the ineffectiveness of the legislation and to oppose its renewal on the basis of the small percentage of those detained who are charged with offences under it. I agree with that. Viscount Colville argues that the Act creates few offences and that they are not of a particularly serious nature. He cites other Acts as providing a fuller picture, and I agree with him about that—they do. Of those charged with offences under the Prevention of Terrorism Acts, only 2 per cent. of those detained were found guilty of any offence, and only 0·5 per cent. were found guilty of offences meriting more than one year's imprisonment.

Mr. Robert Parry (Liverpool, Riverside): My right hon. Friend has made a very relevant point. Does he agree that it is wrong that, under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984, people who are arrested or detained and then released without any evidence being produced that they have been involved in any criminal activities should have their fingerprints and photographs retained on the files?

Mr. Kaufman: I shall deal with that point and with the proportion of those detained who are charged with any kind of offence under any type of legislation, let alone under the prevention of terrorism legislation. This is the test that Viscount Colville uses. He says that it is "simplistic" to look at offences under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act with which people are charged and that we should look more widely.

Let us look more widely at those offences. Of those detained under the Act and charged with criminal offences under other Acts, only 4 per cent. were found guilty, and fewer than 2 per cent. received prison sentences of one year or more. All told, fewer than 2·5 per cent. of those detained were found to have committed offences of any seriousness.

Mr. Bermingham: Does my right hon. Friend agree that if people are charged, there must have been evidence for that action? If there is evidence at the time of arrest, there are adequate powers under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, and various other statutes, for the police to investigate and lay charges appropriately. Therefore, there is no need for this Act.

Mr. Kaufman: I agree with my hon. Friend that the Police and Criminal Act powers would provide opportunities to detain the overwhelming majority of those who are detained, but even those powers are not required to detain the considerable majority of those who are detained. The Home Secretary cannot even use the existence of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act as an argument for the types of policies that he is pursuing.

It is up to the Government to prove that even these few persons—80 out of more than 6,400—would not have been caught, charged and convicted if this legislation had not been on the statute book. Of those detained under this legislation, 95 per cent. have been completely innocent of anything, however trivial.

Mr. Lawrence: What about the other 5 per cent.?

Mr. Kaufman: The Home Secretary has failed to demonstrate that the other 5 per cent. would not have been caught without this legislation on the statute book. Indeed, one is sometimes led to believe from the Home Secretary's arguments that the only way in which we can stop, say, the Abu Nidal group from coming to this country is not by having this Act on the statute book but by having visa requirements for terrorists.

If the Home Secretary can still seek to quote Lord Colville's report in favour of the continuance of the detention power, he certainly cannot do so with regard to the power to make exclusion orders. Last year Sir Cyril Philips, in his report on the Act, came out strongly against exclusion orders. He argued that the power to make them

"should be one of the first powers in the Act to be repealed."

The Home Secretary curtly rejected that recommendation. In doing so, he stated on 19 February 1986 that the exclusion power

"has sometimes been described as a power of internal exile."

He insisted firmly:

"that is misleading".—[*Official Report*, 19 February 1986, Vol. 92, c. 417.]

Yet on page six of his report Viscount Colville describes the exclusion power as a form

"a form of internal exile".

The Colville report deals with exclusion powers at some length. It states:

"The issue is essentially one for Great Britain. In practice it relates to the amount of intelligence work which has to be carried out in England, Wales and Scotland by the police and security services. If exclusion orders disappeared it is possible that port procedures, such as carding and other examination under the Order might become marginally more intrusive. By comparison with Northern Ireland, the population of Great Britain and the flow of travellers into and out of it is vastly greater. Vigilance against terrorist inroads would have to be ensured as well from Northern Ireland as from the rest of the world.

In my view this would be more acceptable than a system of internal exile; any resultant criticisms would have to be considered sympathetically but in the light of the abolition of a power which the public may have seen as necessary to restrict the movement of Northern Ireland terrorists and contain their activities, but which now is not sufficiently used to stem the tide of protest. The deterrent effect is not to be underestimated, even if it cannot be quantified; but the police have other powers to prevent outbursts of Northern Irish terrorism in Great Britain."

That is the noble Friend of the Home Secretary, whom he has quoted in his own aid.

Either after the Philips report last year, or after the Colville report this year, the Home Secretary could have prepared to remove the exclusion power in the renewal order this year. He could have used the powers that he has

[Mr. Kaufman]

to discontinue only that part of the Prevention of Terrorism Act. He should have done so. He had been advised to do so twice by the persons whom he asked to review the Act. He ignored their advice. One wonders why he asks for it if he ignores it so consistently. If only because of the Home Secretary's failure to take seriously that considered advice two years running, from people whom he asked to advise him, we shall vote against this continuance order tonight.

Viscount Colville concludes his report with a carefully argued critique against the continuance of the Act as a whole. He makes the very point that the Home Secretary made, but he makes it in reverse. The Home Secretary said that we need the Act because it started as an Act to deal with terrorism in Northern Ireland, but has now been amplified to deal with other forms of terrorism and there are many other kinds of terrorism around.

Viscount Colville says that for that very reason the Act should not continue to exist any longer. He says quite simply:

"It does appear strange that the main measure which is designed to give powers against international terrorism should be annually renewable, subject to a life-span no longer than March 1989, and completely entangled with the Northern Irish problem, from which historically the legislation grew."

That is why Viscount Colville says

"In the light of all this it seems to me that HMG might like to start again."

Very soon, whichever Government are in office, the Act will be extinguished. The Act creates, in some quarters, sympathy for those thousands of people wrongfully detained on inaccurate or unreliable suspicion of terrorism. That prevalent inaccuracy of suspicion, the 95 per cent. who are not found guilty of any offence whatsoever after being detained, militates against the acceptance of the existence of terrorism where it does exist. In eroding basic civil liberties this Act hands free of charge a victory to those whose objective it is to destroy our civil liberties.

The Act is a left-over from history. It is a left-over from a special time and a special circumstance, the same special time and the same special circumstance that led to the conviction of those now in prison for the Birmingham pub bombings. The Secretary of State has had the courage to say that there must be a new and searching look at those convictions. He should have the same courage to take a new and searching look at this legislation. To encourage him to do so, we shall vote against this renewal order tonight.

10.59 pm

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): The attractive feature of Lord Colville's report is that there are some light moments in what is otherwise an extremely serious matter. For example, I was fascinated to discover in his report that one of the oil platforms that he visited has three legs in Scotland and one in Norway. Lord Colville certainly did a pretty thorough job and wrote a most interesting report. The important thing—

Mr. Mallon: On the matter of the thorough job done by Lord Colville, I should inform the House that when he visited Northern Ireland he made no contact with the party to which I belong, he made no contact with me as spokesman on justice for that party, and he certainly seemed to ignore the views of that section of the community that suffers most from the legislation. That is the thorough job he did.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: No doubt Lord Colville will take account of what the hon. Gentleman has said.

The important thing about the report is that, consistent with the reports of Lord Jellicoe and Sir Cyril Philips before him, Lord Colville has come to the conclusion that basically the Act remains necessary. It is true that he has some criticisms and particularly in respect of exclusion orders, his criticisms are trenchant and will need to be dealt with. I am glad that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has said that he will be minded to look at the recommendations on exclusion orders before the House again considers the Act. It cannot be gain said that Lord Jellicoe, Sir Cyril Philips and now Lord Colville, each of them very different men, have looked at the facts, interviewed the people concerned—

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston-upon-Hull, North): They are all Tories.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I do not think that Sir Cyril Philips would agree with that description.

In any event, all three of them, quite independently, have come to the conclusion that fundamentally the Act is necessary. They arrive at that conclusion for what I should have thought was the most obvious reason in the world. There is a terrorists threat to our country and its people. That threat is manifestly becoming greater in Europe, the middle east and elsewhere and it is almost certainly the fact that people in this country and elsewhere are alive today who would not be alive if the police had been unable to use the pre-emptive powers of the Act to arrest, detain and exclude them.

It is always difficult to prove a negative; I cannot dispute that. However, I have some access, as no doubt other hon. Members have, to the police service and to those involved in dealing with terrorism, particularly in Northern Ireland. It is the absolute conviction of those who have to deal with the terrorist problem and put their lives at risk on our behalf that if they were deprived of the Act they could not do the job. It is their conviction that there are, as I have said, people alive in our country today who, without the powers in the hands of the police, would be dead.

I hope that no hon. Member who does not have to deal with the terrorist problem will so lightly discard the judgment of those who risk their lives on our account. It is simply arrogance on the part of those—I exclude the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) from this—who live comfortable lives here to say that they know so much better than our police officers and other persons who risk their lives to protect us. The evidence is pretty clear——

Ms. Clare Short: What the hon. Gentleman says is serious and he has to give examples or it is worthless. Surely, throughout history, when one balances civil liberties against the need to prevent crime, those who advocate the prevention of crime will say, "If we could arrest everybody whenever we felt like it we could prevent crime." It is no good the hon. Gentleman simply saying that; he must tell us time and day, and who are the people whose lives have been saved because of the Prevention of Terrorism Act otherwise his point is worthless.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: The hon. Lady may feel that it is worthless, but she inhabits a peculiar role if she imagines that it is possible precisely to identify those things that have not happened on account of the pre-emptive action of the police. I shall give her some facts. In Northern Ireland in 1976, 297 of our fellow citizens were done to death by terrorists. In 1977, the figure was 112; in 1978 it was 81; in 1979 it was 113; in 1980 it was 75; in 1981 it was 101; in 1982 it was 97; in 1983 it was 77; in 1984 it was 64; in 1985 it was 54; and last year it was 61. That is an appalling toll of our fellow citizens.

As the hon. Lady challenged me, I ask whether she is prepared to say that she is certain that the figure of 97 killed in 1982 would have been fewer or more had the Act not existed? How can she possibly argue in that fashion?

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): I have listened carefully to the hon. Gentleman. Is he attempting to prove that the Act does not prevent terrorism and, therefore, does not work?

Sir Eldon Griffiths: Not at all. Indeed, I could argue from the statistics—but I shall not—that there has been a happy reduction in the numbers killed since the Act and the emergency powers relating to Northern Ireland that flow from it have been in operation. I would not make that claim, but nor can the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) make the contrary claim that, because I am unable to identify those who, as a result of the Act, are alive, the Act does not work. Her logic is not acceptable.

Ms. Clare Short *rose*——

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I must get on; the hon. Lady will wish to speak in the debate, and no doubt there will be an opportunity for her to do so.

Ms. Clare Short: The hon. Gentleman challenged me.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I shall give way to the hon. Lady once more.

Ms. Clare Short: I wish to put to the hon. Gentleman a serious proposition that I believe to be true. Successive legislation, this Act and the emergency powers cause such disgruntlement, especially within Northern Ireland, that they are a recruiting sergeant for people who engage in terrorism. That is my serious judgment, and it is the serious judgment of many people.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: Why does not the hon. Lady make that point if she is fortunate enough to catch Mr. Speaker's eye?

Ms. Clare Short: Because the hon. Gentleman challenged me.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: It is a general point, not an argument with me.

In addition to the deaths that have occurred in Northern Ireland, and they continue, during the past year or so there has been an enormous increase in terrorist actions throughout Europe, and some of them affect us deeply. The attempt to blow up the El Al flight from London to Tel Aviv led to the conviction and imprisonment of Nezar Hindawi. Subsequently, because of the clear involvement of the Syrian embassy, including its ambassador, diplomatic relations between Britain and Syria were severed on 31 October.

Two men arrested under the Act are currently awaiting trial on charges of conspiracy to murder two leading members of the Sikh community in Britain; no one is awaiting trial charged with the attempted murder of a Sikh in Derby. On 18 December,, at Birmingham Crown court, two Sikhs were found guilty of conspiracy to murder Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, the Indian Prime Minister. So it goes on; terrorism remains an appalling threat to this country.

The question with which the House is being asked to deal is simply whether we should provide the powers that the police and the three independent examiners — Sir Cyril Philips, Lord Jellicoe and Lord Colville — have concluded, in the circumstances, to be necessary. I believe that it would be utterly derelict of us to remove from the police and security services the powers that they believe are needed to do the job.

I turn specifically to some of Lord Colville's recommendations. I should like to put two points to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. He will have noticed that Lord Colville suggests that in the case of the extension of intention orders three new criteria should be adopted. They are the checking of an alibi, the time that is needed for the evaluation of documents which are once translated and the investigations arising from them, and where time is needed for consultation with other security services, sometimes across time zones and requiring translation. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State or my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Home Office who is to reply to the debate will be able to say that Lord Colville's recommendations find favour with Ministers because, to my mind, they make good sense.

Lord Colville has discovered—I did not know this—that those of our ports that are not designated act, in effect, as a loophole which the Act does not cover. On page 31 of his report, Lord Colville states that two practical results should be noted from the absence of certain ports from designation. He states at 5.5.2.1:

"These powers . . . do not appear to have been extended to deal with international terrorism, so long at least as the terrorists choose to come through a non-designated port."

Surely that is absurd. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will deal with that point.

Lord Colville further states at 5.5.2.2:

"Non-commercial shipping and small boats in Great Britain are not covered by the legislation at all."

Mr. Leighton: We all know that the hon. Gentleman has a special relationship with the police. However, is it right that he should monopolise the time for a very short debate when some of us would like to hear the speeches of other hon. Members who have something to say?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. It is a short debate which will end at 11.45. The Front Bench Members are anxious to speak. However, the hon. Gentleman is not out of order.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I shall conclude shortly. However, I was unfortunately detained on three occasions, twice by the hon. Member for Ladywood.

I ask my right hon. Friend if he will deal with Lord Colville's recommendations on the ports.

I should like to conclude with the point on which my right hon. Friend ended. The Labour party ought not again to vote against this extension of the legislation. The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) devises a new reason every year, and the one that he devised tonight was surely the weakest yet. He

[Sir Eldon Griffiths]

knows that there is a problem and that if he were in office —I do not think that he will be—he would need to deal with it. What he is doing tonight, as he has done before, is to lead the Labour party into a vote that he knows in his heart is wrong. I ask him to change his mind.

11.12 pm

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): I intervene briefly only to underline one of the points in the Colville report that has already been mentioned. Lord Colville's fortunes have been mixed in the debate. It is remarkable what can happen to a former Under-Secretary of State in his years out of office. He made a fair observation towards the end of his report, which has already been quoted by the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) and which I should like to read again to the House. He stated:

> "It does appear strange that the main measure which is designed to give powers against international terrorism should be . . . completely entangled with the Northern Irish problem, from which the legislation grew."

Consequently, he believed that Her Majesty's Government might like to start again.

Certain remarks that fell from the Home Secretary suggested that his mind, in looking forward to a possible enactment two years ahead, was malleable on that topic. It is because of the entanglement with the affairs of Northern Ireland and with the particular circumstances of 1974 that we have, in this Act, that most regrettable element described as "internal exile".

The provision for exclusion from Great Britain was always viewed askance by opinion in Northern Ireland, which regarded it as an affront that this artificial boundary should be drawn across the United Kingdom. That was only partially allayed by the introduction into the Act of a virtually meaningless reciprocity which prevented entry into Northern Ireland from Great Britain; but the offence remains.

The inherent objectionableness of a power to exclude from one part of the United Kingdom into another is undiminished, but the evidence for utility continues to diminish. I hope that we shall see the end of it, certainly no later than the new edition of this Act, and preferably when we come to consider renewal in a year's time. An indication of that indeed came from the Home Secretary. There is no reason why we should perpetuate this division of the United Kingdom into mutual exclusion zones. We probably should never have done this in 1974. It was probably based on misconception and the hysterical state of opinion that existed at the time. The power is no longer welcome, certainly not in Northern Ireland.

11.15 pm

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): I shall not follow the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) along the line that he has pursued with conviction and persuasiveness on many occasions.

The disgust of anybody in the House or the country for anything that even smacks of arbitrariness does not need to be stated. It is obvious on first blush that the Prevention of Terrorism Act 1984 does so smack. But in an age where the horror of international terrorism is everywhere so rife and the rule of law in its pure form is not always adequate to protect citizens, it is ridiculous to suppose that no further steps should be taken, beyond the pure form of the rule of law, to provide a defence. Yet Opposition Members do so pretend.

Opposition Members are in danger of being exposed as caring more for the civil liberties of someone who is a known associate of terrorists and most likely to be a foreigner—[HON. MEMBERS: "Disgraceful."]—than for the safety of British people. They are not only soft about terrorism but uncaring about terrorism. That is the impression that Opposition Members make and since that will do the Conservative party no harm at the hustings I do not share the request of my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) that Oppostion Members should change their tack.

It beggars belief that grown hon. Ladies and Gentlemen should come to the House and say, "If it becomes known after someone has gained entry to this country that he is a terrorist associate, if not a known terrorist, and there is some evidence, but not sufficient evidence to arraign him before a court of law, the police should have no power to detain or exclude him until and unless sufficient evidence becomes available." By the time the evidence becomes available it may well be too late.

Ms. Clare Short: That is not conducive to the public good. Has not the hon. and learned Gentleman heard about that?

Mr. Lawrence: The hon. Lady, who has not stopped talking from the start of the debate, would be one of the first to come to the House if ever there were a terrorist act in her city again, such as we experienced in the 1970s, whoever was responsible for it. Terrorists must be laughing their heads off.

The only reasonable objection one can have to the legislation is that it is not sufficiently restrictive. It should apply to anyone who boasts an affiliation with a known terrorist organisation, whether or not they have hitherto been convicted and whether or not there is any evidence against them. It should apply to stop PLO representatives staying in Britain and establishing their offices in Kensington. [HON. MEMBERS: "Ah."] But I suppose we would upset the United Nations if we took such a sensible step.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): Will the hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lawrence: I shall be brief and Opposition Members have asked for an opportunity to speak, so I hope that the hon. Gentlemen will forgive me if I continue.

The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) said, "Every hon. Member loathes terrorism." Yes, of course we do. However, it is easy just to mouth such a phrase. In this case, action is far more convincing than mere weasel words. The right hon. Member said in a sneering manner that only 5 per cent. of those who have been detained and excluded have been followed up with prosecutions or convictions elsewhere. Would even that 5 per cent. have been caught if they had not first been detained and excluded here and then arrested when they arrived back in Northern Ireland or wherever?

Not only are the Opposition not to be trusted with the nation's defences, not only can they not be trusted with the nation's secrets, but they are not to be trusted to protect this nation against terrorism. Their words are disgraceful.

11.20 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): On page 36 of his report, Viscount Colville comments that the provision with which we are concerned tonight

"creates martyrs and tends to cause misplaced sympathy for people who on any rational view have committed terrible crimes."

Right though that comment is, I wish that I could regard the issues that we are discusing tonight in terms as black and white and clear as Labour Members purport to see them.

We have a terribly difficult balance to draw here between the civil liberties of people in this country—civil liberties that I noticed practically every Labour Member refused to support last Friday afternoon when we had a vote on whether the European convention on human rights should be incorporated into our domestic law—and, on the other hand, the very important consideration of the protection of the public.

Of course we are all revolted by terrorism and the fact that terrorists still abound. Most of us, at least, abhor too any intrusion on civil liberties which extends as deep as is summarised by Viscount Colville in the small section of his report from which I quoted a few moments ago.

On balance I am persuaded tonight to advise my hon. Friends to support the Government on this occasion. I am persuaded partly by the fact that Viscount Colville's very objective report appears to be based on the most extensive consultations yet in comparison with the other reports which have been considered by the House on this difficult subject. Although in the end this is not a matter for me, but for the Government, I want to dwell a moment on a comment made by the Opposition. They say that Viscount Colville's consultations were inadequate. In response to that, page 2 of the report shows that even though Viscount Colville may not have gone directly to certain interested people, they were given every opportunity through advertisements and other appeals to go to him.

I want to consider three substantive points very briefly. First, I want to look at the detention powers. We must be realistic and share with Viscount Colville the view that it is extremely difficult for the police to provide sustained evidence of conspiracy or attempt. Therefore, at present, the case against the detention powers has not been made.

Secondly, I turn to exclusion orders. We must recall the strong words of Sir Cyril Philips last year against the continuation of exclusion orders. This year Viscount Colville said in relation to the removal of exclusion orders:

"positive steps could perhaps be taken to prepare for this in 1988."

Lord Colville recognised that the tide of protest now outweighs the usefulness of the exclusion orders.

I too hope that by next year or, at the very latest, by 1988, the Home Secretary of the day will come to the House and show that the Government regard the continuation of the exclusion orders as unnecessary.

At the end of his report, Viscount Colville dealt with what he called the broader considerations. Every year, as we approach and then hear this debate, we see that legislation is divisive philosophically, between the Irish and between the Northern Irish and the rest of the British community, creates martyrs, and unnecessarily alienates people. It is not helpful that we have to deal with the Northern Ireland situation and the international terrorist situation as though they were all one, both in quality and quantity. I urge the Home Secretary to take the point urged by Viscount Colville, and start again, soon.

11.25 pm

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): Two years ago my party leader, my hon. Friend the Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume), said:

"The man who conducted the review did not consult, nor did he invite consultation, with the responsible organisations which represent the Irish community and which are at the receiving end of this legislation." — [*Official Report*, 21 February 1985; Vol. 73, c. 1316.]

My hon. Friend was referring to Sir Cyril Philips. The same could be said of Viscount Colville this year, and references to consultation should be taken with a pinch of salt.

I am glad that this debate is taking place. One of my quarrels with the order is that it substitutes one year for the six months' debate. If here is a room with an odour, and there is concern about that odour, the proper thing to do is open the window as often as possible; to open it to scrutiny, examination and to whatever fresh thinking can come in.

The previous debates have had one repetitious factor, but that is essential when we are dealing with legislation that derogates so much from high standards of legal practice. The key point is that, somewhere along the line, somebody has to break the vicious circle between terrorism and repressive legislation. Who will break it? We can be sure that, in Irish terms, it will not be the Provisional IRA, the IRA, the UDA or the UDF. The onus rests on the House to ensure that the highest standards are adhered to and the derogations, whatever they be—I accept that they must happen in certain circumstances—are of the very slightest. The onus rests on the House and the Government to make an act of faith by at least trying to temper the provisions of the Act, especially those concerning exclusion orders. I am disappointed that there has been no such attempt.

At the moment there is a small effort—it is not enough, but at least it is a start—to deal with the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act with public order, with the police complaints procedure and with the use of the supergrass system, so why not the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act? I would have thought that if there had been movement on the exclusion orders, on the basis of the suggestion made by Sir Cyril Philips, there would be hope that there was a hint of a rethink and the beginning of an attempt to break out of this vicious circle. Unless that circle is broken by the Government and the House, it will not be broken by those involved in terrorism.

There are those who poured scorn on the view that the aim of the terrorist is not to create repressive legislation, but that is their aim, because that creates the climate in which they can recruit people and get active and covert support, and also resentment and alienation, which allows them to continue in their evil ways. I refer especially to the words of Mr. Daniel Morrison, of the Provisional Sinn Fein, after the atrocious attack in Brighton, when he said that it was the aim of the IRA to create repression. We remember the lengths to which they went after that atrocity to try to ensure that internment was reintroduced, because that is their most potent weapon. We play into the hands of the terrorists, be they of Northern Ireland or

[Mr. Seamus Mallon]

international, when we provide them with a means of creating a reaction towards law and the process of justice and towards those who are charged with enforcing the law.

Finally, I refer to exclusion orders and detention. The Secretary of State said that nine people had been excluded during the past year. How many of those nine people were questioned by the police in Northern Ireland before they came to England, Scotland or Wales? That question is crucial. Subsequently, after their exclusion, how many of them were questioned and charged? The Secretary of State said specifically that they were excluded because of their involvement in terrorism in relation to Northern Ireland. If there was sufficient proof of their involvement before they came here and after they were returned to Northern Ireland, surely there must be some record of charges having been brought.

I regard certain sections of the Act as an anachronism that is adding to the problems that have been created in the wake of terrorism. It could well follow the example shown with, and be a very small step in relation to, the Emergency Provisions Act and the other factors in relation to Northern Ireland. It would at least be a signpost of hope. Unfortunately, we have received a very defensive reply from the Government. We have to live with this for another year, during which we may be sure that the people who wish to promote terrorism and violence will use that defensiveness for their own purposes.

11.33 pm

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): I was alarmed by one sentence that the Home Secretary used, among many, in which he implied that the situation was of such a nature that the Act was possibly with us for ever more. I think that is what he said really. It is often said by those who defend the Prevention of Terrorism Act—and I am one of those who have been against it from its inception—that those who oppose the Act are giving support to the terrorists. I was sad to hear the implication in the speech of the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths), which was delivered in rather more immoderate language than he normally uses. Usually people who use such language are typical of those who prevented the operation of democracy in Ireland for hundreds of years, and especially during the last 50 years in Northern Ireland. Many of them wish to return to the old Stormont. They are acting as though nothing has changed, but things have changed and we can never go back.

Opposition to the emergency legislation is now massive and is growing. No matter what happens on the Conservative Benches, that is the reality. The British people are wishing more and more, and in bigger numbers, to be rid of the whole mess of Northern Ireland. —[Hon. Members: "Hear, hear."] The *Daily Express* poll underlined that, because 61 per cent. were for immediate withdrawal. Many of us would never agree with that, but it is a guide and a backcloth to what is happening.

Some of us have opposed this legislation from the beginning because it was born of a desperation—which is alway a bad adviser—which swept the country after the Birmingham pub bombings. The last word has not been said about those bombings and who did them. The legislation demanded victims and the nearest were seized. It has corrupted our justice and our courts. It has curtailed civil liberties throughout the country and continues to do so. It has solved nothing. It has widened and deepened the problem. We should not once again be renewing this emergency legislation; we should be getting rid of it for good. It is not the right legislation to deal with the problems with which it fails to grapple, no matter what the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds, who speaks for the police, constantly says.

Experience over the last decade has shown that the Prevention of Terrorism Act is not a necessary and acceptable response to political violence, but one of the chief causes of continued violence. Denial of civil liberties and rights and the implementation of emergency powers feed the conflict from which the terrorism emerges. The Acts of 1974 and 1976 brought to Great Britain the emergency legislation under which Northern Ireland has had to be governed for the last 50 years, when the real answer is democracy in Northern Ireland, which the Conservative party was never willing to give. That spawned the terrorism, and while Northern Ireland is in the grip of those people, terrorism will continue. The border has to go and the people of Ireland have to be united. As long as the border is there, so long will the struggle go on.

11.36 pm

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): The opening speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) should have convinced the Government that they should think again about this legislation. Even if they do not, I hope that the Home Secretary will note that, after I have been saying for some years that exclusion orders were a form of internal exile, Viscount Colville has confirmed that view. To some extent, the Home Secretary was right; the argument is beginning to shift. But where he is wrong is that it is shifting in our direction.

Lord Colville makes the other important point that there is a need to start again. We need to understand the force of that argument. In paragraph 2.25 on page 6 he says that

"only about 3 per cent. detained are subsequently charged".

The argument is then used to demonstrate the ineffectiveness of the legislation. I have not argued that the Act is ineffective in that respect. What I have argued is the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short), that it is counter-productive.

One of the things that makes the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) so obnoxious in his interventions is that at best one can say that he does not understand the argument or, if he does understand it he is trying to take unto himself the ability to represent the brave people who stand out against terror. It is not like that. The argument is clearly whether the Act is not just offensive to civil liberties—nearly everybody agrees with that, although one or two Government Back Benchers were heckling on that a few moments ago, so perhaps they do not—but also counter-productive.

Mr. Hurd: It saves lives.

Mr. Soley: The Home Secretary keeps saying that it saves lives, but let me put this back to him. I accept that one cannot prove such a negative, but I ask him to accept the other side of the argument, that if many people related to and friends of the 95 per cent. who are wrongly detained

feel so alienated from the system that they no longer co-operate by giving evidence to the security forces, we are undermining the work of the security forces. If a small percentage of them are even more alienated to the point that they give support to the paramilitary organisations, we are responsible for helping the recruitment of those organisations. That applies as much to the Unionists as to the Republicans, although the Prevention of Terrorism Act affects Republicans more.

What Conservative Members have to understand is that increasingly and for many years the recruitment ability of the paramilitaries in Northern Ireland has been very high. Things like the Prevention of Terrorism Act are part of the propaganda that is used in recruitment. I ask them at least to understand that argument even if they do not agree with it. Lord Colville does not address that part of the argument.

The other difficult part of the argument is that the Government and Lord Colville concede that this is not properly called a Prevention of Terrorism Act. It should be called a Collection of Information Act, because that is what it is. Indeed Lord Colville says in paragraph 7.3:

"There is no denying that a police officer who stops someone for examination has often little but instinct to prompt him. One senior officer told me that his force stops people to see if they are terrorists; if this is not clear and there is no direct evidence, they are content to collect information. To detain a person under section 12 merely in order to collect information would clearly be an abuse of the section, which requires reasonable grounds for suspicion of terrorist involvement."

He concludes that paragraph by saying:

"Parliament may well wish to consider that line"—

the line between collecting intelligence and identifying terrorism—

"and ensure that powers are carefully phrased."

If we are to have a measure of this nature, let us be clear about it and call it a Collection of Information Act. Let us be clear about the use of that power because at least we shall then recognise, as Lord Colville has recognised, that the other part of the Act is a form of internal exile. Then we can debate the facts and not the fantasies.

11.42 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Waddington): It is a great pity that Labour Members intend to vote against the order. We should all be standing together against the threat of terrorism, and I begin my remarks by reminding the House that it was only in 1983 that Labour Members for the first time voted against the prevention of terrorism legislation. There was no sense at that time in their change of front, because the terrorist threat had in no way abated. Nothing had changed at that time except the Labour party. It was one of the first retreats by Labour Members into irresponsibility, the beginning of a decline that has taken them to one-sided disarmament and a completely frivolous approach to national security.

I shall deal first with the question of detention. Opposition Members usually argue that the detention powers are unnecessary because the vast majority of detainees are not charged with any offence, and the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) was up to that tonight. Last year he said—and he said much the same tonight—that 95 per cent. of those detained under this legislation had been completely innocent of anything. My noble Friend Lord Colville was over-generous when he described that as a simplistic approach. I would describe it as sheer and utter nonsense.

The purpose of the powers is to prevent the commission of offences and to deprive people of the chance of letting off bombs. Information is sometimes obtained showing the commission of offences and in quite a high proportion of cases charges follow. But in other cases the information obtained may be too sensitive to be revealed in court or no evidence is obtained which would be admissible in court, but there is clear information to the effect that the person is bent on terrorist activities.

My right hon. Friend said he had taken careful note of Lord Colville's argument that it would be better to have more vigorous scrutiny at the ports than retain the power to exclude. But is vigorous scrutiny at the ports a substitute? It is a question not just of identifying known terrorists but of what to do with a known terrorist when he has been identified. Exclusion, again, is a preventive measure. It is a power used with great discretion, but it has still been found necessary to use it on seven occasions in 1985 and on nine occasions in 1986, and my right hon. Friend is not as yet convinced that it is a power which can be abandoned without subjecting the public to increased risk.

When dealing with the issue of international terrorists the right hon. Member for Gorton was completely up the pole, not for the first time, especially when dealing with the question of the Abu Nidal group. He did not seem to grasp the fact that they were admitted and information was then received which led to their detention. They could certainly not have been detained under Immigration Act powers except for the purpose of removing them from the country. They could not have been detained under Immigration Act powers in order to be questioned about the possibility of the commission of criminal offences.

Regarding the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths), there is an overlap between Immigration Act powers to designate ports and the powers under this Act, and we are not sure that there is an operational need for——

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business).*

The House divided: Ayes 184, Noes 91.

Division No. 88] **[11.45 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan	Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Alexander, Richard	Dover, Den
Alison, Rt Hon Michael	Durant, Tony
Ancram, Michael	Fenner, Dame Peggy
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*	Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Baldry, Tony	Forth, Eric
Batiste, Spencer	Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Beith, A. J.	Franks, Cecil
Benyon, William	Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Bruce, Malcolm	Gale, Roger
Budgen, Nick	Galley, Roy
Burt, Alistair	Garel-Jones, Tristan
Butcher, John	Goodhart, Sir Philip
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*	Gow, Ian
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*	Gregory, Conal
Cartwright, John	Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Colvin, Michael	Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Cope, John	Ground, Patrick
Corrie, John	Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Couchman, James	Hanley, Jeremy
Currie, Mrs Edwina	Hargreaves, Kenneth

Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Hickmet, Richard
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Kennedy, Charles
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, David
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mather, Sir Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Oppenheim, Phillip
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Roesi, Sir Hugh
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wall, Sir Patrick
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Peter LLoyd.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Anthony
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Haynes, Frank
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley, N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Michie, William
Neillist, David
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sheerman, Barry
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Skinner, Dennis
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
Winnick, David

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Chris Smith and
Mr. John McWilliam.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 (Continuance) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 27th January, be approved.

AIDS (CONTROL) Etc. BILL *[MONEY]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purpose of any Act resulting from the AIDS (Control) Etc. Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money by Parliament of any increase attributable to that Act in the sums so payable under any other Act.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

NORFOLK AND SUFFOLK BROADS BILL

Ordered,

That Mr. Humfrey Malins, Mr. David Amess, Mr. Robert N. Wareing and Mr. Clement Freud be members of the Select Committee on the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Bill.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

Planning Decisions (Northern Ireland)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

11.57 pm

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): I would not normally trouble the House, especially at this time of night, with a detailed constituency case of the apparent failure of planning control. Nor would I take up the time of the Minister and his advisers in so doing if I did not believe that the circumstances of the case were symptomatic of something which is faulty in the system of planning control in Northern Ireland that threatens to deprive it of public confidence and, in some cases, to create a public scandal. However, I must first lay before the House, as briefly as I can, the events in the case to which I wish to draw attention. I shall put them in chronological order.

There is a building plot in a development known as Moyra drive, Saintfield, in my constituency. On 18 August, an application was received for planning permission to erect upon that plot, which is situated between two existing houses, a two-storey house. That was considered in the planning department, and on 20 October, in the normal course, the district council was consulted by the department with a recommendation that the application should be refused. The district council agreed with that recommendation.

Three days later, on 23 October, an amended application was received, and renewed consideration was given to it. As a result of that, on 17 November the district council was again consulted, again with a recommendation to refuse the permission, and again the district council was found to be in agreement with that recommendation.

Meanwhile, however, on 6 November work had begun on the site with a view to the erection of the house concerned. On 14 November, three days before the second consultation of the district council, a distinct warning was issued by the department to the developer. It is perhaps worth quoting the terms in the words of the divisional planning officer:

"The applicant was warned on 14 November 1986 that the commencement of development without the benefit of planning permission constitutes a breach of planning control."

In spite of all that, the work continued steadily, and on 8 January I was written to again. The wording of the letter from the divisional planning officer is significant, and is worth putting on the record. He said:

"You will appreciate that the Department does not normally proceed to enforcement action pending the outcome of a planning application.

However, the applicant has already been advised that the development had started on site without the benefit of planning permission. At the same time an assurance was sought that the development would cease pending the outcome of the planning application. In addition the applicant was advised that failure to comply with this request may result in enforcement proceedings."

The last that is known of the matter is that, if the house is not fully complete, it has nearly reached completion.

That course of events must naturally arouse our anxiety. It is bound to cause local and more widespread offence, since it implies that the administration and the law make it possible for planning control to be openly flouted. Here is a development for which planning permission was sought, and for which planning permission was not forthcoming, but which nevertheless was put in hand and carried through to completion. So far as I am aware, no enforcement action has been taken.

There is one result of this on public opinion and there is one result on events in the Province. The result on public opinion is that it is generally concluded that planning control will not be made to stick — if a developer is sufficiently determined to go ahead in breach of or in the absence of planning control, he stands a good chance of getting away with it. Whatever steps are properly taken by the public—through their elected representatives on the district council and through their representatives in the House and by direct representations to the department — nothing will happen, but the development will be carried on. No doubt, in due course, some way will be found of sanctioning, retrospectively, what has happened. That is the effect on public opinion.

It is serious that there should be the consequent loss, which certainly exists, of confidence in the planning process. One loss of confidence breeds another. It means that everyone who is aggrieved by a planning decision will be tempted to take the law into his own hands. It will mean that there will be a general belief that there may be planning laws, area plans and the rest of the contraption but, in the end, a developer will get away with it if he defies the planning law. It is, of course, an incitement precisely to that kind of defiance of the law which we have seen in this case — a "defiance of planning control", as the developer in this case was candidly informed he was committing by the department on more than one occasion.

I hope that the Under-Secretary of State will accept that there must be something wrong if a course of events can happen such as that which I have placed before the House and of which I think the hon. Gentleman is already aware. It may be that the failure is administrative. It may be that a different decision should have been taken or that a planning refusal should have issued at an earlier date, in which case the matter is capable of being remedied, not only in this instance but in other instances, by a more prompt reaction. It may be, however, that there is some fault in the powers which are available to the planning authority if such a blatant defiance occurs in the absence of planning control in the face of a department which is minded to refuse planning permission and which is supported in that intention by the relevant district council.

I hope, therefore, that the Under-Secretary of State will take the opportunity which this short debate affords not so much to clear up what happened in this case — although it will need to be cleared up to the satisfaction of public opinion in the immediate area—but to ensure that the planning process is fortified in the Province, both in practice and in the minds of the public.

12.4 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Richard Needham): I thank the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) for giving me advance notice of the proposition that he was bringing forward tonight. I will, of course, answer the points that he made as best I can in the particular and in the general.

On the matter of Moyra drive, Saintfield, the original application of 18 August 1986 to which the right hon. Member for South Down referred was to put a two-storey house on a piece of land which on the original plan had been designated as a play area. The application was not to put the house on the road that went through the estate

[Mr. Richard Needham]

where the house is now being built. Because it was behind the existing houses and on the play area, the Department felt that the application should be turned down; it consulted the district council and the application was turned down.

The developer then came back and moved the application for the house to be sited between two existing houses, more in line with the existing buildings. At first, the view of the Department was that that application should also be refused. However on reflection, and once the Department had discussed the matter with the road engineers, it was felt that the application would have to be granted.

Any developer can put in an amendment to his original plans or a re-amendment, and he frequently does. That is the position and it happens in Northern Ireland and all over the United Kingdom. Hon. Members are not always greatly enamoured of the practice when it happens within their constituencies. In this particular case, the Department's preliminary view is that on the second application there are no planning grounds for refusing the application. We have consulted the district council on the basis of this latest opinion and it has deferred consideration of the application at its meeting and sought a site meeting. As a result of that decision by the district council on 4 February of this year the Department served an enforcement notice and a stop notice on the developer requiring him to halt work. The divisional planning officer did not begin formal enforcement proceedings earlier because the Department had been moving through what I accept is a tortuous process, towards approving the application.

As the right hon. Gentleman said, the Department sought the co-operation of the builder and asked him to cease the building while the planning application was considered. That request was ignored. The right hon. Gentleman is absolutely right about the building being three quarters of the way up, because I have looked at the photographs of it today. However, the work has now been stopped. I will, of course, keep the right hon. Gentleman informed about what happens in future developments on that site.

I now turn from the particular to the general. Stressing the point about the rights of applicants to bring forward different planning applications to change existing permissions that they have received, I know that the right hon. Gentleman has expressed concern to me that the Department on occasion may fail to take those matters into consideration because of the effects of outside bodies on the Department's proposals.

I have discussed that matter most fully with my officials to see if there was any truth in that suggestion. There is none. The Department must look at the merits of each application according to existing planning policy. The Department need have no reason or fear about going beyond or outside that. Although I accept the right hon. Gentleman's point that if builders go out and start building without planning permission and the Department fails to act it inevitably gives the impression to the public that all is not well with the planning procedure.

I have turned over the papers and correspondence that the right hon. Gentleman had with some of my predecessors, particularly my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West (Mr. Mitchell), about the Department's policy on enforcement against unathorised development. At that time he questioned article 19 of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1972 which, as the right hon. Gentleman is aware, empowers the Department to consider applications for planning permission for buildings or works constructed or in the process of construction before the date of an application. Article 19 allows applicants to receive authorisation for unathorised development where an individual seeking to sell a property could find himself in a position of real hardship. The tenet behind that comes from the Town and Country Planning Act 1947 which says that development without planning permission is not in itself an offence. That is primarily because in some cases there can be real difficulty in deciding whether planning permission should have been applied for in the first place.

I accept that if permissions after the event become the order of the day then, of course, the planning system will fall into disrepute. Our experience is that the vast majority of developers seek permission before starting work. Article 19 is there as a fallback power which is needed to avoid some planning irregularities where development is acceptable. It is not a power that is used simply to avoid enforcement action where such action is clearly necessary.

On the question of numbers, in 1986 some 20,000 applicants in Northern Ireland submitted themselves to the existing system and the Department found itself serving 34 enforcement notices and eight stop notices. There are, of course, many additional cases of unauthorised development and they are resolved without recourse to formal action. Very often the most effective way of dealing with the problem is where an authorised developer can be persuaded by the divisional planning officer without formal action, to end his breach of control.

I repeat that I recognise the disquiet that raises when builders and others commence development without applying for planning permission or even awaiting the outcome of planning applications. The Department does not condone that action. It is certainly unacceptable that some individuals should seek to avoid the procedures which as I have said most developers and most applicants submit to. Further, such action, as the right hon. Gentleman said, creates the perception that the Department is precluded from an objective view of the merits of the case when it consents to the building after the event. I have to say to the right hon. Gentleman that that perception is not correct. The developer who jumps the gun does not receive any advantage and in many cases he has to undo what he has put up in an unauthorised way.

For example, in Islandmagee in county Antrim recently a developer started constructing a house and garage. He was asked by the Department to stop work but submitted a planning application instead and continued work on the house and garage. Enforcement and stop notices were served and planning permission was refused. Development ceased and eventually, following a number of court cases, the Department ensured that the development was removed.

In another case, with which I am familiar because political pressure was brought on the issue, a 15 ft high wall — an extremely unpleasant looking wall — was erected along the coast at Portstewart in county Londonderry without permission. Even though a planning application was submitted, the Department served a stop notice and an enforcement notice requiring the demolition

of the wall. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman accepts that, when a planning application falls outside planning policy, the Department will take action.

In consideration of the need or otherwise for enforcement action, the Department adheres to the view that the developer should gain no advantage or suffer no penalty by virtue of the fact that development commenced without the benefit of planning permission. That view is supported by the Planning Appeals Commission in its consideration of appeals against enforcement notices, and it applies equally throughout the United Kingdom.

To summarise the general position, we have a policy of considering enforcement action when development is started without permission. Developers who do not follow the rules gain no advantage from doing so and retrospective applications are dealt with solely on their merits.

It might be that the right hon. Gentleman does not agree with current planning policy throughout the United Kingdom, which presumes in favour of the applicant even when he retrospectively applies for permission. Any change would require an alteration to the existing United Kingdomwide planning policy going back over 40 years, which is not something that I am in a position to grant this evening.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: I am grateful to the Minister for his reply and for the trouble that he has taken to establish and reflect upon the facts of the case. I think that he and the Department will wish to draw some practical deductions from this experience.

In the light of what the Minister has explained to the House, I think that it is regrettable that an enforcement and stop notice was not issued in November rather than in February. Had that been done, very likely the development would not have proceeded as it did in the following two months. What principally caused the public scandal was when it became known that the Department's original recommendation on the second application had been for a refusal, and that that had been concurred with by the district council.

If something is to come out of this individual case that is of more general application, it may be—I leave this with the Minister for reflection—that recourse to stop and enforcement notices should be taken at an earlier stage than, perhaps, has been happening in all instances.

Mr. Needham: The reason why the enforcement and stop notice was not issued in November was that, by that time, the Department felt that permission might be granted. Nevertheless, I very much take on board the right hon. Gentleman's points. In this case, the building was going ahead without permission, and it should not have done. As I said, we have now issued stop and enforcement notices. I shall certainly discuss with my officials the necessity that, in such cases, we should carefully consider whether, where appropriate, we should take action earlier to stop this happening.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at seventeen minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 11 February 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

PORT OF FOSDYKE BILL *[Lords]*

Order for Third Reading read.
Queen's Consent, on behalf of the Crown, signified.
Read the Third time and passed, with amendments.

GRAMPIAN REGIONAL COUNCIL (HARBOURS) ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL

Considered; to be read the Third time.

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

Prison Accommodation

1. **Mr. Hugh Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total cell accommodation in Scottish prisons; how many are currently out of use; for what reasons; and when he expects additional cells to come into use.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): The total design capacity of accommodation in Scottish penal establishments is 5,398 places. Of these, 395 cells are currently out of use as a result of damage in recent incidents. Four hundred and sixty eight additional places will become available when phase 2 of Shotts prison is brought into use this year.

Mr. Brown: During the recent disturbance in Barlinnie the Secretary of State repeatedly stated that overcrowding was not a problem. When is the inspector's report on Peterhead expected? Will the Secretary of State comment on the leaked report by the prison working group? Everybody in Scotland seems to know about that report except us. What proposals does he have in mind to reduce the prison population rather than to reshuffle places and prisoners?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman has raised many points. My comments on overcrowding related to B hall of Barlinnie, where the incident took place, and indeed to Peterhead. In neither case has there been overcrowding. I have said that I shall consider publishing the working party's report when its draft report is finally determined. It might be a useful contribution to public debate on this matter.

The hon. Gentleman will agree that one of the most important aspects of the prison population concerns those in prison for non-payment of fines. He will be aware of the appointment of fine enforcement officers. Early signs are that those appointments are at least helping to reduce the number of people admitted to prison for that reason. Clearly, we shall be willing to give further consideration to ideas that might produce further progress.

Mr. Henderson: How much have the Government expended in capital expenditure in Scottish prisons in recent years? How does it compare with the record of the previous Government to improve accommodation in Scottish prisons?

Mr. Rifkind: The standard figure is approximately £40 million since 1979. Indeed, the opening of the new phase of Shotts prison will provide a substantial improvement in the quality of the infrastructure for those incarcerated within prisons. We attach importance to a proper prison programme to ensure that the standard of facilities in Scottish prisons is commensurate with what modern circumstances suggest is appropriate.

Mr. O'Neill: Although the Secretary of State and the Opposition may disagree on what is meant by overcrowding, he will surely accept that too many people are in Scottish prisons and that not all of them are in prison because they have not paid fines. Is it not depressing that the best that the Scottish prisons group can come up with is some reshuffling of numbers? It should look at finding better ways of treating prisoners by means of halfway houses and more imaginative sentencing policies, and that is the Secretary of State's responsibility.

Mr. Rifkind: I ask the hon. Gentleman to appreciate that the question of who gets sent to prison is a matter not for the working group or, indeed, for the Government, but for the courts to determine when convicted individuals are sentenced. Therefore, penal policy relates to other issues.

The working party is looking at alternative systems for certain kinds of prisoners. I am anxious, beyond that aspect, to look at other ways of ensuring that, at the end of the day, prisons are used only for those for whom there is no appropriate alternative form of punishment. There is common ground on that matter. Translating that into specific policy decisions is inevitably more difficult, but we are open to proposals that might be forthcoming on this matter. At the end of the day, what is done with any individual convicted person is a matter for the courts and not for anyone else.

Mr. Hirst: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the recent disruption in prisons and the consequent damage to prison buildings have merely compounded the overcrowding problem in certain prisons? At the same time, will he place on record his admiraton for the work of officer John Kearney, one of my constituents, who was held hostage for over 100 hours? Finally, with a view to dealing with any possible future disruption, will my right hon. and learned Friend invite the media to ensure that, in future, demonstrations are not covered by television, newspaper and radio people, because that has the unfortunate habit of encouraging demonstrations to continue for longer.

Mr. Rifkind: When the new phase 2 of Shotts prison is open, the total capacity of the Scottish prison system will be slightly greater than the total number of individual prisoners. However, there may still be a mismatch in individual establishments. We are considering ways of

ensuring that the establishments that are available are properly utilised so that there is not under-utilisation of capacity in one establishment and overcrowding in another. As for the latter part of my hon. Friend's question, I do indeed pay tribute to the courage of all prison officers, who are constantly required to undertake very difficult and serious responsibilities that are often not perceived by the general public. The role that the media might play in covering incidents in prisons is a separate issue, but I know that all who are interested in the public interest will wish to ensure that nothing is done to inflame or aggravate any delicate situation, particularly when the physical safety of individual prison officers may be affected.

Mr. Clarke: Why does the right hon. and learned Gentleman ignore the fact that under this Government the crime rate has risen by 80 per cent. in Scotland since 1979? Why has he failed to address himself today to the problem of prisoners on remand? Is he not worried about untried prisoners? Is he not worried that those who have been found guilty of nothing are being put into overcrowded cells? Does he accept that since Scotland sends to prison four times as many people as do most other European countries, the problem calls for resources? Above all, will he respond to the low morale among the personnel in Scottish prisons by holding an urgent public inquiry?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman's question illustrates a certain degree of confusion. Those who have been found not guilty are not incarcerated in prison. The remand prisoners to whom the hon. Gentleman referred are those who have been charged with crimes and who are awaiting trial, but to whom the courts have concluded that it would not be appropriate to grant bail. I accept that those who have not yet been convicted of an offence but who are detained in prison awaiting trial are in a different category and that we must ensure that they are given proper care and consideration. I should also emphasise that under the Scottish system those who are awaiting trial do not have to suffer a period of detention before trial of the kind that one finds in many other countries.

Travel-to-Work Areas

2. **Mr. Bill Walker** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to review the assisted area status of the Blairgowrie Pitlochry Aberfeldy travel-to-work area.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to do so.

Mr. Walker: Does my hon. Friend agree that, if it is to be accepted, regional policy must be seen to be fair and sensible? Does my hon. Friend think that it is sensible to describe Aberfeldy, Pitlochry and Blairgowrie as a travel-to-work area when it is neither viable nor sensible to travel on those roads in the winter every day? It cannot be done. Since male unemployment in Blairgowrie has been around and over 20 per cent. since 1978, which is higher than the unemployment in Dundee, will my hon. Friend tell me why that can be said to be fair? What does he propose to do about it?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend campaigns on this matter with commendable persistence. I am sure he will be aware that a number of possible arrangements were considered when the travel-to-work areas were established. As the system is only two years old, I think he will accept that there is a need for a period of stability before undertaking changes to the system.

Western Isles

3. **Mr. Donald Stewart** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on progress on an extension of the integrated development programme in the Western Isles.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. John MacKay): The European Commission considers that there is no need for a full-scale extension of the integrated development programme. We have asked the Commission to consider how best to wind up the IDP in order to protect the significant achievements made. We await the Commission's response.

Mr. Stewart: I thank the Minister for his reply. Is he aware that when the programme was inaugurated there were suggestions that there would be a follow-on extension? A number of the projects that have shown excellent results might be in danger if that extension is not arranged. Will he put pressure on the EEC to bring matters to a head as quickly as possible?

Mr. MacKay: I appreciate the point that the right hon. Gentleman is making. The ball is in the Commission's court, and I have recently written to remind it of that fact. We shall have to wait to see what proposals it makes, but that must be before May 1987 in order that any proposals can be rolled over from the current integrated development programme.

AIDS

4. **Mrs. McCurley** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps have been taken to ensure that all necessary provisions have been made to assist the Scottish medical profession in its assessment and containment of AIDS.

Mr. Rifkind: In addition to the issue of extensive guidance to doctors, dentists and nurses about the disease, the Government have to date allocated £1·4 million centrally to fund measures to control the spread of AIDS in Scotland.

Mrs. McCurley: May I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on that reply and on the excellent booklet that has been produced for educational establishments in Scotland to be used mainly by teachers? Is it possible that in the future a similar booklet may be produced for young people within these establishments to be distributed and discussed within those establishments?

Mr. Rifkind: The guidance booklet that we issued last week essentially dealt with the need for a range of sensible, hygienic precautions in schools to stop AIDS being passed on accidentally. My colleagues and I will be issuing in a few weeks time a question and answer leaflet on AIDS for teachers to use in response to children's questions. Schools have a positive role to play in that respect, and we have asked bodies such as the Consultative Committee on the Curriculum and the Scottish Health Education Group to consider what further guidance and materials should be provided.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Is the Secretary of State aware that, as a result of the University Grants Committee's reductions at Aberdeen university, the department of microbiology is to lose clinical and teaching staff and that, combined with the difficulties in the Grampian health board, laboratory staff will be seriously reduced, with repercussions not only for the AIDS programme but for research into meningitis? How does the Secretary of State justify that?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman is well aware that I have no departmental responsibility for the University Grants Committee, therefore I shall confine myself to the specific point about research on AIDS in Scotland. The Scottish Office is providing just under £250,000 for research on AIDS in Scotland. Other research proposals have been put forward to the Government, which will be considered in due course.

Mr. Wilson: With regard to the need to contain AIDS, will the Secretary of State explain why it has taken so long to inaugurate the proposed needle exchange system? Is it the case that it is not due to come into effect until April, and thus about three to four months will elapse, with the danger of AIDS being spread by contaminated needles continuing?

Mr. Rifkind: On 18 December we announced our intention to set up small-scale trials under medical supervision, including the counselling of drug misusers and the exchange of clean for used equipment on a one-for-one basis. That requires close co-operation with the medical profession and others in the three likely localities of Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dundee. That cannot be arranged overnight. We are equally anxious to ensure that the trials begin at the earliest possible date. It seems likely that April will be the commencement date, but that will depend on the conclusion of the detailed discussions with the medical profession and others who will be involved in the trials.

Mr. Ron Brown: Young Tories in Scotland have called for brothels to be taken into public ownership to curb the spread of AIDS and improve health standards. Will the Secretary of State accept that nationalisation is of more benefit to the community than privatisation?

Mr. Rifkind: We have no early intention of taking brothels or any other comparable establishments into public ownership. I recall that it was once remarked that Socialists disapprove of sin because it is a form of private enterprise.

Mr. Kirkwood: I hope the Secretary of State will bear in mind, when considering the pilot projects on free exchange of needles, the case that can be made for needles to be issued free to diabetics. May I use that as an example of the need for an advisory committee at central level to co-ordinate some of these difficult questions? I accept that the Government will have to confront everything, including troops returning from the Horn of Africa, and the difficulties that they create locally, when they return. I was questioned in my own constituency about when the Minister asked me whether I thought he should advise people who were proposing to get married in church to take AIDS tests beforehand. Does he accept that these questions need some strategic overall view by a central advisory committee?

Mr. Rifkind: We must try to ensure that we respond to this serious problem in a serious and responsible fashion. Some somewhat exotic suggestions about how the problem can be dealt with have often been made, but we are trying to identify ways in which the Government and the community can make a meaningful contribution to reducing the incidence of this serious disease.

The existing arrangements for diabetics provide for prescription of reusable syringes by general practitioners under the National Health Service. Although diabetics might find it more convenient to use disposable syringes, it would be difficult to justify the substantial additional cost to the NHS of general provision of disposable needles for all insulin using diabetics.

As for drug users, we are at the moment talking only about certain trial tests. We shall have to wait to see the outcome of those tests before deciding what general policy might be appropriate.

Mr. Maxton: Is the Secretary of State aware that there will be considerable anger among diabetics in Scotland as a result of that answer? May we have an assurance that none of the money that is being used for the advertising campaign on AIDS will come from the Scottish health education group's budget and thus damage its excellent work? May we also be assured that the increased number of hospital places and the doctors and nursing staff required to deal with AIDS as its incidence increases will be paid for by extra money from the Government and not represent a burden on the health boards?

Mr. Rifkind: From the hon. Gentleman's original comment, one would have thought that there were no diabetics before 1979. He should be reminded that the Labour Government saw no need to provide free syringes to diabetics, so it is somewhat hypocritical for him to suggest that there has been a fundamental change.

The money that we give for research projects on AIDS is in addition to a further £250,000 to assist the publicity campaign by the Scottish Health Education Group. We have also appointed a working group under the general manager of Lothian health board to advise on methods of caring for those who might be found to suffer from AIDS. I understand that that working group is to report fairly soon.

Education Classes (North of Scotland)

5. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what support he intends to give to maintain the provision of extra-mural studies and adult education classes in the north of Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: Education authorities are responsible for the provision of education in their areas. In addition, the Scottish Education Department gives grant to a number of voluntary organisations active in community education.

Mr. Wallace: I trust that the Minister does not need any lessons about how valuable is the provision of extra-mural classes, especially in rural parts of Scotland and the islands. Those who administer the system — certainly those in the north of Scotland—feel that withdrawal of the administration grant by the Scottish Office poses a threat to the continuation of those classes. As the Minister has accepted in correspondence with me that a very small amount of money is involved, why are the Government being so mean in withdrawing it?

Mr. MacKay: It is indeed a small amount when compared with university budgets, but the total of £53,000 for the whole of Scotland is significant when compared with the alternative priority on which we think the money should be spent — getting a Scottish version of the PICKUP scheme off the ground to give people in mid career the advantage of retraining in new skills.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Does the Miniser agree that the PICKUP scheme in Engand and Wales has been funded by additional money, whereas in Scotland the money is coming from the same budget? Why will he not do the same as England and ensure that we get extra money for this valuable scheme?

Mr. MacKay: The hon. Gentleman must recall from his time in government that one has to order priorities in some way. When we considered the PICKUP scheme and studied the Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Committee's report, which said that limited pump priming finance by Government could provide an important stimulus, we decided that it was right to do that and to find the money to enable us to fund a limited project.

Mr. Bruce: Will the Minister acknowledge that the two projects address themselves to different markets and that it is wrong to take away funding for a service that affects small communities throughout the north-east and the north of Scotland and the islands in favour of a scheme that will simply not make the same provision for those people? Will he recognise that, for the small amount of money involved, he is causing grave hardship and indeed outrage among rural communities?

Mr. MacKay: I do not believe for a moment that I am causing hardship or outrage, other than in the mind of the hon. Gentleman. It is fair to point out that my Department pays grant-aid amounting to about £423,000 for the administrative costs of national voluntary organisations that provide educational activities, including encouraging adult participation, in the north of Scotland.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Does the Minister not agree that these problems in the north of Scotland and elsewhere suggest that the Government place a low priority on adult education? Does that not therefore re-emphasise the need for proper funding for the Workers Educational Association? Will the Minister bear that in mind when I meet him to discuss the matter tomorrow morning?

Mr. MacKay: I can assure the hon. Gentleman that I shall think about nothing other than the Workers Educational Association and his visit between now and tomorrow morning, but it is fair to say, as I shall point out to him, that the grant to the WEA in 1986-87 came to £184,500, which is a significant amount of money.

Forestry Commission (Planting Policy)

6. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will take steps to ensure that the Forestry Commission acts upon the conclusions of the National Audit Office regarding the marginal cost-effectiveness of planting conifers on high ground in the north of Scotland, by switching its emphasis to broadleaf plantings in agricultural land further south; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: The National Audit Office review of Forestry Commission objectives and achievements is being considered by the Public Accounts Committee, which will report to Parliament in due course. My right hon. and learned Friend is therefore not at present in a position to make any detailed statement.

Mr. Taylor: I note that reply, but does not my hon. Friend agree that it is, in any event, a virtue to plant woodlands on less productive farmland, or even to develop golf courses there? Would that not lend a new meaning to green keeping? Does that not help to sustain the rural character of that land and a habitat for wildlife?

Mr. MacKay: I completely agree with my hon. Friend. It is important that against the background of surplus agricultural production we look at all the means of maintaining economic activity and rural life in our countryside. That is what my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food had in mind when he made his statement on Monday in the House.

Sir Hector Monro: Does my hon. Friend agree that the initiative taken by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food this week to help promote the rural economy is extremely good news? Does he accept that if we are to increase broadleaved planting, as opposed to conifers, there must be an extra incentive but, at the same time, does he also accept that if we are to encourage tourism in Scotland we must be careful about blanket coniferous planting throughout the scenic areas?

Mr. MacKay: I thank my hon. Friend for his support for our policy. He will recall that the policy statement that we made as far back as July 1985, which introduced the broadleaved woodland grant scheme, was widely welcomed, and the Forestry Commission tells me that the scheme has got off to an encouraging start. My hon. Friend makes a valid point, which everyone who is interested in the countryside and in the forestry industry fully appreciates, that we need to look at both conifers and broadleaved trees as the way forward for the forestry industry and the countryside.

Mr. Lambie: Is the Minister aware that the decision by Caledonian Papers to build a paper mill in Irvine in my constituency, which is an inward investment of £250 million and will involve up to 1,500 jobs during the construction period, and 900 permanent jobs, depends on adequate supplies of timber from the public and private sectors in Scotland? Will the Minister give encouragement to the Forestry Commission to extend its activities in the highlands and southern uplands of Scotland to ensure the continuation of those timber supplies in the future?

Mr. MacKay: The hon. Gentleman shows a realistic appreciation of the importance of forestry for Scotland. I only wish that it was shared by a few other Labour Members. I add to the hon. Gentleman's valid point about the importance of this development in job terms. The plant at Irvine will require sitka spruce, which is often a species much maligned by the environmental conservation lobby. That is the species that the industry wants. It is because of that species that the company is coming to Scotland and to Irvine.

Mr. Pollock: Will my hon. Friend confirm that he recently visited the plant of Highland Forest Products near Inverness? Does he agree that that is a welcome addition, in a modern framework, to the forestry enterprise,

substantially relying as it does on locally grown products and bringing a welcome infusion of new jobs to the area? In short, is that not the sort of development in rural areas that we wish to encourage, and will the Scottish Office do precisely that?

Mr. MacKay: I am happy to respond positively to my hon. Friend, just as I did to the hon. Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie). Highland Forest Products has a factory employing about 100 people in the plant and about 300 to 400 people throughout the countryside in the north-east of Scotland. Once again, the plant requires pine trees, the coniferous trees that some of the critics rail against so much. Again, that underlines the point that we need these trees if we are to have a proper forest industry.

Mr. Hardy: Given the enormous dependency on imported timber products and the hugh cereal surpluses that the Government will fail to tackle by their recently announced policy, is it not desirable to transfer some of the rich grade 1 and grade 2 low-level arable areas in England to forestry purposes to meet the need——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This question is about Scotland.

Mr. Hardy: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: This question is about Scotland.

Mr. Hardy: No, forestry.

Mr. Speaker: No, it is about Scotland.

Mr. Corrie: I support what the hon. Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie) has said. Could not many areas in Scotland be planted with coniferous trees without spoiling the environment? I support any move to put in hardwood trees, but if land is set aside for such trees, should not agriculture have some compensation for the output of that land?

Mr. MacKay: I agree with my hon. Friend, who has a major constituency interest in the plant at Irvine. I also agree about the need for a balance between broadleaf and conifer. It is important that farmers take advantage of the scheme announced on Monday to plant conifers and deciduous trees in land, which, up to now, has not been considered for tree planting.

Mr. Kirkwood: Will the Minister give us an assurance that the changes announced this week by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in England will not prejudice the Scottish Office's lead on forestry? Will he also give us an assurance that the Forestry Commission will play an integral part in the expansion of forestry and that the Government's plans to privatise have been shelved for ever?

Mr. MacKay: I assure the hon. Gentleman that the Scottish Office will continue to play the lead role in forestry. The Forestry Commission has an important role to play. It will be called upon to administer the farm forestry scheme, as it does the scheme on private planting, and its important role in the forestry industry has greatly helped projects such as Kaukas and Highland Forest Products get off the ground in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I congratulate my hon. Friend on the announcement made earlier this week, which will help ordinary farmers, as opposed to pop stars, to plant woodlands. Will he confirm that the cost to public funds of the 40 jobs created by Fountain Forestry in the flow country is in excess of £300,000 per job? Is this a useful way to use public money, especially when more jobs could be created elsewhere from the same resources?

Mr. MacKay: I am afraid that my hon. Friend will have to put down a specific question before I can answer about the exact figure that he mentions. I believe that there is room for both forestry and the open land for which many of the environmentalists and conservationists ask. The committee that we have set up in the Scottish Office to look into the interaction between wildlife and planting in the north of Scotland will help us to find a reasonable solution that will be in the interest of the countryside in that part of Scotland.

Mr. Home Robertson: Is the Minister aware that one of the many clangers dropped by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food came when he said:

"The growing of trees under these proposals will be much more attractive to people in the marginal areas".—[*Official Report*, 9 February 1987; Vol. 110, c. 72.]

This must point to more blanket afforestation in the Highlands. If the Minister hopes to curtail the surplus agricultural produce and protect the rural environment, will he take this opportunity to explain how he expects the Forestry Commission or the private sector to achieve an appropriate increase in tree planting on the low ground?

Mr. MacKay: One of the ways in which that can be achieved is to act on the decision that was announced a few months ago that we would take a more relaxed view to planting on land further down the hill. That view has been made perfectly clear to the forestry industry.

Mr. Home Robertson: That is not economic.

Mr. MacKay: I do not agree with the comments made from a sedentary position by the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson). Both large-scale forestry — I prefer to use that phrase rather than blanket-forestry—and farm forestry have an important role to play. I would have preferred to hear from the hon. Gentleman that he supported the development of the forestry industry and the jobs that are coming to Scotland as a result.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend agree that the hundreds of square miles of forestry in my constituency contribute handsomely to the local economy? Does he further agree that it is important that a balance is retained between the needs of tourism and forestry and that that balance has been substantially retained in many areas? Does he accept that the welcome given by the vice-president of the National Farmers Union of Scotland to the Government's proposals show that we are moving along the right lines?

Mr. MacKay: I can certainly confirm to my hon. Friend that the National Farmers Union of Scotland has made a positive response to the statement made by my right hon. Friend last Monday. The Scottish Farmers Union has warmly welcomed the statement, and Opposition Members would be well advised to heed its words. My hon. Friend is equally correct when he said that we have to strike a sensible balance between planting and the needs of conservation interests and the needs of tourism. That can be achieved, and in many parts of Scotland, including the area that I represent, that has been achieved.

Severe Weather (Financial Assistance)

7. **Mr. Eadie** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what additional financial help he intends to give local authorities as a consequence of extra expenditure incurred during the exceptional cold snap in January.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Ancram): Rate support grant is paid in aid of local authority services generally. The grant paid to authorities this year, and promised for next, is generous. Prudent authorities make provision for contingencies such as bad winter weather, and in the case of road maintenance the incidence of snow is specifically taken into account, on an authority-by-authority basis, in assessing expenditure need. I therefore see no reason for any special arrangements in this case.

Mr. Eadie: Is the Minister aware that that is a dusty and unsatisfactory answer? He must be aware that because of the cold snap local authorities incurred additional expenditure in their roads, social works and housing departments because of burst pipes. Is he further aware that yesterday the Department of Energy said that there were 15,000 extra calls on the Monergy hot line as a consequence of the cold snap? Is the Minister really saying to local authorities "You're getting nowt" bearing in mind that the winter has only just started?

Mr. Ancram: I want to take this opportunity first to congratulate local authorities and their workers on the great efforts that they have made to keep our roads clear. Although the severe weather did not last long, it made life difficult for a time and the authorities responded quickly and efficiently. With regard to the hon. Gentleman's point, I must tell him that snowfall and snow lying are not new occurrences this year. That has happened during many winters in Scotland. The figures for 1982-83, 1983-84 and 1984-85 reveal that in Lothian the average number of days when snow was lying were 13·2, 22·2, and 19·8 respectively. That is not a new occurrence and authorities are well able to deal with it. With regard to social work, my right hon. and learned Friend made provision of more than £300 million for social work in 1986-87. There is ample room for sensible management for unexpected costs within that total.

Mr. McQuarrie: While I agree with my hon. Friend that rate support grant was a little more generous this year, especially in Grampian and Banff and Buchan, will he accept that there are cold snaps and cold snaps, and that in the north-east of Scotland in my constituency we had a very severe cold snap this winter? We certainly require some additional assistance towards the problems that have been created, because the local authority direct labour department was called out on many occasions in excess of the normal procedure.

Mr. Ancram: I note my hon. Friend's comments and I appreciate the reasons why he has made them. However, in the time that I have held my present responsibilities, this is not the first time that Grampian has suffered from cold weather during the winter. It is for that reason that the client group assessments in their secondary indicators make provision on a historical basis for road maintenance in particular, which is the expenditure most affected by cold weather.

Mr. Martin: Does the Minister agree that cold snaps not only make life difficult for people but cause severe danger, especially to the elderly? Does he know that in my constituency two people died during the cold snap and many elderly people could not get out of their houses, because my constituency covers one of the highest points in the city? Should not more assistance be given to the social work department and the roads department to make conditions safer, especially for the elderly?

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Gentleman referred specifically to elderly people. The Government have shown their willingness to respond flexibly to the needs of the elderly and other vulnerable groups with the £5 weekly allowance. In Scotland more than 82,000 claimants have already received two payments, with 32,000 cases still in the pipeline, which is a much higher figure than some of our critics suggested. It comes ill from the hon. Gentleman to suggest that cold weather was invented by this Government. It is worth remembering that under the Labour Government expenditure on heating additions amounted to only £90 million, as opposed to more than £400 million under this Government.

Prosperity

8. **Mr. Henderson** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the relative prosperity of Scotland compared with the rest of Great Britain.

Mr. Lang: The standard of living of most Scots compares favourably with most of the rest of Great Britain. In terms of average male weekly earnings, the latest figures for 1985 show that only the south-east fared better.

Mr. Henderson: Does this not show that a Conservative Government are good for the Scots, especially since, under this Government, those who depend upon health, social and other vital services such as education receive more per head of the population in Scotland than they do south of the border?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is right as regards identifiable public expenditure. He may also wish to know that in terms of gross domestic product per head and personal disposable income, Scotland lies third in the list of regions in the United Kingdom.

Mr. James Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that since the new year statement by the Secretary of State for Scotland on the potential boom in Scotland the Caterpillar tractor company has decided to draw stumps and close the factory en bloc. Since then there have been further redundancies in my constituency. Is it not about time that we had a statement from the Minister or from the Secretary of State as to the Government's intentions in respect of Caterpillar?

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend's views about Caterpillar are well know. However, I am glad to say that what happened with Caterpillar does not reflect the general view of overseas companies with regard to investment in Scotland. During the past seven years about £1·8 billion of inward investment has been attracted to Scotland.

Mr. Fallon: Will my hon. Friend confirm that last year identifiable public expenditure per head was 27 per cent. higher in Scotland than it was in England and that housing

expenditure per head was about 90 per cent. higher? Is it not time that this tartan featherbedding was subject to an independent audit?

Mr. Lang: Identifiable public expenditure has been higher in Scotland in several areas, reflecting the special needs of Scotland which my hon. Friend, as a Member of the United Kingdom Parliament, would wish to support.

Mr. Douglas: Will the Minister reflect on the fact that in the 1960s we were worried that Scotland had too large a share of the old and declining industries and not enough of the new dynamic industries, but that under the Conservative Government there has been a huge diminution in the older established industries such as coal, steel and shipbuilding and not enough growth, even with all the advantages of North sea oil, in the new dynamic industries? There is also an absence in Scotland of decision-making headquarters of companies. Does the Minister concede that a regional policy which suits the south-east of England does not necessarily suit Scotland, which should have a more independent view of its economic future?

Mr. Lang: I am glad to assure the hon. Gentleman that the number of people self-employed in Scotland has increased by about a quarter during the past seven years. Although there has been a loss of jobs in manufacturing industry, it is significant that output has been almost back at the 1979 levels, with many fewer workers, thus reflecting the dramatic increase in productivity, which is the best guarantee of secure jobs in the future.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Is my hon. Friend aware of the recent announcement of a multi-million pound investment at Mearns Cross in my constituency? Is he further aware that that follows a major investment announced by English Sewing in manufacturing industry at Neilston and Newton Mearns in my constituency? Do not those practical examples give the lie to the nonsense talked by Opposition Members about the Scottish economy?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The quality of the Scottish work force and the other attractions of locating in Scotland are manifest and are reflected in the number of companies coming to Scotland.

Mr. John David Taylor: Does the Minister realise that Scottish Unionists will not be voting for Conservative candidates at the next election, not simply because they supported the Anglo-Irish Agreement, but because Scottish Ministers——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must stop the hon. Member from going wide of the question. Will he relate his question to Scottish prosperity?

Mr. Taylor: It is very much related to the Scottish economy. I am giving the second reason why Scottish Unionists will not be voting. It is because Scottish Ministers have clearly put London policies before the interests of the Scots.

Mr. Lang: I had hoped that the right hon. Gentleman, in this United Kingdom Parliament, would pay tribute to the very generous help that has gone to Northern Ireland from the British Government.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Bearing in mind that Scotland has more Members of Parliament per head than England, does my hon. Friend believe that this public expenditure results in more, or less, prosperity for Scotland?

Mr. Lang: I shall answer my hon. Friend by pointing out that productivity on the Government side of the House is very much greater than on the Opposition side.

Dr. Godman: Many people in my constituency are emphatically denied a share in this so-called prosperity. Will the Secretary of State for Scotland now respond to the request that I made to him some three weeks ago for a feasibility study into potential projects in the lower Clyde area to be conducted by, say, Planning Industrial Economic Development Advisers or some other such consultancy firm? Such a study is desperately needed.

Mr. Lang: I certainly recognise the special difficulties in the Inverclyde area. As the hon. Gentleman will know, the Inverclyde initiative is giving close attention to this. My right hon. and learned Friend is also considering what further measures may be brought to bear in that area.

Mr. Forth: Does my hon. Friend realise that those of us who live in the midlands look north with envy to Scotland, in appreciating the levels of income, as he has mentioned, and of public expenditure? Will my hon. Friend tell us the secret of his success?

Mr. Lang: I would advise my hon. Friend to return to Scotland, where he will find that average earnings are up threefold over the past 10 years and the gross domestic product has doubled since 1977.

Mr. Dewar: Will the Minister note that on the Opposition side, at least, we do not regard the news of a shopping development in Newton Mearns as the yardstick against which we ought to measure national success? Can he perhaps comment on his extraordinary boast that after eight years of Conservative success he can only say that we have almost got industrial investment back to 1979 levels?

May I suggest to the assorted comics on the Government Benches who have taken part in this interlude that we have in Scotland some 360,000 people in the dole queues and that we were alone in the United Kingdom last month in seeing our seasonally adjusted unemployment figures rise? If we want a constructive debate, will the Minister say what he is doing to support the stand by the Caterpillar work force, who do not want to add to the total of 192,000 manufacturing jobs lost under this Government? Will he recognise that we expect positive steps to be taken to find another operator or, as a last resort, to provide jobs in the plant for the work force, and that a generalised statement of good intentions or of a feeling of outrage is no substitute for specific and effective action?

Mr. Lang: If the hon. Gentleman has read the statement that I made yesterday, he will be well aware of the Government's continuing commitment to finding alternative employment for the work force at the Caterpillar plant. As regards manufacturing jobs, if he had listened to the answer that I gave earlier he would have realised that the point I was making was not so much about output as about productivity. The very demonstration of the increased productivity that has resulted over the past few years is the best guarantee of continuing employment provision in Scotland.

Agricultural Production

9. **Mr. Fairbairn** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to sustain the rural economy in the light of policies aimed at reducing agricultural production.

Mr. Rifkind: The Government are committed to maintaining a healthy rural economy in Scotland and my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food announced a number of measures to the House on Monday 9 February.

Mr. Fairbairn: Will my right hon. and learned Friend, in acknowledging the welcome given by the Scottish National Farmers Union to the proposals announced this week, also take time to read my article in the *Glasgow Herald*, if he can find it in the Library, from which place somebody seems to have nicked it? That article proposes that we should be given special grants in Scotland to save the steadings and farm buildings and set up a rural population to sustain a rural economy.

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. and learned Friend is a source of many new ideas that could be of value in dealing with the problem. We are prepared to consider constructively any proposals for the diversification of the rural economy in order to ensure that the income base for the farming community and for the rural community is as broad as possible.

Mr. Maclennan: Is it not the case that in Scotland, as in England, no additional expenditure is to be incurred on these rural initiatives?

Mr. Rifkind: As the hon. Gentleman is well aware, one of the Government's objectives is to reduce the structural surpluses in the European Community. That itself would lead to savings on current expenditure. The proposal announced by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture would indeed involve substantial expenditure of a kind that he himself described to the House.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Procurator Fiscal Service

44. **Mr. Pollock** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland whether he has any plans to review the resources available to the procurator fiscal service; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland (Mr. Peter Fraser): The resources of the Crown Office and procurator fiscal service have recently been reviewed and, subject to parliamentary approval, the 1986-87 cash limit for Class XX, Vote 20 will be increased by £180,000. Class XX, Vote 21 provision will be increased by £150,000.

Mr. Pollock: I thank my hon. and learned Friend for that reply. In view of the current pressures on the procurator fiscal's office in Glasgow, why was it necessary for the procurator fiscal to be involved in the obtaining of a search warrant recently for the BBC offices in Glasgow?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: It was in accordance with both proper and accepted practice and procedure in Scotland in such circumstances for the police to make a request to the procurator fiscal to make application on their behalf to the sheriff. In deciding whether it was proper to present such an application, the procurator fiscal had to be satisfied as to the legal justification for the application. In that regard he would consider the information to be sworn to by the police and the known attitude of the BBC to the requirement of due legal process. He sought to ensure that the warrant was sufficient to meet its purpose and did not go beyond what was required. With his legal experience, I hope my hon. Friend will recognise that the course followed there and the relationship between the police and the procurator fiscal were appropriate in the circumstances.

Mr. Dalyell: Was Professor Bradley right, or wrong, in suggesting—[HON. MEMBERS: "Wrong."] If he is wrong, let it be said where he is wrong. Was he right, or wrong, in suggesting that the procurator fiscal and the Lord Advocate, in the mode and style of their investigation, had to take into account the interests and the feelings of the victim? In this case was not the major victim the Foreign Office? When did the Crown Office first approach or talk to the Foreign Office, or when did the Foreign Office first approach or talk to the Crown Office?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: To answer the last part of the hon. Gentleman's question first, in no circumstances and at no time did the Crown Office contact the Foreign Office, nor indeed was there any pressure or approach from the Foreign Office to the Crown Office. Although I studied under Professor Bradley, I regret to say that I do not consider that his statement of the law, as I saw it reported in *The Independent* today, is wholly correct. I would not dissent in any way from what he has to say with regard to consideration of the public interest where there is——

Mr. Dalyell: Is he wrong?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: If the hon. Gentleman would give me half a moment I shall try to answer his question. I do not dissent from what Professor Bradley has to say about the consideration of the public interest once a stage of consideration of prosecution is reached. However, I do not agree, nor would my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate agree, that it would be his practice to consult any other Minister when considering applications for search warrants in the course of a criminal investigation.

Sir Alex Fletcher: In considering the resources in Glasgow, is my hon. and learned Friend still satisfied that the attitude of the BBC at the highest level was such that the police had no alternative but to obtain a search warrant and raid the Glasgow premises? Can he assure the House that every reasonable possibility was covered by the police before this drastic action was taken?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The BBC was perfectly within its legal rights in insisting that if any action was to be taken against it in relation to material that it held, due legal process should be carried through. As I said in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Moray (Mr. Pollock), one of the known factors at the time when the application was considered by the procurator fiscal was that at a senior level the BBC took the view that if those investigating this matter wanted material from the BBC, it was for them to follow due legal process. The BBC had a right to insist on that and, clearly if it did insist, that excluded the possibility of such material being handed

over to the investigating authorities without the necessity for a search warrant, as is sometimes the case in some circumstances.

Mr. Wallace: It has been said on a number of occasions by some people that the showing of the Zircon film last week in Edinburgh and Glasgow could put those who saw it in breach of the Official Secrets Act. Does the Solicitor-General think that the procurator fiscal's office has sufficient resources to deal with such a vast number of cases? Given that the Government and the Leader of the Opposition think that it endangers national security, why did the Government not seek to take out an interim interdict against the showing of these films?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that, following the *New Statesman* article, information was already in the public domain, as it were, and the prospects of obtaining an interim interdict or an interdict in perpetuity in Scotland were thereby limited. I am certainly not answerable for the views of the Leader of the Opposition, and I am even less answerable for the disagreements that have opened between him and his Back Benchers.

Mr. Bill Walker: Is my hon. and learned Friend satisfied that sufficient resources are available to the procurator fiscal? If they are not, will he look at those resources and recruit people of the highest calibre so that we may have the best possible people prosecuting when we want to bring prosecutions in cases such as the BBC case? That will ensure that we can make the charges stick.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I shall resist the temptation to make any observations about the last point made by my hon. Friend. I know that he has a continuing interest in the affairs of the procurator fiscal service. I am encouraged by the fact that there is some agreement to increase the Vote, and I hope that the House will approve the Vote. I share my hon. Friend's view that, through the procurator fiscal service in Scotland, we probably enjoy the finest prosecution system in the world.

Mr. Dewar: I am sure the Solicitor-General will agree that he was aware that a warrant was in existence in England at the time when he considered the Scottish process. Did he think about restricting and narrowing the scope of the warrant in Scotland, in the way that it was done in England? Does he agree that that might well have stopped some of the controversy and damage that has flowed from this lamentable incident?

We know that the Secretary of State for Scotland was informed on the day on which the warrant was obtained. Can the hon. and learned Gentleman confirm that that was Friday 30 January, and can he say when on that day the Secretary of State was advised by his office? Will he again categorically confirm, because I want to be absolutely clear beyond all doubt, that there was no consultation at any time about the application, the drawing or the exercise of the warrant, with any of his ministerial colleagues outside the Law Officers?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I shall start by answering the hon. Gentleman's last point. I confirm yet again that in the drawing up of the petition and the warrant, in considering whether such an application should be made to the sheriff and in arranging for its execution there was no pressure and nothing was done in relation to any other Ministers, least of all, as the hon. Gentleman's hon. Friends seem to think, with No. 10 Downing street or with any other office.

I am aware that the hon. Gentleman has written to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. With respect, it seems to me that this is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend to answer. I shall now deal with the major part of the hon. Gentleman's question. Of course there was an awareness that a warrant had been obtained in England. It was obtained under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. The hon. Gentleman ought to appreciate that such a warrant would not have any validity in Scotland. I wish that he would go back to the letter that I sent him and read it rather more carefully, together with the petition and the crave attached to it. Had the hon. Gentleman looked at it, he would have realised that it referred explicitly to highly classified information. If he had read as far as the first paragraph of the petition, he would know that it referred to highly classified information contained in the article in the *New Statesman*.

North and South Courts (Glasgow)

45. **Mr. Fairbairn** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland on how many days the north and south courts in Glasgow were used for High Court prosecutions in 1956, 1966, 1976 and 1986; and if he will estimate trends over the next 10 years.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The figures are 55, 143, 230 and 425 days respectively. In addition, in 1986 the High Court sat in other courts in Glasgow on 190 days. It is not practicable to make detailed estimates of trends over the next 10 years.

Mr. Fairbairn: In view of the escalating figures that my hon. and learned Friend has given to the House, does he recall that when we have both been prosecuting or defending major cases in the High Court in Glasgow, we sometimes had to be unnecessarily close to one another? Will he use his influence with the Secretary of State, who may have a more distant recollection of those matters, and suggest that if we go for option 1 for the High Court we would foreclose the possibility of enlarging those courts, and persuade him to go for option 2, so that he and I will never have to be so close together that we fall out?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I am aware of the views that my hon. and learned Friend has expressed about the redevelopment of the judiciary buildings in Glasgow. He clearly appreciates that it is essentially a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, who, as he knows, has consulted on plans to increase the number of court rooms. I and my right hon. and learned Friend are aware of my hon. and learned Friend's views.

Privilege

3.31 pm

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. At 10.14 pm last night the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn)—I have obviously given him notice of this—purported to raise with you what he described as a "point of privilege".

It would be of tremendous benefit to the House, Mr. Speaker, if you would remind us of the clear resolution passed on 6 February 1978, which laid down the procedure for raising a point of privilege. I can summarise it as giving you written notice of a complaint of breach of privilege after that breach had occurred. Should you find that a prima facie case had been made, you would notify the hon. Member of that in writing. He would then rise in his place and move that the matter be referred to the Committee of Privileges.

I think that it would be unfortunate if violence were done to that resolution by a precendent created last night. Would you reiterate that resolution, Mr. Speaker?

Secondly, on the substance of what the right hon. Member for Chesterfield said, if he now, after the event, claims that it was a point of order and not one of privilege, would it not be as well to remind the House and the right hon. Gentleman that Speaker after Speaker has declared that he would not give rulings on hypothetical points as opposed to questioning events which have actually occurred?

Mr. Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) for raising that point. It is perfectly true that the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) said in his submission that he was raising a matter of privilege. It was not a matter of privilege; I think that it was a slip of the tongue, and I took it to be so.

I readily confirm what the hon. Member for Tiverton said—that a complaint of breach of privilege should not be made on the Floor of the House, but sent to me in writing.

Later—

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, that I was a moment late and missed the statement that you have just made. However, when I saw you last night, I raised with you the question of a possible aspect of privilege and notified you of that. You kindly said that I could rise at 10.15 pm, which I did. In my statement I said that the matter related to privilege, which I have raised with you privately, and I checked what I had said in *Hansard*. That was what I said, and if I made a mistake in putting it into the wrong category, I wish to apologise to you and to the House.

Questions to Ministers

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am extremely sorry to raise this matter, but you will recall that when we considered Question No. 6 on the Order Paper you would not allow my question to proceed, on the grounds that you interpreted the question as applying solely to Scotland. If you look at Question No. 6 you will see that it referred to the transfer of forestry planting from the north of Scotland further south. I submit that my question was entirely in order and I regret that I shall not now receive a ministerial answer.

Mr. Speaker: I think that I should apologise to the hon. Gentleman. I took "further south" to mean further south in Scotland, since the question was one for the Secretary of State for Scotland. The hon. Gentleman would have been totally in order if he had raised his question on Question No. 9 on sustaining the

"rural economy in the light of policies aimed at reducing agricultural production".

I am sorry, but I cannot do anything about it now.

Mr. Hardy: Arising from that, Mr. Speaker, do you therefore not accept that it is especially difficult for English Members who are interested in forestry matters, because we do not have any other alternative than to raise such matters at Scottish Question Time?

Mr. Speaker: I called a number of English Members during Scottish Questions today. *[Interruption.]* Scottish Members have an equal right to be called during English Questions. Therefore, it is only fair that English Members should have the right to be called during Scottish Questions.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Arising out of questions to the Solicitor-General for Scotland, I beg to move the Adjournment of the House under SO 20 on the subject of the——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have not had notice of that. I am dealing with points of order at the moment.

Division Lists

3.37 pm

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will be concerned to ensure the accuracy of *Hansard*, for history and for our own benefit. I think that there must be a mistake in today's *Hansard*, which shows that once again the alliance parties voted against each other in the Division last night. It proves that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey, (Mr. Hughes) voted against the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen). Therefore, there must be a mistake in *Hansard*—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): *rose——*

Mr. Speaker: I think that we should hear the explanation.

Mr. Hughes: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I was unfortunately absent.

State Security

3.38 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Further to my earlier point of order, Mr. Speaker. Arising out of questions it will be in your recollection that I came to see you, at your request, on this subject on Monday, at 2 pm in your house, arising out of questions—and no one could know the answers to those questions. Therefore, I apologise for any discourtesy in not giving you full notice that I wish to raise, under Standing Order No. 20,

"the role of the Law Officers and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in relation to the police entry into the BBC in Glasgow."

First of all, I have to persuade you, Mr. Speaker, that the matter is important. It is important because it is simply not credible that the Lord Advocate could have properly performed his duties without informing himself as to the damage to the public interest caused by the Zircon film. Specifically, how does the Lord Advocate assess the damage to the public interest? How does the noble Lord Cameron of Lochbroom alone assess the damage to the public interest of a wholesale search of the BBC? May there not be a changing public interest as events proceed? Must there not come a time when Ministers say to themselves, "For heaven's sake, we have gone far enough."? *[Interruption.]*——

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I shall take the point of order afterwards. May I just say that the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) is perfectly in order to make this SO 20 application arising out of the answer that he received to his question. However, he must make the case that it is urgent, specific and important.

Mr. Dalyell: How does Lord Cameron of Lochbroom assess the security interests without consulting the Foreign Office?

Mr. Marlow: The hon. Gentleman always gets away with it——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) must contain himself, please.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member is always abusing the procedures of the House, and it is time it was stopped.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Linlithgow has as much right as anybody to submit an application under Standing Order No. 20 arising from a question which has just been answered. It is not an abuse. The hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) would also have that right, if he chose to exercise it.

Mr. Dalyell: Many more serious Conservative Members know that deep legal issues are involved. This is not a matter of cheap party politics. As the scene unfolds, is there not a continuing reassessment of the public interest? That is an important point.

I now have to persuade you, Mr. Speaker, that the matter is definite. It is definite because it relates to the evidence that was given by a distinguished Conservative Attorney-General, Sir Peter Rawlinson, to the Franks Committee in 1972. He said:

"In exercising this discretion the factors which the Attorney-General of the day takes into account are

1) The strength of the evidence.

2) The degree of culpability of the potential defendant."—

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Dalyell:

"3) The damage to the Public Interest, which has resulted from the disclosure.

4) The effect of Prosecution on the Public Interest."

The noble Lord, Lord Rawlinson as he now is, said:

"In considering factors relating to the Public Interest, I, and my predecessors, may consult other Ministers so that"—

Mr. Dickens: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Dalyell:

"we are in a better position to assess the damage which has been caused and the effect which the Prosecution may have on the Public Interest."

The important legal point is whether the Solicitor-General is right or Professor Bradley—on mutatis mutandis, warrant and prosecution——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has had his time——

Mr. Dalyell: Finally——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Gentleman please bring me the title of his application under Standing Order No. 20?

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order——

Mr. Speaker: No. I want the title of the hon. Gentleman's application under Standing Order No. 20.

Mr. Dickens: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): It is sheer intimidation, that is what it is.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter which he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the role of the Law Officers and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in relation to the police entry into the BBC in Glasgow."

I have listened with care to what the hon. Gentleman said in his submission, but I regret that I do not consider that the matter that he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20. Therefore, I cannot submit his application to the House.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This is meant to be helpful——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will not seek to challenge my ruling.

Mr. Williams: Quite the opposite, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) was challenging the Chair and saying that you were not carrying out your duties. He is the one who should apologise.

My point of order is this. It is important for hon. Members to refresh their memories on the rules. Is it not a fact that we cannot raise a point of order in the middle of a Standing Order No. 20 application? If that is the case, it may help to cool future proceedings if, instead of hon. Members hopping up and down all the time, creating

[Mr. Williams]

difficulties for you, Mr. Speaker, you were to remind the House of that rule. Then perhaps we could have more orderly conduct.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Let us take them all at once. Mr. Forth first.

Mr. Forth: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Could you help the House in the context of what has just happened and remind us of the criterion for making an application under Standing Order No. 20? There is genuine confusion about whether anything goes within a particular time limit or whether only a specific matter of urgency must be raised and the substance cannot be argued during the submission. It would help the House if you would remind us and the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) of the correct method of submitting a Standing Order No. 20 application.

Mr. Speaker: Does any other hon. Member have a point of order on this matter? If so, I shall deal with them all at once.

Mr. Winnick *rose*——

Mr. Dickens *rose*——

Mr. Winnick: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Does it not strike you as rather strange that writs should have been issued to stop a film being shown——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That has nothing to do with this matter. Mr. Dickens.

Mr. Dickens: I am much obliged, Sir. On a point of order, you will recall that in the past, whenever I have made a Standing Order No. 20 application, I have obeyed the courtesies of the House and have kept strictly within the three-minute time limit to which we are all supposed to adhere. This was not done today. The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) abused the courtesies of the House.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The trouble is that points of order were raised when the hon. Gentleman was making his Standing Order No. 20 application. Therefore, I had to take it into account in assessing whether his three minutes had elapsed. It is far better—I quite agree with the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) — that points of order should not be raised in the middle of an SO 20 application. As to the hon. Member's question, I am pleased to reaffirm that, normally, applications under Standing Order No. 20 should be submitted to me by noon. But if a matter suddenly occurs subsequently in the Chamber, it is perfectly legitimate for an hon. Member to raise the matter under the Standing Order No. 20 procedure. It does not happen often, but it is possible to do it, and it happened today.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Are you saying that if an emergency arises in the Chamber, that emergency normally relates, as far as you are concerned, only to Question Time emergencies, or does it relate to any time?

Mr. Speaker: Applications under Standing Order No. 20 must be raised at their proper time, which normally is immediately after statements, or, as happened today, when there are no statements, immediately after Question Time.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR FRIDAY 27 FEBRUARY 1987

Members successful in the ballot were:

Mr. Robert Banks
Mr. Michael Marshall
Mr. Tony Favell

Parental Leave

3.44 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to introduce a statutory right to a period of parental leave for working parents of young children; to make provision for the establishment of a parental leave fund for the reimbursement of payment made during parental leave; and for connected purposes.

This is a radical and progressive measure for parents and children. I am proud that, as I understand it, this is the first time that a parental leave Bill has been presented to the House of Commons. In many ways, that is surprising, as the need for such a Bill is now widely recognised. Such Bills are widely available elsewhere in Europe. For example, 10 of the 12 EEC countries have such provisions. Britain is almost alone in denying working fathers leave for child care. My Bill rectifies that situation.

An employee will become entitled to parental leave when he or she is the parent of a child under two years of age, or of a disabled or adopted child under five years of age. The leave entitlement that I propose is 13 weeks for each parent when both are in paid employment, 26 weeks when an employee is a single parent, and four weeks for an employed parent when the other parent is not eligible for parental leave because of unemployment, for example. Part-time workers will get a pro rata leave entitlement. Parents will suffer no loss of basic pay for taking parental leave. They will be given the right to return to the same or similar work after an absence for child care. The Government will be empowered to establish a fund to reimburse some or all payments made for parental leave.

Parental leave is different from maternity and paternity leave. Maternity leave is a minimum period of leave of absence for the mother before and after the birth. Paternity leave, where it is allowed, gives some time off for the father at the birth of the new-born child and to support the mother immediately after the birth. Parental leave, by contrast, allows time off after the expiry of maternity and paternity leave over a longer period to care for the young baby. It is available equally to both men and women.

My Bill specifically divides the entitlement equally between the mother and the father—three months each. It is not transferable. I have learnt from the Swedish example, where men, for various reasons, transfer their leave to their wives, thus curtailing many of the benefits to be derived from parental leave. As the Equal Opportunities Commission pointed out, however it is used it is essential to ensure that fathers not only have the right to parental leave but take it up themselves instead of transferring their leave entitlement to the mother. Non-transferability, therefore, emphasises both the rights and the responsibilities of fathers in caring for their young children.

The benefits of parental leave are enormous. I have identified at least five benefits to mothers and fathers. First, it helps to promote equal opportunities in employment for women. Childbirth and child rearing in the overwhelming majority of cases result in a woman being denied equal employment opportunities. That is not her choice. Choice is denied her. The options that are available to a mother who might want to resume work are limited. If work is available, often it means a return to employment conditions that make no allowance for the new circumstances of the mother, so parental leave promotes equal opportunities by giving women more options and more choice, knowing that time off is available for both herself and her husband to look after the baby and greater flexibility in resuming paid work.

Secondly, it helps women to overcome the damaging discontinuity in their employment. The Government's own women and employment study of 1984 showed that a mother of two is taken out of the labour force for an average of seven years because of her child care responsibilities. Employment rates for women with young children are very low in Britain—only a half of those in the United States and France and only a quarter of those in Sweden and Germany. The jobs that they manage to obtain are often poor-calibre, low-paid jobs that are mostly part time and that fail fully to use them or reward them for their skills. In addition, there are the long-term effects on a woman's career and income. For example, the loss of earnings for a typical mother of two could amount to £135,000 over her working life. Parental leave counters that.

The third benefit is that parental leave more fairly distributes responsibility for child care between the parents. Not only is this practically the case, but there is also an attitude-changing aspect, for the better. It challenges the view that child care is purely a woman's role. Instead, looking after children becomes recognised as the parents' joint responsibility.

Fourthly, parental leave improves family and child welfare. It helps in a small but important way to enable a mother and a father to work together as a team with their young baby. They are both more available to share the responsibilities, the burdens and the joys.

The fifth benefit is that parental leave gives dads a better deal. They have more time to spend with their young children and a better opportunity to fulfil their role as fathers. My Bill recognises that dads have both responsibilities and rights.

Of course, there are costs. For the EEC scheme, it would be between £31 million and £45 million. Mine would be more, because it is better, but it would still be well below 0·1 per cent. of the total wages and salaries bill and it could be shared between employers and the Treasury. However, these costs have to be set against the enormous benefits to individual mothers and fathers that I have just stated.

The fact is that parental leave creates jobs. It is estimated that it would create approximately 9,000 jobs. Peter Moss, the expert adviser to the House of Lords Sub-Committee that is looking at the EEC's parental leave proposals, said:

"Child-related discontinuity of employment does not involve losses only for individual women. To the economy as a whole, it represents a massive underutilisation of human resources, a waste of skills and experience that has been taken for granted by successive Governments with an amazing indifference. There are similar losses to individual employers."

The balance of argument about parental leave is that it is beneficial. That is why the rest of Europe has begun to implement it, and it is the Government who have been the obstacle in Britain.

Parental leave is not a panacea on its own; it must accompany other advances, such as better maternity provision, paternity leave as a statutory right, leave for family reasons such as a child's illness, and a Government

[Mr. Harry Cohen]

boost to workplace nurseries and local authority child-care provision. Then we would be talking about policies for the family and against child abuse and neglect.

I pay tribute to the Maternity Alliance, which helped me with the Bill, and its maternity emergency campaign, of which parental leave is a part. It is holding a national rally at Central hall, Westminster on Monday 6 April, which will get widespread support. It kindly gave me a badge, which I am wearing. It says: "Parents care, care for parents." My Parental Leave Bill does just that.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Harry Cohen, Ms. Jo Richardson, Mrs. Margaret Beckett, Mrs. Ann Clwyd, Miss Joan Maynard, Ms. Clare Short, Mr. Tony Banks, Mr. Tony Benn, Mr. Bob Clay, Mr. Jeremy Corbyn, Mr. Don Dixon and Mr. Dave Nellist.

Parental Leave

Mr. Harry Cohen accordingly presented a Bill to introduce a statutory right to a period of parental leave for working parents of young children; to make provision for the establishment of a parental leave fund for the reimbursement of payment made during parental leave; and for connected purposes. And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 27 March and to be printed. [Bill 71.]

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) and the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) to behave in a child-like and imbecile manner while my hon. Friend was trying to introduce his Bill to improve the lot of the children of Britain?

Mr. Speaker: I hope that we will have no display of bad manners in the Chamber. We are supposed to set an example.

Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Bill (Allocation of Time)

3.57 pm

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): I beg to move,

That the following provisions shall apply to the remaining proceedings on the Bill:

Committee

1.—(1) The Standing Committee to which the Bill is allocated shall report the Bill to the House on or before 19th February 1987.

(2) Proceedings on the Bill at a sitting of the Standing Committee on the said 19th February may continue until Ten o'clock, whether or not the House is adjourned before that time, and if the House is adjourned before those proceedings have been brought to a conclusion the Standing Committee shall report the Bill to the House on 20th February.

Report and Third Reading

2.—(1) The proceedings on consideration and Third Reading of the Bill shall be completed in two allotted days and shall be brought to a conclusion at Ten o'clock on the second of those days; and for the purposes of Standing Order No. 80 (Business Committee) this Order shall be taken to allot to the proceedings on consideration such part of those days as the Resolution of the Business Committee may determine.

(2) The Business Committee shall report to the House its Resolutions as to the proceedings on consideration of the Bill, and as to the allocation of time between those proceedings and proceedings on Third Reading, not later than the fourth day on which the House sits after the day on which the Chairman of the Standing Committee reports the Bill to the House.

(3) The Resolutions in any Report made under Standing Order No. 80 may be varied by a further Report so made, whether or not within the time specified in sub-paragraph (2) above, and whether or not the Resolutions have been agreed to by the House.

(4) The Resolutions of the Business Committee may include alterations in the order in which proceedings on consideration of the Bill are taken.

Procedure in Standing Committee

3.—(1) At a sitting of the Standing Committee at which any proceedings on the Bill are to be brought to a conclusion under a Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee the Chairman shall not adjourn the Committee under any Order relating to the sittings of the Committee until the proceedings have been brought to a conclusion.

(2) No Motion shall be moved in the Standing Committee relating to the sitting of the Committee except by a member of the Government, and the Chairman shall permit a brief explanatiory statement from the Member who makes, and from a Member who opposes, the Motion, and shall then put the Question thereon.

4. No Motion shall be made to alter the order in which Clauses, Schedules, new Clauses and new Schedules are to be taken in the Standing Committee but the Resolutions of the Business Sub-Committee may include alterations in that order.

Conclusion of proceedings in Committee

5. On the conclusion of the proceedings in any Committee on the Bill the Chairman shall report the Bill to the House without putting any Question.

Dilatory Motions

6. No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, proceedings on the Bill shall be made in the Standing Committee or on an allotted day except by a Member of the Government, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

Extra time on first allotted day

7.—(1) On the first allotted day paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings on the Bill for two hours after Ten o'clock.

(2) Any period during which proceedings on the Bill may be proceeded with after Ten o'clock under paragraph (7) of Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) shall be in addition to the said period of two hours.

(3) If the first allotted day is one to which a Motion for the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 stands over from an earlier day, a period of time equal to the duration of the proceedings upon that Motion shall be added to the said period of two hours.

Private business

8. Any private business which has been set down for consideration at Seven o'clock on an allotted day shall, instead of being considered as provided by Standing Orders, be considered at the conclusion of the proceedings on the Bill on that day, and paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the private business for a period of three hours from the conclusion of the proceedings on the Bill or, if those proceedings are concluded before Ten o'clock, for a period equal to the time elapsing between Seven o'clock and the conclusion of those proceedings.

Conclusion of proceedings

9.—(1) For the purpose of bringing to a conclusion any proceedings which are to be brought to a conclusion at a time appointed by this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee or the Business Sub-Committee and which have not previously been brought to a conclusion, the Chairman or Mr. Speaker shall forthwith put the following Questions (but no others);

(*a*) any Question already proposed from the Chair;

(*b*) any Question necessary to bring to a decision a Question so proposed (including, in the case of a new Clause or new Schedule which has been read a second time, the Question that the Clause or Schedule be added to the Bill);

(*c*) the Question on any Amendment or Motion standing on the Order Paper in the name of any Member, if that Amendment or Motion is moved by a Member of the Government;

(*d*) any other Question necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded; and on a Motion so made for a new Clause or a new Schedule, the Chairman or Mr. Speaker shall put only the Question that the Clause or Schedule be added to the Bill.

(2) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (1) above shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

(3) If an allotted day is one on which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) would, apart from this Order, stand over to Seven o'clock—

(*a*) that Motion shall stand over until the conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion at or before that time;

(*b*) the bringing to a conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion after that time shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

(4) If an allotted day is one to which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 stands over from an earlier day, the bringing to a conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion on that day shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

Supplemental orders

10.—(1) The proceedings on any Motion made in the House by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order (including anything which might have been the subject of a report of the Business Committee or Business Sub-Committee) shall, if not previously concluded, be brought to a conclusion one hour after they have been commenced, and paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings.

(2) If on an allotted day on which any proceedings on the Bill are to be brought to a conclusion at a time appointed by this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee the House is adjourned, or the sitting is suspended, before that time no notice shall be required of a Motion made at the next sitting by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order.

Saving

11. Nothing in this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee or Business Sub-Committee shall—

(*a*) prevent any proceedings to which the Order or Resolution applies from being taken or completed earlier than is required by the Order or Resolution, or

(*b*) prevent any business (whether on the Bill or not) from being proceeded with on any day after the completion of all such proceedings on the Bill as are to be taken on that day.

Re-committal

12.—(1) References in this Order to proceedings on Consideration or proceedings on Third Reading include references to proceedings, at those stages respectively, for, on or in consequence of re-committal.

(2) On an allotted day no debate shall be permitted on any Motion to re-commit the Bill (whether as a whole or otherwise), and Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith any Question necessary to dispose of the Motion, including the Question on any amendment moved to the Question.

Interpretation

13. In this Order—

"allotted day" means any day (other than a Friday) on which the Bill is put down as first Government Order of the Day provided that a Motion for allotting time to the proceedings on the Bill to be taken on that day either has been agreed to on a previous day or is set down for consideration on that day;

"the Bill" means the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Bill;

"Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee" means a Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee as agreed to by the Standing Committee;

"Resolution of the Business Committee" means a Resolution of the Business Committee as agreed to by the House.

When I announced last Thursday that this motion would be the first item of today's business, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Brown) pointed out the

"narrow distinction . . . between filibustering and natural verbosity"—[*Official Report*, 5 February 1987; Vol. 109, c. 1149.]

on the part of Scottish Members and urged me to reconsider the motion. While I have not been able to do so, his words reminded me of the only occasion previously when I have taken part in a Scottish debate. Almost three years ago, on 5 March 1984, I moved the timetable motion on the Rating and Valuation (Amendment) (Scotland) Bill. On that occasion, only seven clauses out of 17 had been considered in 82 hours of Committee sittings. Progress has been greater during the Committee consideration of the Bill, but not so great that we believe consideration of the Bill could be more satisfactorily completed under the measured arrangements set out in the motion before us. I shall say more about those arrangements and progress so far in a moment, but first I should turn to the substance of the Bill.

The proposals contained in the Bill are radical and wide-ranging. They would bring an end to the contentious system of domestic rating. In its place, the Bill would introduce community charges. The personal community charge will be the basis of the new system and will be payable to the local authority by each adult whose sole or main residence is in that area. A standard community charge would be payable in respect of second homes, and a collective community charge would be payable by the owners of premises where the residents stay for only short periods. There will also be a rebate scheme, which will ensure that those who are on the lowest incomes will not have to pay the full community charge. The Bill also contains proposals to reform the system of non-domestic rating. That will cover the period until the longer-term

[Mr. John Biffen]

introduction of a uniform business rate. I realise that these broad principles are only too familiar to hon. Members who have served on the Standing Committee. Even so, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will be able to deal with them in more detail. There should be no doubt, however, that they represent a determined response to the challenge of finding an alternative to the present discredited rating system.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Keep a straight face.

Mr. Biffen: When confronted by the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson), that exhortation is particularly difficult to comply with.

Proposals so far-reaching and fundamental in nature do, of course, require consultation and careful consideration. These have received both. The debate on the reform of the rate system has been an important item on the political agenda for many years. A new development in that discussion was marked in January last year when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales published the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government". This invited, and received, comments from organisations and individuals about the structure of the proposed changes. The comments led to the modification of the Green Paper proposals in some respects, for example the circumstances in which a collective rather than a personal community charge would be payable. Thus, even before my right hon. and learned Friend introduced the Bill on 27 November, its contents had had the benefit of careful scrutiny.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): Whose scrutiny? Does the Leader of the House realise that the proposals for this iniquitous additional tax which is to be levied on working-class people and their families in Scotland probably makes them guinea pigs for the rest of Britain and does not have the approval of the people of Scotland? Is he aware that the vast majority, as is shown in opinion polls, reject the proposals and that the vast majority of the Scottish people's elected representatives, whether at local government level or at parliamentary level, reject the proposals? Why are the Government so hell-bent on expediting the Bill, which is yet another attack on the living standards of working-class people and their families in Scotland? The Government have no mandate to impose such legislation. That is why my right hon. and hon. Friends who are members of the Committee are right to fight the Bill tooth and nail. We shall continue to do that on the Floor of the House.

Mr. Biffen: The last time that I saw the hon. Gentleman in the context of this Bill was in Committee, and he was much quieter although, in that sedentary way, he was somewhat effective.

The point that I have been making is that the Bill has been available for scrutiny. The hon. Gentleman confesses that he and his colleagues have applied scrutiny to it. As to the ultimate public judgment, that clearly will lie for the future, but scrutiny has not been lacking so far. The Bill received its Second Reading after a full day's debate on 9 December last year by 258 votes to 204. The First Scottish Standing Committee began its consideration of the Bill on 16 December, and has been sitting four times a week since then to debate the Bill.

I should refer here to the sittings motion which the Committee passed at its first meeting, enabling it to meet four times each week. The hon. Member for Provan referred to it last Thursday as

"an unprecedented and provocative sittings motion" — [*Official Report*, 5 February 1987; Vol. 109, c.1149.]

I accept at once that the motion is clearly unusual, but there was no doubt that the Bill would require extensive consideration in Committee, and it seems to me merely realistic, rather than provocative, to accept from the start that this would be the case and to work on that basis.

While precedent should not be the sole determinant of our actions, the hon. Gentleman may find it comforting as far as precedents are concerned, if I draw his attention to the first meeting, on 10 May 1977, of the Standing Committee considering the Price Commission Bill. At that first meeting, the Committee agreed to meet on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 10.30 am and 4 pm. The fact that this was agreed without much debate and without a Division really proves the reasonableness of the Conservative Opposition.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): Perhaps the Leader of the House might contemplate the possibility that there was agreement then because there had been consultation. That is not the case here.

Mr. Biffen: I think that the hon. Gentleman will find that the circumstances were broadly similar. In one instance, however, we have wise Tory legislation designed to bring about major fiscal reform and in the other we had dirigiste and interventionist Socialist legislation designed further to impede the working of our national economy.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): As a former Minister who had some responsibility for the Price Commission Bill, may I remind the right hon. Gentleman that it was broadly welcomed by the Conservative Opposition as it moved towards dismantling price controls set in place by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath)?

Mr. Biffen: When I looked at that particularly anaemic legislation, I inquired whether the hon. Gentleman was a part author. I am not sure whether he was, but my research shows that he was not a member of the Committee which considered the Bill.

As for the Bill that is now under consideration, the Committee has made full use of its sittings. It has sat for 101 hours and has completed its consideration of only 20 clauses. This has included more than four sittings on clause 1, abolishing domestic rates. More than two sittings have been spent on clause 13 dealing with the collective community charge. Of course there are important questions to be raised and discussed, but the rate of progress to date might suggest that a further 70 hours or so in Committee would be required for the remaining 14 clauses before the House as a whole would have an opportunity to consider the Bill in detail. I believe that the House would prefer to have an opportunity to consider the Bill more promptly.

The motion would enable that to occur and allow the Committee to complete its consideration at a measured pace. It would enable the Committee to hold a further six sittings. I do not believe that that is unreasonable.

Mr. Canavan: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is there not a standing order which provides that no right hon. or hon. Member is allowed to read his speech? Is it not a measure of the right hon. Gentleman's insincerity that he, of all people, should be reading his Civil Service gobbledegook instead of giving his usual heart-to-heart address?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows that hon. Members frequently refer to their notes. That goes for the Front Bench too.

Mr. Biffen: I should like to assure the hon. Gentleman that all of my best heart-to-hearts are carefully prepared by the resident Miltons in the Department.

While significant aspects of the proposals remain to be discussed—I refer to the replacing of rate support grant by revenue support grant and the rebate system—not all of the clauses left for consideration are of that magnitude, and there has already been an opportunity for more general discussion in consideration of earlier clauses.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): As I am one of those who has been privileged not to be subjected to the boredom of sitting on the Committee, and as one of those whose friends have come near to death by boredom by the irresponsible opposition of the Labour party to a measure which is greatly popular in Scotland, may I suggest that it would be a unique occasion for my right hon. Friend to be able to say to many of his friends, "Delivered from death by boredom with a guillotine?"

Mr. Biffen: Yes, and if it will facilitate the proceedings I will say just that. I thank my hon. and learned Friend for speaking for me.

The motion would provide also for the House to take the Bill through its Report and Third Reading on two allotted days. The first of these days could last until midnight, the second until 10 pm. They represent an opportunity of perhaps more than 14 hours more debate on the Bill. I do not wish to detain the House further. The Bill is recognised as a significant step in local government in Scotland and beyond, and by broadening tax base it seeks to strengthen local accountability.

Mr. Canavan: Nonsense.

Mr. Biffen: The Bill has received extensive consideration to date, and I am confident that the Committee's consideration of the rest of the bill will be no less effective than it has been so far. This measure will enable that consideration to go forward expeditiously. I hope to take the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) with me when we vote.

4.9 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): The Leader of the House began with his recollections of times past, especially the last occasion when he chopped and guillotined a Scottish Bill. I, too, have one or two recollections which are perhaps worth sharing with the right hon. Gentleman and the House.

I begin by saying that this is the tenth guillotine of this Parliament. No fewer than five of the 10 Bills that have been guillotined have been directed against local government. That, in itself, is evidence of the Government's open hostility to local democracy and of their determination to crib, cabin and confine local councils by limiting their expenditures and revenues, and even, as we saw two years ago in the case of the metropolitan councils, by abolishing them altogether.

This measure takes another long stride towards diminishing local democracy and increasing central Government control. I cannot find——

Mr. Barry Henderson (Fife, North-East): Does not the right hon. Gentleman think that if local government conducted its business in the way that this Committee has conducted its business in terms of the time taken to discuss perfectly simple matters, even he might consider that we should legislate to change the way in which local government did its business?

Mr. Shore: I do not know what goes on in Scottish local councils, but I would be surprised if a matter of such importance was or would be discussed at less length in major councils in Scotland than in the House of Commons. Therefore, I do not take the hon. Gentleman's point.

I cannot find and have not heard this afternoon from the Lord Privy Seal any convincing argument for introducing the guillotine, and, certainly not for introducing it at this stage. The Bill, which abolishes the domestic rating system and replaces it by a community charge, is a remarkable innovation. On 9 December 1986 on Second Reading the Secretary of State for Scotland described it as

"a radical and reforming measure".

The Under-Secretary of State for Scotland claimed it was

"one of the most fundamental reforms of local government finance in Scotland for a generation or more."

Both those descriptions were understatements. The measure is in fact a revolution—or, rather, a counter-revolution—in local government finance.

No-one can doubt that the Bill deserves the closest scrutiny, and all the more so when we recall that its central proposal was discussed and dismissed by the Layfield committee in 1977 and again by the present Government, after two years of Green Paper consultation, in their White Paper of August 1983. What did the Goverment's White Paper say? The Government, in their White Paper after the last election, said:

"There is little point in replacing rates with an untried and unfamiliar system having little support from the outset. The Government had therefore decided to make reforms to the rating system which is basically sound but needs improvement."

The Government, in the English and Welsh White Paper on similar proposals, said:

"The Government recognise that rates are far from being an ideal or popular tax. But they do have advantages . . . they are well understood, cheap to collect and very difficult to evade. They act as an incentive to the most efficient use of property. No property tax can be directly related to the ability to pay; but rate rebates, now incorporated in housing benefit, together with supplementary benefit, have been designed to reduce hardship. The Government have concluded and announced to Parliament that rates should remain for the foreseeable future the main source of local revenue for local government."

The Government have done a complete volte face, and reversed their conclusions of only three years ago. They have done so in a complex Bill of 34 clauses, plus six dense schedules that fill no fewer than 26 pages of text.

No-one can argue—and the Leader of the House did not—that the Bill has been blocked by delaying tactics.

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): It has been argued.

Mr. Shore: No, no-one has argued that point.

Mr. Forsyth: The right hon. Gentleman may not have had an opportunity to read the proceedings in Committee held last night in which the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) admitted that the purpose of the Opposition in Committee had been to wreck the Bill. That has nothing to do with careful scrutiny or deciding issues. It was clear from the start that the Opposition had no constructive role to play. Surely, in the interests of scrutiny, we should accept this guillotine measure?

Mr. Shore: I cannot for a moment accept that that argument can be sustained when we recall the progress that was made in discussing and deciding some of the most important clauses in the Bill. Seventeen clauses have been dealt with in 17 sittings. Those clauses included provisions for phasing out and abolishing domestic rates, the future of non-domestic rates and the new system of community charges. Those are the three major features of the Bill. The fact that the Committee got through those three major aspects gives the lie straight away to the assertion that the Opposition determined to wreck the Bill and to stop it in its tracks after the first votes had taken place.

What is still to be covered is the complex administration of the community charge system; the replacement of rate support grant by revenue support grant; the important question of rebates; and the new system of charging for water and sewage services.

Those issues should not be squeezed into the rigid framework of a timetable motion. The idea that these matters, 17 clauses and the greater part of the schedules, can be dealt with in six sittings is ludicrous. One would have thought that the danger of ill-considered legislation, pushed through with inadequate thought and large Parliamentary majorities, would be particularly fresh in the Government's mind after the recent Local Government Finance Bill. That was the subject of another timetable motion only a fortnight ago. It was rushed through to make lawful six years of unlawful rate support grant legislation. That legislation was in itself the consequence of incompetent drafting and insufficient Parliamentary scrutiny. However, unlike this Bill, the Local Government Finance Bill had at least the excuse that it had to get through quickly to meet the rate support grant payment timetable before 1 April.

Even this insensitive Government must be aware that they have only a small minority of seats in Scotland. Their new measures are opposed, as the Second Reading debate made crystal clear, by the Labour party, the SNP, the Liberals and the Social Democrats in Scotland. There is no parliamentary majority for this measure in Scotland and I doubt whether there is any popular electoral support for it either. The Government's motive for haste is clearly political and electoral. They believe that a measure that abolishes domestic rates in Scotland will be popular there, provided only that people do not have time to digest the far more unacceptable alternative, the community charge, which is to take its place.

The Government have sought deliberately to discredit the present rating system by making massive cuts in the rate support grant, thus forcing local councils to make up for some part of the lost Government grant by rate increases. Those increases have, inevitably, been high. The facts are indisputable. Rate support grant accounted for 68·5 per cent. of relevant expenditure in the last year of the Labour Government. The present level, in the most recent year, is 56 per cent. The average domestic rate in Scotland was £132 in 1978-79. Last year the average was £392.

The same has happened in England and Wales, but unlike England and Wales, where revaluation of property values was irresponsibly cancelled in 1979, Scotland has gone ahead with rate revaluations and these have brought many shocks to Scottish ratepayers and near-panic to the Scottish Tory party.

It is clear why the Government wish to substitute a community charge, or poll tax, for domestic rating. First, it is regressive. As the Secretary of State gleefully pointed out in his speech on Second Reading,

"personal community charge is to be payable by everyone aged 18 or over with their sole or main residence in each local authority area. There will be only very limited exemptions —those who are still receiving child benefit, and those who are resident in prisons or hospitals."

Thus, apart from the rebate, virtually every adult over the age of 18 will be charged the same amount, irrespective of his or her income. A wealthy couple living in a large house will pay exactly the same amount as a low-paid worker and his wife living in a modest terraced house or council flat. Even the very poorest, who are wholly exempt from rates today, will have to pay a minimum 20 per cent. of the community charge. Regressive taxation is a classic Tory fiscal policy.

The second attraction of the new system to the Government is that it will further limit the power of local councils by removing from their control the imposition of local taxation on industrial and commercial properties. It is the Government, not the local authorities, who will decide henceforth the level of non-domestic rates, which will be limited to increases in the cost of living index. Non-domestic rates account for more than half of locally raised revenues today. Can any hon. Member seriously argue that this is not a great diminution of the powers that presently exist, as they have long existed, in the hands of local councils and local democracy?

The third attraction for the Government, and closely linked to the second, is that the new system is bound to discourage and limit public expenditure by local councils. Since non-domestic rates will be controlled by the Government, henceforth increases in local authority expenditure will fall wholly upon the community charge. The higher local authority expenditure, the higher the poll tax will be, regardless of whether there is a need for high and increasing expenditure in the areas concerned.

On Second Reading, the Secretary of State sought to justify this by saying:

"This is the means by which the new system will provide its essential element of accountability, since the personal community charge is to be payable by everyone aged 18 or over . . . it is intended that the charge should be for practical purposes a universal obligation on the adult population".—[*Official Report*, 9 December 1986; Vol. 107, c. 200-69.]

"No taxation without representation," was the cry of the American revolution in 1776. The Government are now arguing for a new doctrine, "No representation without taxation." It is wrong at this stage to abort consideration of this novel, ill-considered, regressive, punitive and anti-democratic Bill. I urge the House to reject the timetable motion.

4.23 pm

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood): The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) said, understandably, that he did not know much about what

happened in Scottish local councils, and it is obvious that he knows nothing about what happened in the Committee. His speech was a grave discourtesy to those who serve on the Committee, as he has patently not read a word of its proceedings. We have sat for 101 hours or so considering the Bill.

The Opposition have not had a particularly good press. *The Scotsman* said today that the highlight of the proceedings was the arrival of the tea lady. That depends on one's view—I should have thought that the highlight of the proceedings was the arrival of the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) who was in rumbustious form, just as he was before he left the Chamber today.

Mr. Henderson: Does it not say something about the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) and his hon. Friends that the hon. Gentleman uses undemocratic means to advance his cause but when he has the opportunity to talk about the timetable on the Bill he fails to do so, preferring to raise another bogus point of order rather than argue his case in an honourable and democratic way?

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend is right. I am glad to say that none of us is responsible for the actions or the speeches of the hon. Member for Falkirk, West.

This allocation of time motion may go down in history as the *Glasgow Herald* guillotine. We were making not unreasonable progress until an editorial in the *Glasgow Herald* criticised the effectiveness of the Opposition Front Bench. Thereafter, progress slowed down remarkably. The effectiveness of the Opposition Front Bench has been criticised also by the *Daily Record*, which is the Scottish Socialist equivalent of *Pravda* saying that Mr. Gorbachev should pull his socks up.

Throughout the Committee, my hon. Friends on the Front Bench have listened courteously to the points made by the Opposition. My hon. Friend the Minister made two concessions when he accepted two Opposition amendments. The House will be agog to know more about the intellectual force and vigour, combined with rigorous research, which lay behind the concessions forced out of my hon. Friend. The first was an amendment defined by the Opposition as a probing amendment. The second they put forward with the argument that they did not understand what it was and asked my hon. Friend to explain it. That has been the standard of the Opposition argument in Committee.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) has argued that the Opposition deliberately tried to delay the Bill. I am not sure that I accept that. I think rather that the Opposition have wasted a great deal of time through their confused arguments. My hon. Friend the Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Henderson) made that point effectively in an early intervention. The Opposition are confused in their analysis of the present system. The analysis of the rating system put forward by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) was as follows:

"Rates are about as fair a form of taxation as one can have. Income tax is unfair and VAT is much more unfair than rates".

He repeated that point so that his hon. Friends could understand it, saying about rates:

"They are fair, or as fair as any other form of taxation."

That was before lunch. After lunch, that analysis was clarified, if that is the correct term, by the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson). He said:

"The burden for paying for local services has been shifted from the progressive taxes levied by the Treasury onto relatively regressive taxes such as the rating system." —[*Official Report, First Scottish Standing Committee*, 13 January 1987; c. 133-52.]

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney is no doubt very interested in this clarification of the Labour party's analysis of various forms of taxation. The view of the Opposition Front Bench spokesmen on Scottish affairs is that income tax is progressive, according to the hon. Member for East Lothian, but unfair, according to the hon. Member for Cathcart, whereas rates are "relatively regressive" according to the hon. Member for East Lothian but

"about as fair a form of taxation as one can have",

according to the hon. Member for Cathcart.

Mr. Henderson: That is just the Front Bench.

Mr. Stewart: No doubt we can look forward to the promotion of the hon. Members for East Lothian and for Cathcart to the shadow Treasury team in the near future. That confusion accounted for a great deal of the time wasted in Committee.

Let us consider the confusion on policy. The policy was spelt out early on in the Committee by the hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey), who we all wish a speedy recovery and a safe return to the House. The hon. Gentleman said:

"Our party, from its grass roots, has decided through all its consultations that the road to take is that of local income tax."—[*Official Report, First Scottish Standing Committee*, 18 December 1986; c. 80.]

That may have been the policy at the grass roots, but it was not the policy elsewhere. I am not quite sure what the opposite of grass roots is—it may be tree tops, or even coconuts. At any rate, the policy at the grass roots had not been passed on to the coconuts on the Opposition Front Bench. The hon. Member for Cathcart, in one of his best speeches in Committee—it was actually quite a good speech—effectively attacked the whole concept of local income tax. The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) initiated that debate.

Throughout the Committee stage, the hon. Member for East Lothian kept saying that he did not like rates, while the hon. Member for Cathcart continued to raise arguments in favour of them. That is why we wasted so much time.

Time was also wasted by the consistent failure of Opposition Members to put forward their policy. Neither the hon. Member for Cathcart nor the hon. Member for East Lothian presented any policy, but eventually all was revealed. Into the intellectual void created by those two hon. Members stepped, without hesitation and with a firm stride, the hon. Member for Paisley, North (Mr. Adams), saying:

"If the Minister asks again for the Labour party policy on rates I think that we should give him it."

That comment brought thunderous applause from the Conservative Benches. He continued:

"We should phone Walworth road and get the Labour party's policy on rating since 1905 and read it to him word for word, line by line, paragraph by paragraph. He would find it illuminating."

My hon. Friend the Minister replied:

"That is the first constructive suggestion that we have had from the Opposition Benches. I should like to take up the hon. Gentleman's invitation".

The hon. Member for Paisley, North paused and then said:

[Mr. Stewart]

"I am glad of the invitation."

There was a longer pause before he continued, with reference to the document:

"It is somewhat lengthy".

At that point there was the following intervention from the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart:

"And applies only to England and Wales."—[*Official Report, First Scottish Standing Committee*, 13 January 1987; c. 162-3.]

All is revealed. A genuine seeker after truth who wishes to establish the Labour party in Scotland's alternative policy to the Abolition of Domestic Rates, Etc. (Scotland) Bill must go to Walworth road — not an obviously convenient location for the average Scottish seeker after truth, but never mind — and dig out a major tome entitled "Labour Party Policy on Rates in England and Wales since 1905". Continuing nonsense of that kind wasted much of the Committee's time.

I do not wish to suggest for a moment that constructive points were not put forward by the Oppposition. Generally, those points were put forward by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Brown). Indeed, it was noticeable that the atmosphere of genial relaxation that surrounded my hon. Friends on the Government Front Bench changed when the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan rose and the advisers leaned forward and grasped their pencils because the hon. Gentleman put forward genuine points.

Some productive matters were revealed in Committee —notably, in regard to my constituency, a very helpful statement by the Opposition that the residents of Eastwood were the first and major beneficiaries of the community charge. The hon. Member for Cathcart referred to them as the largest group of beneficiaries in Scotland, although it must have been a close-run thing between my constituents and those represented by my hon. Friends the Members for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst) and for Fife, North-East (Mr. Henderson). It was also helpful that the Labour party repeated its policy that Eastwood district should be abolished and that the good people of Eastwood should become part of Glasgow. It was also helpful that the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland put forward the case for a local income tax at great length, but with little detail, admitting by implication that a local income tax under any rational system must mean the abolition of very small district councils such as Eastwood. Those were some of the plus points in Committee.

I thought that the Opposition tactics on the Bill were somewhat dubious. I thought that they would make sufficient progress in Committee to avoid a guillotine and then go for all-night sessions on the Floor of the House when, of course, the Committee members could be supplemented by the battle-hardened battalions from Govan, Garscadden, Monklands and elsewhere.

Mr. Fairbairn: My hon. Friend has used the word guillotine in reference to this instrument of execution. As this is a Scottish Bill, should we not use the proper terminology and call it a "maiden"? The Scottish equivalent of the guillotine was the maiden, so we should be maidening the Bill.

Mr. Stewart: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend for that comment. Perhaps I should use the official term and refer to an allocation of time motion.

I conclude that the Labour party tactics are probably correct because the Opposition dare not expose their arguments or their lack of policy to extended debate on the Floor of the House. I believe that the guillotine is perfectly reasonable. It allows the Committee and the House to consider the outstanding matters with a reasonable timetable. It will protect the Labour party from extended debate on the Floor of the House on its total lack of policy on a subject of importance to the Scottish people. My right hon. Friend has put forward a reasonable timetable for the Bill and I urge the House to accept it.

4.37 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): On these occasions when we debate motions to allocate time, there is an element of ritual. That has the effect of driving the press from the Gallery because they seem to have heard these arguments before. However, I do not believe that the House should regard these matters lightly.

The Leader of the House admitted that this Bill is of considerable importance. It is of considerable constitutional importance, in that it substantially alters the balance of power between central and local government. It curtails the effective use of financial powers hitherto enjoyed by local government to provide the services which Parliament has prescribed that local government shall operate. The Bill sweeps away the principal local source of revenue for local government which has operated in Scotland for more than 200 years. It does so by a reversal of policy as dramatic and unexpected as anything that has occurred in the lifetime of this Government — a Government not prone to making U-turns.

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) drew attention in his remarkably perceptive speech to the regressive horrors of the Bill. The concept of a tax being levied upon every citizen in Scotland regardless of ability to pay is, not surprisingly, regarded with horror throughout Scotland. An independent opinion poll conducted during the passage of the Bill showed that 86 per cent. of the Scottish people believed that local taxation should be related to ability to pay. If ever a thumbs-down was given to a measure to which the Government appear to attach importance in terms of winning votes at the coming election, this is it.

Mr. Henderson: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, for public service broadcasting, we pay a television licence fee or tax which is unrelated to ability to pay and which, for many people, will be lower—or higher—than they would be required to pay as a community charge for the range of local government services? Has not the hon. Gentleman got this out of perspective?

Mr. Maclennan: The financing of television has very little to do with this Bill on local government. The hon. Gentleman had better sort out whether it is higher or lower before he makes another such intervention.

As the Bill is of major constitutional importance, its Committee stage could have been taken on the Floor of the House, as has been the practice with earlier constitutional Bills. We could also have argued that it should have been considered first by an all-party pre-legislative Committee that would have taken evidence from those who would be affected by it and those who would have to administer the new system of local taxation. It would have been an ideal candidate for such a

procedure. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), the right hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Stewart) and I proposed that to the Lord Privy Seal, who refused even to meet us to discuss the issue. That demonstrates his scant regard for the opinion of people in Scotland, as expressed by those who represent them in Parliament. He has been cavalier from the beginning in his handling of the Bill, as is illustrated by its extraordinary timetabling since it was published.

The Bill was given a First Reading on 27 November and a Second Reading only a week later. That was all the time allowed to local authorities and people throughout Scotland to form their views on the Bill and their recommendations about what could be done to improve it.

Mr. Michael Hirst (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): I was interested by the hon. Gentleman's commitment to the constitutional aspects of the Bill and especially by his suggestion that it should have been exposed to a pre-legislative Committee so that its details might have been considered further. Can he assure the House that if the alliance was in a future Government, it would ensure that all legislation was considered by a pre-legislative Committee?

Mr. Maclennan: The alliance parties have always believed that major constitutional reform should proceed on the basis of agreement and consensus so far as possible. We not only preach that, we shall practise it.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Is the hon. Gentleman saying yes or no to my hon. Friend's question?

Mr. Maclennan: If the hon. Gentleman simply behaves like a parrot, he will do better to keep his seat. The answer to the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst) is that measures to reform the constitution must enjoy the support of a majority of hon. Members and it is highly desirable that that support should be drawn from both sides of the House. That is a well recognised convention of Parliament.

The Bill is designed to limit the power of local government to spend money, and although the Minister dressed it up as providing for greater local accountability, the reality is that, by the Government's admission, local authorities will have the power to determine what services should be offered in respect of only 13 per cent. of the moneys which they will raise by a poll tax. The Bill has always been controversial and has aroused widespread hostility.

I had started to discuss the manner in which the Government have handled the Bill. Its Second Reading was on 9 December and it was committed to Standing Committee a week later. That was another period during which people could make suggestions about how the Bill could be improved. As the Lord Privy Seal admits, at the first sitting, the Government moved an almost unprecedented sittings motion to ensure that the Committee would sit four times a week and for long hours to consider the Bill in detail. That put pressure not only on Members of Parliament but on all those outside the House who will be affected by the measure and who wish to make representations on it. They include the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, the Scottish Consumer Council, the National Union of Ratepayers Associations and many others. In taking longer than usual to consider the early clauses, Labour Members of the Committee were simply trying to provide time to those who wished to prepare their formal submissions and amendments to try to improve the Bill.

We must also consider what happened in Committee. The Lord Privy Seal had the good grace to admit that reasonable progress has been made and that we have proceeded, broadly speaking, at the rate of one clause for each sitting. But the clauses are extremely important. The first clause provided for the complete abolition of domestic rates, and we also considered the way in which non-domestic rates would be determined, the limited powers of local authorities following the introduction of provisions whereby the Secretary of State will control these matters, the highly contested question of how the community charge will be applied to students at university, how a standard community charge will be levied and who will be liable to pay it, and the calculation of the collective community charge and those who will be liable to pay it. It seems quite unreasonable to expect that these matters could have been dealt with any more quickly than by one clause per sitting.

That, however, is not the only point of importance in considering the progress made on the Bill. The Bill itself is in large measure an enabling Bill. It leaves undefined many matters which are of great importance in the administration of the new tax system. It provides, if my accounting is correct, no fewer than 47 times, that matters will be prescribed, following the passage of the Bill through the House. Within the body of the Bill, and in the schedules still to come there are 31 references to circumstances being prescribed. If a Committee is to serve any useful purpose in elucidating the Government's intention, it must above all have in mind the need to determine what the Secretary of State intends should be prescribed, what the circumstances are to be; and when there is so much hidden from the public view as there is in this Bill it is right to seek to tease it out.

In so far as the Committee took time over these matters, it was because the Ministers were so forthcoming about the contents of subordinate legislation which will flow from this Bill, almost of all of which will be enacted by negative procedure and with no subsequent debate in this House. There are a number of other references to the discretion of the Secretary of State. There are eight references to his exercising powers "as may be determined", two to "as he considers appropriate" and two to "as he thinks fit". All these are occasions when the Secretary of State has wide powers of discretion in the practical operation of the Bill. The Committee would not have been doing its job properly if it had not attempted to ascertain the Minister's intentions in these respects.

The burden of the Government's case has been that the House must take it on trust that the Secretary of State will operate the Bill according to his best judgment of what is administratively convenient. In almost all cases, when he was asked to say what would be the content of the subordinate legislation, that was the gist of the reply, that it would be a matter for the convenience of those who had to operate the Bill. This was the case even when there were certain issues touching on the liberty of the subject and touching on confidentiality of information—empowering, for example, the registration officer to nominate persons to give information to him concerning the compilation of the register which would involve the most serious invasions of confidential administration, requiring

[Mr. Maclennan]

local authorities to surrender to him information given them for completely different purposes. It is right that the Committee should have lingered on points such as that and should have sought to persuade the Minister that such broad and arbitrary power should be curtailed by the inclusion of at least some criteria in the Bill itself.

One is bound to ask why the Government are in such a hurry. There has been no mention of this so far in the debate. The Lord Privy Seal vouchsafed that we would continue to make good progress under the proposed timetable. Let me make it plain that I have never objected to the introduction of timetables, provided that it was done by agreement across the Floor of the House and with the consent of all parties. It can lead to orderly discussion. But the time for such a discussion is not when the Bill is in train, but before it has been taken into Committee. Why does the Lord Privy Seal feel it so necessary to complete the Committee stage by 19 February? If we were to continue to proceed at the rate at which we have been proceeding, there is not much doubt that the Bill would have been through not just Committee but all its stages in this House by Easter and through all its stages in another place by early summer.

One is bound to conclude that there is some reason external to the Bill which is driving the Government along this course. The reason is not far to seek. It is fairly clear that the Government have in mind that the Bill should be enacted sufficiently early to enable them to call a general election with the Bill on the statute book at any time after the Chancellor has introduced his Budget and the Prime Minister has returned from Moscow, having talked to Secretary Gorbachev: she wishes to have this little measure in her pocket.

Far be it from me to counsel the Government on what will or will not help them to win an election in Scotland. All I can say is that they are more foolish than I believe them to be if they think that this measure will win them a single vote in Scotland. The reality is that the Bill is seen for what it is, a regressive Bill which imposes a tax on those who can ill afford to pay it. It seems to be a Bill that is taking from local government powers to spend on services which it has enjoyed in the past. The Bill is seen as an arrogation of power to the centre which is, of course, quite typical of this Government. The Government are being cavalier about the possibility that they have got anything in the Bill wrong, despite the fact that, in an earlier case to which the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney referred, they had to bring forward amending legislation to legalise an earlier local government finance Bill which had resulted in six years of illegality due very largely to the same kind of approach to legislation which we see here.

I am not one to complain about attempts to bring about orderly debate, but I am opposed to precipitate debate, particularly in matters of this kind, which have been highly divisive, complex and inequitable in their effect. I hope that the House will resist the motion, because it is quite unnecessary to get the Bill on to the statute book by the end of this parliamentary session. There is no good case for the motion, and I hope that the House will resist it.

4.58 pm

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I am afraid that I have not had the privilege of being a member of the Standing Committee, so I have missed the tremendous arguments that have gone on through the night for over a hundred hours. Having listened to the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) I am not surprised that they have gone on for so long. It is perhaps a happy coincidence that on the Order Paper are the amendments to Standing Orders relative to short speeches in both the House and the Scottish Grand Committee, and perhaps the hon. Member will take that to heart.

I am disappointed that the Leader of the House and the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) have just left the Chamber. Some of us have strongly argued the case put forward by the Select Committee on Procedure for timetabling debate in Standing Committees. Had our motion to do that been accepted last year, there is no doubt that the 34 clauses of this Bill could have been covered easily in a hundred hours, had the Bill been timetabled with the agreement of both the Front Benches, allowing for adequate discussion of each clause.

That surely is such a simple supposition that it is disappointing that the Front Benches of the Conservative and Labour parties are so resolutely against the timetabling of Committee stages. That would be logical, because Members would have far more opportunity to discuss each clause, with a reasonable time scale for each sitting. I hope that, the more of these guillotine motions we have, the more likely it will be that we shall get to timetabling Standing Committees.

Anyone who has been in Parliament for even a short time accepts that when the Opposition set out to show their virility by achieving a guillotine, it is not too difficult for them to do so, but it is done at the expense of a detailed discussion of each clause and schedule. In turn, that puts a greater onus on Members of another place who feel that they have a duty to do what we have been unable to accomplish in this Chamber or in Standing Committee.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Does my hon. Friend agree that in this case we have managed within the 100 hours to deal with all the major points of principle in the Bill?

Sir Hector Monro: I am not so sure that we have. I have read most, but not all, of the proceedings. In the latter part of the Bill there are important issues such as the register, rebates and water and sewerage charges. No doubt many new clauses will be put down for discussion. Because the Opposition have been so dilatory on the early part of the Bill, these important issues will not be discussed even though 100 hours have been spent in Committee so far.

Mr. Home Robertson: The hon. Gentleman is preaching sweet reasonableness about the way the proceedings should be conducted. What does he think about the Government publishing an extremely controversial Bill one week, arranging Second Reading debate for the following week and expecting the standing committee to sit both morning and afternoon only one week later? Did that allow reasonable time for consideration by hon. Members or by people outside the House?

Sir Hector Monro: The hon. Gentleman was well aware of what was coming in the Bill. He had the whole of the Christmas recess to consult anyone he wanted. There was adequate time to prepare the vicious attack that he wished to launch. We were led to believe that there was to be a devastating attack on the Conservative party today. What

do we find? There are eight Labour Members on the Back Benches. There is not one Scottish nationalist here. There is now one Liberal Member here after the debate has been going on for a long time; he is an English Member who has managed to get back from Greenwich, no doubt by boat. It is astonishing that not one Scottish Liberal and only one member of the SDP has been here for what was to be a great attack on the timetable motion and the way that the Government have handled the Bill in Standing Committee.

Members of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities have come down in cohorts at great expense to the ratepayers to show their opposition. Here they find only eight supporters on the Labour Benches. That does not show much strength of opposition from Labour Members of Parliament against the motion or against the Bill.

The Opposition have not considered constructively the positive advantages of the Bill, such as community charges, which will be fairer to single people and widows. The Government are giving Members the opportunity to change a system that is outmoded. If we were starting from scratch today, who would have thought of taxing the valuation of houses as the best way of financing local government?

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Labour party.

Sir Hector Monro: Yes, indeed, the Labour party wants to keep that system. The alliance wants a system of local income tax, which is the most hopeless proposition that has been made throughout the debate.

Mr. John Currie (Cunninghame, North): Even worse than that, is it not a fact that the Opposition intend to rate agricultural buildings, which would mean a severe curtailment of the income of farmers?

Sir Hector Monro: Yes, indeed. I was trying to keep in relatively low key.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will also keep to the motion that is before the House.

Sir Hector Monro: I hope, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you feel that I have kept to the issue of why we should have adopted the proposal of the Select Committee on Procedure to timetable Standing Committees.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I was merely seeking to prevent the debate from turning into a discussion about agricultural or any other rating.

Sir Hector Monro: I appreciate what you say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but it is of crucial interest to everyone in Scotland that the Labour party intends to rate agricultural land. That is important relative to a Bill dealing with rating in Scotland. However, I shall say no more because the point has been made. *[Interruption.]* Indeed, I am coming to that point. I did not want to spoil a reference to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Brown) who has made many constructive comments in Committee. I look forward to his contribution. If I were looking for supporters on timetabling Committee stages I am sure that he would be the first to join me.

The sad thing about the Bill is the incredible opposition of local authorities in Scotland. They have never shown so little wish to change as at present. They are reluctant to consider any proposition that would mean a change in their administration procedures. When the register and community charges are enforced, with all the modern technology that an office can use these days, the operation of the system will be not only much fairer, but simpler.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): Who wrote the Bill?

Sir Hector Monro: One gets bored by the childish interventions of the hon. Gentleman. *[Interruption.]* About 99 hours of the 100 hours spent in Committee have been taken up by interventions by the hon. Gentleman.

I hope that the House will support strongly the motion to restrict further discussion in Standing Committee so that we can get on with the Bill, get it to another place and get it on the statute book as soon as possible.

5.7 pm

Mr. Bob McTaggart (Glasgow, Central): I became a member of the Standing Committee only after the Christmas recess because of the unfortunate illness of my hon. Friend the Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey). I am pleased to report to the House that my hon. Friend is making a good, sound recovery. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I only wish that the same could be said for me, because of my involvement in Standing Committee.

There is a total of seven Opposition Members in Standing Committee. For much of the proceedings, we have not had our total complement. Yet we are now considering a motion to introduce a guillotine on the proceedings of the Committee, although it could not be argued that hon. Members have had sufficient time to examine the Bill paragraph by paragraph and clause by clause.

This is a very important Bill. The clauses relating to collective community charges show that the Bill has been put together hurriedly, without consideration for the almost impossible burden that it will place on Scottish local authorities, quite apart from the individual ratepayer. The ambiguity of many of the references shows that the Government have not gone over the finer points of the Bill, and have not considered any exemptions for any sector of the public and intend to leave the already hard-pressed local authorities to pick up the pieces and clear up the mess.

Representations have been made to the Minister by groups such as Shelter and the Council for Single Homeless and by other bodies concerned with the plight of the mentally handicapped and people receiving severe disablement benefits. The Minister has chosen to ignore all those representations. In my constituency there are many hostels for the homeless and the mentally handicapped and it is grossly unfair to expect those people, with all the other burdens that they have to carry, to be faced with a collective community charge.

There are many multi-occupancy properties in my constituency and one landlord often controls several properties. Does the Minister believe that such landlords — at best people who are very busy and at worst Rachmans who are unscrupulous — will keep daily records of the tenants and apportion the collective community charge? I am sure that in such cases many landlords will deduct a flat sum from tenants who already have very little, and that the local authority, if it is lucky, will receive some of that money.

[Mr. Bob McTaggart]

The number of people living in hostels for the homeless and in hostels for battered wives and so on, is increasing all the time, and the problems that those people will face will be quite insurmountable. It will prove difficult for them to obtain the rebates to which they are justly entitled. I have a large number of unemployed people and people on supplementary benefit in my constituency, and they will bear an unfair portion of this new tax. Two wards in my constituency will be expected to pay an extra 42 per cent. and an extra 35 per cent. How can the Minister deny that that is anything other than a tax on the poor and a pre-election sop to the middle-class home owner?

The Government have already had plenty of time to consider the average Tory voter and they realise that most middle-class high-earning families in which only one member of the family is working and earning a high salary will pay less of the new tax. That will be a popular vote catcher and the Government hope that it will be in time for the general election. It exposes a total lack of care or consideration by the Government for the plight of the large and growing army of disadvantaged people. A family of four, all of whom are working but in low-paid jobs, will often earn, collectively, less than one middle-class manager. Yet that family will have to pay four times more in community charges. That is a blatantly unfair distribution of resources. A family of four hard-working people is not more likely to use the services of a local authority than the executive family with a leisurely life style.

The Bill will widen even further the gap between the rich and the poor in our society. The poor will be penalised simply because there are more of them per household. Figures published by Glasgow district council show that the areas of very high unemployment and poor amenities are the areas that will bear the brunt of this new tax. Only eight wards, mostly residential areas with low levels of unemployment, will gain under this new system by paying less tax. That is out of a total of 66 wards in Glasgow.

What level of collection do the Government expect to see? We have heard estimates of 80 per cent., but under the present system 90 per cent. of rates are collected. However, 80 per cent. is a gross over-estimate of what local authorities can expect to receive. Evasion of the tax will be massive. Families will split up and youngsters will move out of the family home in order to avoid placing an even bigger onus on their parents to pay this tax. The only people guaranteed exemption from the tax are long-term hospital patients and prisoners. Perhaps we should all take a stand and refuse to pay the poll tax. If we did so and refused to pay the fines, we would swell the already overcrowded prisons to bursting point—if they have not already reached that point. At least the Government would be forced to have a look at the problems in the prisons if at nothing else.

Judging by the clauses about the collective community charge, it is quite clear that the Bill has been hurriedly put together without consideration of the almost impossible burden which our local authorities will face. The amount of money that they will have to spend will prove to be completely under-estimated by the Government. When a Labour Government are returned at the next general election, perhaps all of us can reflect on this Bill and say that it was only a bad dream.

5.15 pm

Mr. Michael Hirst (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): I have not been impressed so far tonight by what I discern as synthetic indignation by the Opposition about the motion. The history of the use of the guillotine is worth considering in order to judge the assertions made by the Opposition that the Government are moving with haste to get this legislation through. The record for the number of Bills guillotined in any one session is held by the last Labour Government. They moved to impose a guillotine after far fewer sittings than this legislation. The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) and some of his Front Bench colleagues ought to have had regard to that.

I am sympathetic to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) about the general principle of timetabling legislation. To anybody who used to earn a living on the basis of time spent in a job, it must come as a shock to come to this House and sit in a Standing Committee where it is possible to wait hour after hour for some minor amendment, often described as a probing amendment, when the purpose is simply to waste time and clock up hours of opposition. For that reason I have considerable sympathy for the view of my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries that one benefit of a timetable motion is that it concentrates the minds of all participants on the remaining clauses and schedules and obviates the time wasting that characterised the earlier part of this Standing Committee.

Mr. Maxton: The hon. Member is familiar with the Bill and knows that is says 75 times "as may be prescribed". It is right that the Opposition should put down probing amendments to try to find out from Ministers exactly what they intend to do under that phrase.

Mr. Hirst: I could not agree more with the hon. Gentleman. It is a pity that his memory seems to be so thin and that he has not consulted the *Official Report*. That shows that many of the interventions and speeches in Standing Committee were no more than a lot of time wasting. He makes the point that the Opposition tabled probing amendments, but the *Official Report* will help him look differently at the quality of some of the contributions. I can recall many occasions on which my hon. Friends on the Committee evinced their boredom about the irrelevance of the contributions made by some Opposition Members.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Will my hon. Friend confirm that a probing amendment is meant to be tabled in order to find out the meaning and purpose of a Bill? Its purpose is not, as the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) said, to find out its own meaning.

Mr. Hirst: I am indebted to my hon. Friend for reminding me of that. The position is, perhaps, slightly worse than he described, because one Opposition probing amendment was accepted by the Government. I think that reveals the thinking of many Opposition Members.

Mr. Maxton: Does the hon. Gentleman recall that one of our lengthy debates, in which he played a prominent part, dealt with an amendment that he tabled on help for sports clubs? He will remember that, following that lengthy debate, he tried to withdraw the amendment—which, in a sense, made the debate a total waste of time.

Mr. Hirst: We have certainly set the scene for a jolly good discussion on this point. I intend to return to it later, to put firmly on the record the reasons why my hon. Friends followed that approach and why the actions of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) were so injurious to the proper interests of sporting clubs.

In their own words, the Opposition started out to wreck the Bill. The hon. Member for Cathcart admitted that, and in the early stages of our debates the conduct of Opposition Members confirmed it. I need not remind the House about the events on Thursday 18 December. During my relatively short time in the House, I had not before witnessed conduct such as that of one Opposition Member who insinuated himself into the Committee. It was appalling. It must be unprecedented for a Committee to be suspended three times because of such irresponsibility. If the hon. Member for Cathcart is as fair-minded as I believe him to be, he will agree that the whole purpose of the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) was to wreck the Bill by extra-parliamentary practices, as he had threatened to do.

We do not need a timetable to extract an admission from the Opposition that they are basically clinging to a discredited system. The hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey)—his absence is a matter of great sadness, and we look forward to his return—said revealingly during the third Committee sitting that the Labour party had no definite policy on which way to go, but admitted that the system was discredited. Bearing that in mind, we might have expected Opposition Members to make some kind of revelation about the way that they proposed to fund local government expenditure.

Mr. Home Robertson: We did.

Mr. Hirst: I know that I did not attend all the sittings, but I listened during those that I did attend and there was certainly a great void in the official policy of the Opposition.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) referred to the confusions and contradictions in the admissions of the Labour Front Bench spokesman. I watched with some interest the way in which the brow of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) furrowed deeper and deeper as he learned of those contradictions so eloquently described by my hon. Friend.

However, there are some things that Opposition Members did not or would not say. Notwithstanding whether the timetable motion is agreed to, I hope that there will be sufficient time in Committee and on the Floor of the House for Opposition Members to answer some of the questions put to them in Committee, which they were singularly unprepared to answer. They shrugged off the fact that only 29 per cent. of people in Scotland pay full rates——

Mr. Maxton: Seventy-nine per cent.

Mr. Hirst: No, only 29 per cent. of people in Scotland pay full rates. After all the hours of debate in Committee and following the exhaustive examination that the hon. Gentleman asserted he had made of the Green Paper, if he is not now aware of that statistic, I despair.

The Opposition shrugged off the fact that 750,000 people in Scotland who have an income make no contribution to local government expenditure.

Mr. Home Robertson: Rubbish.

Mr. Hirst: The hon. Gentleman should consult the information available, which has been prepared over a long period. It is interesting that he chooses to take this opportunity to challenge something that he did not choose to challenge in Committee. I hope that he will consult the *Official Report* and the available information to clarify his mind. I recall fairly making that point in Committee.

The Opposition shrugged off the fact that businesses in Scotland have no protection. Although under the statute they have the right to be consulted, in Strathclyde a rate was imposed before the business community was consulted. Even when they are consulted, they have little opportunity to influence the spending policies of local government—they are simply obliged to pay.

When my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) said in Committee that it was his belief that this legislation would enhance local accountability, Opposition Members disputed it. If a local authority finds that the community charge that it is obliged to levy upon its inhabitants rises because of a deliberate decision to carry out the democratic will of the local electorate to increase services, I believe that that will improve local accountability.

I suspect that the colleagues of Labour Members serving in local government in Scotland are rather concerned that this measure will promote much greater interest among the public during local government elections. I believe that the political friends of the Labour party serving in Scottish local authorities will take due and proper note of that.

A more significant matter, and one which I do not believe a timetable motion will necessarily resolve, is the reluctance of the alliance representative to spell out how its system of local income tax would operate. On Second Reading and in Committee I asked how the system would operate. I see you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, nodding.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No, the hon. Gentleman saw me shaking my head, and that is rather different.

Mr. Hirst: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you were shaking your head. I do not think for a moment that you share my despair at having failed to learn how the alliance proposes to introduce local income tax.

It is fair to say that this afternoon the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) repeated his assertion that local income tax would be levied on ability to pay, and that therefore it would be a fairer system. It is difficult for me to accept that, as he has studiously declined to say how his party, if it were ever in government, would introduce such a system. We are left with his contention that the system would be fair, without knowing exactly how it would operate. Without challenge, he said that it was not his duty——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman heard me earlier reproach one hon. Member for seeking to introduce matters that were not the subject of the Bill. It is fair for hon. Members to argue about the content of the Bill, but not to argue about matters not covered by the Bill. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will return to the motion before the House.

Mr. Hirst: I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker for making that point, of which I was aware. It is, however, fair to say that during the debates on clause 1 stand part and a series of amendments——

Mr. Maclennan: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am conscious of the point that you just made to the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst). He referred to my remarks this afternoon about local income tax. As you will recall, I made no such remarks this afternoon because, in my view, they would have been out of order.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is correct to say that in Committee the hon. Gentleman tabled a number of amendments requiring the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs to consider local income tax. We frequently discussed the merits of that alternative system.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) has underlined the difficulty facing the Chair. He has illustrated the dangers of allowing the debate to get away from the terms of the motion. I repeat that it is perfectly fair to argue about matters that are covered by the Bill as reasons why the motion should be accepted, or otherwise, but not to refer to matters that are not covered by the Bill.

Mr. Hirst: If I have inadvertently forgotten what was previously discussed this afternoon, I apologise to the House. However, it was my recollection that local income tax was mentioned.

In essence, the purpose of the legislation is to look at ways of financing of Scottish local government more fairly. I know that the different Opposition parties have different suggestions about that. The point that I should like to make now is relevant to the timetable motion and in the light of the discussions in Committee.

Those hon. Members who have argued against the Government's proposals have overlooked one vital fact: however local government is financed — whether by rates, sales tax, community charge or local income tax— the sum and substance of the matter is that the lion's share of local government expenditure is, and will continue to be, financed by the Exchequer, to which all taxpayers will contribute in accordance with their ability to pay. That is the vital point, which was so often overlooked in the amendments tabled by alliance and Opposition Members in Committee.

I have a special interest in this legislation. My hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood said that his constituents were reckoned to do best out of the legislation. I have the invidious distinction that my constituents pay the highest average rates of any local authority in Scotland, and probably in the rest of Britain, with the exception of certain London boroughs. Many of my constituents are elderly people who live relatively modestly and for whom this legislation will be extremely important in helping them to continue living in the houses that they have occupied for so many years. It is sad when elderly widows and widowers are driven from their homes because they can no longer afford the burden of maintaining them because of their high rates bills. It is not unusual for people who live in relatively modest houses to pay £1,100 or £1,200 a year in rates. Clearly, that puts an exceptional burden on them.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My hon. Friend is making an important point, which not only relates to his constituency, but is of general application. Is it not an absolute disgrace that no member of the alliance parties is in the Chamber to hear him?

Mr. Hirst: All the alliance representatives are absent. Given the number of Scottish seats that they represent, I should have thought that some of them would have been here this afternoon. Obviously, they will have to answer for themselves and explain their absence.

Speaking on behalf of those whom I have tried, in a kindly way, to describe as little old widows, when I intervened in Committee about their plight, I was surprised at the way in which their interests were dismissed by some hon. Members on the Committee. It is curious that my constituency enjoys the lowest proportion of pensioner households, and that of the hon. Member for Cathcart has one of the highest — over 20 per cent. Therefore, I should have thought that he would have been acutely concerned, as I am, about those elderly people whose rates bill at the moment is proving so burdensome, and for whom this legislation will provide a great deal of relief.

It is quite assuredly the case that the elderly person or the single-parent family, struggling to meet a rates bill, is very resentful of the fact that in the neighbouring house, and paying the same amount in rates, there may be three, four or even more people, each earning an income. Therefore, on the basis of ability to pay, that household would be better able to make a contribution to the costs of the local government.

Perhaps the impression has been given this afternoon that the Committee stage was rather disagreeable and fruitless. I do not believe that. There have been rare moments of unanimity. The hon. Member for Cathcart, who raised a matter to which I shall come presently, was in Committee on the two occasions when we discussed the rating burden upon Scottish sports grounds. As he made a tendentious and unfair intervention earlier in the debate, I shall take the opportunity of placing clearly on the record exactly what happened in Committee. It is of considerable relevance to the timetable motion and also to the Report stage, on which occasion I hope that it will be possible to return to this matter.

Concern about the rates that are levied on sports clubs in Scotland is so widespread, north and south of the border, that I imagine that you may have had some representations on that matter, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Scottish amateur sports clubs pay substantially more in rates than their English counterparts. That has led to financial difficulties for some clubs and even threatened their future.

Bearing in mind that Parliament has already laid down the powers by which local authorities may grant discretionary relief, with some reluctance, Committee members felt it necessary to move amendments to provide mandatory relief. History to that point suggested that, in general, local authorities in Scotland were unwilling to provide for discretionary relief to mitigate the rates burden and enable sports clubs to remain in existence.

I cannot emphasise too much the importance of those clubs, especially when school sporting fixtures and arrangements have been disrupted by industrial action in schools. Therefore, amateur sports clubs play an increasing role. Bearing that in mind, several amendments were tabled in Committee—they were not probing, but substantive amendments — and were signed by Conservative as well as Opposition Members.

In reply, the Minister made it clear that the technical definitions were inadequate, and I accept his advice. In Committee, Opposition Members referred again and again

to the fact that my technical definition of an amateur sports club was inadequate for those purposes. Those amendments put the point firmly and clearly to the Minister that all hon. Members felt that the spirit of the amendments had been supported by Labour, alliance and Conservative Members. The amendments would have provided mandatory relief.

When the Minister advised me that there were problems on two major counts, I said that I was prepared to withdraw the amendments on the express understanding that, after the necessary consultations with ministerial colleagues, he would table Government amendments on Report to meet their spirit.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Exactly.

Mr. Hirst: I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman supports me.

Bearing in mind that those amendments were not raised just to articulate a particular problem, but that they were designed to ensure a specific reaction, in the face of the Minister's advice that they were technically deficient, I believed that the proper course was to withdraw them but to make it clear that I should return to them on Report. Therefore, it was very sad that a Division was forced in Committee. Presumably, that will prevent me from tabling a similar amendment — [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] I am advised that that may prevent me from returning to the same point on Report. I was prepared to withdraw the amendments because I attached the highest importance to having some provision in the legislation to help Scottish sports clubs.

A further point, which did not appear in our Committee discussions, was that the amendments as framed would grant relief from 1989-90 onwards. The position is more urgent than that. Without tabling new clauses, I could not provide relief more immediately, which is what I want. In view of what I have said today I hope that my ministerial colleagues can table amendments on Report, despite the timetable, to meet the spirit of my amendments.

Mr. Dalyell: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that there is serious anxiety about this? I address my remarks to the Minister through the hon. Gentleman. For example, the modest Linlithgow cricket ground——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We cannot debate now matters which were the subject of amendments in Committee. We are debating a timetable motion. I understood that the hon. Gentleman invoked the debate on these issues only with reference to our procedures, rather than on the intrinsic merits of the amendments. In so far as the intervention has a bearing on the motion before the House, I shall allow it, but we are not here to debate the wisdom, or lack of it, of imposing rates on sports clubs.

Mr. Dalyell: Many people in Scotland will not be too worried about our procedures, but they will be worried about the differences between the Linlithgow——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. No matter what the people in Scotland may think, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will have regard to the fact that I have a responsibility to ensure that the Standing Orders and procedures of the House are complied with.

Mr. Dalyell: I simply reinforce the point that the contrast between the Linlithgow ground and the Worcester ground is typical of the sort of contrast that exists.

Mr. Hirst: I welcome support, from whatever source, and I am glad to know that the hon. Gentleman supports the spirit of the amendments that I proposed.

Important matters in the Bill remain to be discussed. I am reassured by what my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House said this afternoon about sufficient time being given to future sittings in Committee to facilitate a constructive, full discussion of these matters. I look forward to participating in them.

5.41 pm

Mr. David Lambie (Cunninghame, South): I felt sorry for the Leader of the House when he moved the motion to curtail further debate, and I am sorry that he is not present now. He spoke in a vacuum as an English Member of Parliament, knowing nothing about conditions in Scotland. He said that he was reading a brief prepared by some young Milton in his Department. I fear that that young Milton, like the previous Milton, also knew nothing about conditions in Scotland. He may be an expert on England, but he knows nothing about Scotland.

Listening to the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), I realised that the longer a Member is in the House nothing tones him up more than being sacked from the Front Bench. I have thoroughly enjoyed the hon. Gentleman's speeches since he left the Front Bench. I remember when we used to ask him questions on industry and education when he was a Minister. He would not answer and, indeed, seldom spoke, but suddenly there is a reincarnation — sacked from the Government and facing a general election, he is back speaking in Parliament and I agree with many of his recent remarks, with the exception of those on Prestwick airport.

Listening to the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst) also reminded me of the feeling that we always have before a general election, when Members who are fighting for their seats and know that they may be defeated suddenly begin to take an interest in local matters such as sports clubs. [HON. MEMBERS: "That is unworthy."] I do not know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, whether you saw the Channel 4 programme on Thursday night which surveyed marginal seats and dealt with the hon. Member's seat. Channel 4's public opinion poll found that the Labour candidate was ahead of the hon. Gentleman by 16 per cent. last week, so you will realise why the hon. Gentleman is trying to cover his ground now on sports clubs.

Mr. Hirst *rose*——

Mr. Lambie: I put it to the hon. Gentleman—this is where he made a serious error and let down sports clubs in Scotland—that no Minister gave an assurance that an amendment would be tabled on Report. I read the *Official Report* and the Minister said clearly that he was prepared to look at the arguments, but he never said that he would table an amendment to meet those arguments and the anomalies that the hon. Gentleman's amendment made apparent.

Mr. Hirst: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that consultation is taking place between Department officials with a view to finding some sort of definition? I see that

[Mr. Hirst]

as a hopeful sign. Does the hon. Gentleman agree? Does he also agree that it is unfair to suggest that the interests of Conservative Members in the plight of sports clubs is new-found? Does he recall the occasion when I went with him to a meeting of sports clubs as a representative from my party when there were very few from his party?

Mr. Lambie: I accept what the hon. Gentleman has said, but he has not answered my point. We can have all the consultations we want, but unless the Government are prepared to table an amendment on Report, the change will not be made. No matter what Scottish Conservative Members think or how they vote, if the Government put on a three-line Whip, Conservative Members will vote for Government policy and not for what Scottish Tory Members want. I hope that the Minister will give an assurance today that definite amendments will be submitted on Report to deal with this matter.

There are many reasons for the guillotine, but the main reason is to get the Bill on the statute book before the general election. The Government want it, not to implement it but to use it in the political battle before the general election as something that the Tory Government have done for Scottish ratepayers. Considering the electorate's opinion in the hon. Gentleman's constituency and applying that across Scotland, it is clear that not one Minister on the Front Bench tonight will be returned at the general election. Even the Parliamentary Private Secretary, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) will not be returned, and nor will many Back Bench Members. Despite this camouflage of dealing with the rates, the people of Scotland will get rid of the Tories once and for all as public representatives in the House.

What is wrong with the rating system in Scotland? That is the fundamental question with which we are dealing tonight. Under the Tory Government, the rate support grant has gradually decreased from 70 per cent. to about 56 per cent. In all probability, in a few weeks' time we shall have a new rate support grant formula which will show a further reduction in the percentage of relevant expenditure. The Scots continued with the revaluation of property in 1973 when the English stopped it. I blame some colleagues here and most colleagues in local government for that. Under this Bill we shall have a further revaluation in 1990. We are told by Ministers that the English will also have a revaluation in 1990, but I do not believe it.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that under the Bill there will be a revaluation only for non-domestic property in 1990? Under the Labour party's policy there will be a total revaluation in 1990.

Mr. Lambie: I accept that under the provisions of the Bill there will be a revaluation only of non-domestic property in 1990, but I am not concerned only about domestic ratepayers. I am also concerned about business ratepayers. I am concerned about every ratepayer in Scotland. We shall carry out another revaluation of industry, starting in Scotland in 1990. The Government have promised only that they may do it in England and Wales. The main reason for the Bill is that we have had a revaluation every five years in Scotland and the last two caused such a revolt among Scottish ratepayers that the Government were forced to do something. That is why we are saddled with the Bill.

What do English Members think will be the effect in England and Wales in 1990 if the Government carry out a revaluation and raise English property valuation levels from 1973 levels to 1990 levels? There was a revolution in Scotland over the five-year period. The Government will get more than a revolution in England if they bring 1973 property valuation levels to 1990 levels. The Government will not have a revaluation in 1990 and the English will not have a poll tax in 1990 because to introduce a poll tax the Government must first reintroduce the revaluation process. The Bill is a con. It is an attempt by the Tory Government to enhance their position in Scotland so as to retain the few seats that they have.

The effects of the Bill will be felt by Scotland only from 1989 to 1992. The Bill will not be introduced immediately and over a period its effects will be reduced. I assure the House that after the general election I shall come back as a Labour Member of Parliament representing a constituency with a solid Labour vote. If, unfortunately, the people in the south-east vote to keep the Conservative Government in power, I shall be able to come back and say, as I have said on all valuation and rating issues since the end of 1970, that I told the Government that they would not be able to do what they intended to do.

I am willing to bet that the Government will not introduce the poll tax if they win the next general election and certainly will not introduce the system proposed for Scotland in England and Wales. Even the people in the south will realise that the Government do not represent the people of the United Kingdom and will vote with the people from Wales, the north and Scotland. When we have a change of Government we can re-examine the system of valuation and rating so that we may be fair to all ratepayers, whether they be in the south of England or in the north of Scotland. This Bill will not help the Tory party or the ratepayers in Scotland.

5.44 pm

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): I am prepared to accept what the hon. Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie) had to say about his prospects of being supported by his electors. He is in a unique position. He is one of the few Opposition Members—if not the only one—who oppose the rating system. It became perfectly clear during our deliberations—which is why I saw no need to detain the Committee further—that the Labour party's purpose was to wreck the Bill; not to make any constructive representations but, rather, to act as an unthinking mouthpiece for COSLA which, sadly, briefed only the Opposition parties during the course of the Bill and organised secret liaisons with them. That was an unfortunate pattern of events.

Mr. Home Robertson: The hon. Gentleman's remark about COSLA is outrageous. He and all members of the Committee were given an opportunity to receive regular briefings from COSLA. If the hon. Gentleman did not avail himself of that opportunity, that is his problem, not COSLA's.

Mr. Forsyth: I assume that the hon. Gentleman suffers from poor memory. He was in the Committee when I read extracts from COSLA's policy committee meeting minutes

about the regular meetings that it was to have with Opposition Members only and also the team of experts who would be on hand to brief them. After one or two sessions, the team of experts seemed to disappear and we were left with empty public seats that in no way reflected the hysteria and storm of protest that the Opposition whipped up and told us was growing in Scotland because of the Government's proposals to introduce a community charge.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Is it not a fact that COSLA experts left in despair because it became increasingly obvious that the Opposition could not understand half their amendments?

Mr. Forsyth: My hon. Friend is quite right. My hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Ancram), in his normal courteous way, during the course of proceedings in Committee took considerable time to explain to hon. Gentlemen exactly what COSLA's intentions were. Whatever happened at the secret meetings with COSLA representatives, they obviously did not discuss what the amendments meant. No doubt they had other matters to discuss.

The guillotine motion is not before time. We have had about 100 hours of debate. During the course of those debates—my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst) was unfair to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton)—we discovered that the Labour party was totally committed to the existing rating system, that it wished to extend it further to cover agricultural land and buildings, and that it wished to have regular revaluations in Scotland. That fact has been firmly placed on the record. We have also discovered that it is determined to destroy the Bill because it believes that it will help only minorities. During the debates, Labour Members made it clear that, although they are prepared to concede that it will help single-parent families, widows and pensioners, they consider them to be a small percentage of the community and, therefore, of no relevance in the generality of the system.

I take issue with my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Munro). He suggested that the use of the guillotine is unfortunate because we have not had an opportunity to discuss matters of principle. We have discussed all the major elements of principle. I hope that when the Bill goes to another place it will have a swift passage. The principle of introducing a community charge and abolishing the rating system has been discussed ad nauseum with many amendments, discussions and opportunities to reiterate the view that Oppostion Members have taken—that the community charge is unfair.

Mr. Henderson: Did not the Committee take over 25 hours to debate clause 1, which contains the simple proposition that, from April 1990, domestic rates will be abolished? It is an important matter of principle certainly, but should it have required 25 hours to debate that straightforward proposition?

Mr. Forsyth: My hon. Friend is being very unfair to the Opposition. They were in difficulty and had to decide in Committee what their policy was. I understand that the debates on clause 1 continued for almost 25 hours while their policy was handed down from on high. At first we were told in Committee that it was not their job to say what their policy was, but later we had a clear enunciation of their policy—a clear commitment to the existing rating system and the status quo.

Perhaps we ought to have more time to discuss how the Opposition's hints could be made into reality. There have been hints that the Opposition might favour capital values. However, when it was pointed out to them that there had been difficulties over the rating of sports clubs and other organisations in Scotland because of a method that depended upon capital values for assessing rateable values, they seemed to move away from it.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) pointed out, I agree with the *Glasgow Herald* that a disorganised Opposition have been operating on an opportunist basis. On the one hand, they have argued that they want to wreck the Bill; on the other hand, they have argued that they want to improve it. They have even tabled amendments whose meaning they did not understand.

Mr. Maxton *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman shakes his head. However, in Committee he asked my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, South to explain to him what the amendment standing in his name meant. If that is not wasting the time of the Committee, I do not know what is. Furthermore, last night in Committee the hon. Gentleman told us that his purpose was to wreck the Bill. These matters are on record and are beyond dispute. That is not what we expected in Committee. I expected to hear a closely argued demolition of the community charge. Also I expected to hear about the Opposition's alternatives for widows, single people and others in Scotland who are facing hardship because of the rating system. We heard nothing about that. Instead, there was opposition for opposition's sake.

As for alliance Members, who are not even in the Chamber, they, too, have been very noisy. I read in the newspapers and hear that they intend to fight the Bill to the bitter end. Obviously they are all fighting it somewhere else—presumably in Greenwich. It is something of a revelation to me to discover the difference between what the alliance say not just to each other but what appears in the newspapers and what they do in this place. It has been an enjoyable Committee stage, if only because it has reinforced the view of my hon. Friends that the Government are proceeding in a carefully thought out and constructive way towards meeting the problems that the people of Scotland have to face because of the rating system and that the Opposition have nothing to offer by way of an alternative.

It is important that we should make progress and deal with the detailed matters, not just matters of principle, that still remain to be discussed. We know that there will be a community charge and a rebate system and that rates will be abolished. These are the main matters of substance that still have to be discussed. It is extraordinary that the Opposition, who made so much hay during the last rating revaluation, who were so critical and went out of their way to try to pin on the Government the blame for revaluation and for the undoubted hardship that is being caused because of the distortion of the rating system, should be so firmly attached to the principle of continuing with the policy of more of the same instead of discussing what can be done about it.

Mr. Lambie: The hon. Gentleman is being very unfair when he suggests that opposition to the revaluation was confined to one party. The problems that have been caused by revaluation in Scotland were spread over two Governments. I was a member of a joint deputation that included the right hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger), now the Secretary of State for Defence, that met my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. MacKenzie), the Minister of State, Scottish Office at that time, on the occasion of the first Scottish revaluation. Therfore, the opposition to revaluation in Scotland, when there was to be no revaluation in England and Wales, was on an all-party basis. Opposition was not confined to one party for electoral purposes.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman is entitled to say that he is opposed to revaluation, because he opposes the rating system. Regrettably, the Labour party is committed to the rating system. We cannot have a credible rating system without revaluation. That is why the hon. Gentleman was quite wrong to tell the House that there would be no poll tax, by which I assume he meant a community charge, in England because there could not possibly be a revaluation. I agree with him that a revaluation of domestic properties in England would cause hardship along the lines that we have experienced in Scotland. That is why I have every confidence that when this Government are once again returned to power after the next general election there will be a Bill to introduce a community charge in England, thereby abolishing the need for revaluation of domestic properties.

The hon. Gentleman appears to be the champion of commercial ratepayers. He said that he was concerned about the revaluation of commercial premises in Scotland. I am prepared to accept his word, but I suggest that he should find himself another party. He is a member of the party that in Committee opposed the idea of limiting increases in commercial rates to the rate of inflation. His party's policy is to have regular commercial revaluations and, in addition, to remove all controls on local authority expenditure. It would take us back to the days when businesses had to face 30 or 40 per cent. rate increases that bore no relation to their ability to pay and to the days when widows and single parents were faced with huge rate increases. That would be done as a sop to those who hold the reins of power in local government.

It is important that the Bill should reach the statute book as quickly as possible, not because I see the need for a speedy general election but because it is important to the electors of Scotland and to local government confidence. The Bill will restore power to local government at local level. Local government will be able to make its own decisions. It will remove all the machinery of controls on expenditure and make local government directly accountable to the electorate. It will be able to spend what it likes and to do what it likes, in the secure and certain knowledge that it will have to answer for it and explain the bill that the electors have to pay. It is that aspect of the Bill that appals the Labour party. The game is up. The Labour party will no longer be able to force a minority to pay.

The Opposition are opposed to the guillotine motion because they wish the corrupt system from which they have benefited to continue. Under that corrupt system, local government is funded by a tiny minority while the majority are weaned on promises. Therefore, I have no hesitation in supporting the guillotine motion. It will enable us to get on with delivering local government out of the hands of the Labour party and into the hands of the people.

6.8 pm

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): I believe that there should be more discussion of the Bill. It ill becomes the Government to impose a guillotine. As a member of the Committee, I felt that we were making reasonable progress. The Committee has reached clause 20. There is no reason to suggest that we are not making more progress on this Bill than we have made on other Bills.

The Government have not provided answers to many of the questions that are worrying us. For the first time, young people between the ages of 18 and 21 will find themselves in court if they do not pay fines that are to be imposed by taxes that will be enforced by this Government. We do not know whether the Government will allow local authorities to recover fines through the deplorable sheriff warrant system that we have in Scotland. A precedent will be created. The Minister, in Committee and on Second Reading, did not answer that. For example, in a household of five or six people, four may be paying the community tax. What will happen if the sheriff officers come in? It is the law in Scotland that sheriff officers can take possession of and put up for pointing any item in the household, regardless of whom it belongs to. It may be an item borrowed from a next-door neighbour, but that could still be removed from the premises and sold to recover the debt.

It would not be fair if all members of a family, with the exception of one, paid their taxes, but that one individual brought about a situation in which the sheriff's officer was called in and the whole family's property was jeopardised by that one person. If the Minister intends to bring in this type of legislation he should tell us what will happen in those situations. It is all very well for the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) to tell us that people in Scotland welcome the legislation, but it is our duty, in Committee, to go into the matter in depth and let the people of Scotland know that everything will not be in apple pie order as the hon. Gentleman tries to make out. Regardless of whether the legislation is carried, the local authorities and people of Scotland will still reject the policies of the Thatcher Government and the administration of the Secretary of State for Scotland. The hon. Gentleman should not kid himself that the legislation will get the Tories off the hook in Scotland. More and more people will vote Labour at future local elections.

Mr. Henderson: Would the hon. Gentleman care to bet whether there will ever be a Labour councillor in north-east Fife, or whether the Labour candidate in north-east Fife will get a higher percentage of the vote than the Tory candidate in his constituency?

Mr. Martin: I do not know what goes on in the part of Fife that the hon. Gentleman talks about, but in Glasgow, as he knows full well, the Tory party is suffering—not only because of the campaigns that we have waged in Glasgow, but because of the policies of the Government and the Secretary of State for Scotland, which are causing a great deal of damage to the Tory party. Traditional Tory party areas are losing seats all over the place in local government.

In Committee, the Minister has not given us a full explanation of the matters that were discussed yesterday. We do not have a full explanation as to who the so-called responsible person will be that the registering officer will designate. He will be required to give information for the register on each individual in that household. We are told that, if the wrong information is given, that could lead to the person being fined, or if that person refuses to give information, measures will be taken against him.

In many cities in Scotland people live in bedsit accommodation, not as a family but as individuals who pool money to pay the rent. They have no connection except that they stay at the same address. They are not living as a family. The Minister has not given us an explanation of that.

My fear—our fears have not been allayed—is that elderly people may be harassed when registration officers call to ask questions. If a young person is not paying a community tax, questions will be put, in many cases, to elderly parents, such as, "Where is your son? When was the last time you saw him? When was he last in the house? Does he visit?" All those questions may worry a person who is elderly, in bad health or frightened of authority. We have not been told how people's rights will be safeguarded when the registration officer comes to the door. We should be entitled to more consideration.

I do not accept what the hon. Member for Stirling says —that, because the Tories have come up with a poll tax, we should have something to put in its place. If the Tories come up with legislation that I do not like, I am entitled to oppose it. I do not have to have anything else to put in its place.

The Tories are abolishing the rates system. Although it has many faults, the rating system is better than what the Tories are proposing. They are introducing a poll tax, and taxing young people who stay with their parents. They are taxing big families, people in communities like my own and in places such as Possilpark, Springburn, where unemployment is very high, and Denison, where young families are striving to make a living. It ill becomes the hon. Member for Stirling to say that we should be putting something in its place. If we cannot find something better than a poll tax, we should be quiet. The rating system is far better than what the Government propose.

6.18 pm

Mrs. Anna McCurley (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Since I have been in the House I have been involved in about 30 Standing Committees. This is probably the worst Opposition that I have ever experienced on any Standing Committee. It was tragic. Good government and good legislation require good opposition. In this case, the Opposition were found wanting. They had only two amendments accepted; one was a probing amendment and the other they did not know the meaning of. One paltry argument followed the other.

Probing amendments were frequently withdrawn as Opposition Members failed to sustain a case, as they fail to sustain so many cases. That served to highlight the smugness and arrogance of Labour Members, who did not do their homework and believed that no change was OK. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) was the first string in this Committee. The hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) was the second string. In the 16th century, some Spanish ladies used to parade with apes to enhance their rather dubious charms. Those of us who had to listen to that deadly duo find the analogy quite appropriate. As for the contribution of the alliance, none of whom are present, I was reminded of an old section of the *Reader's Digest*, which said that it pays to increase your word power. It did not increase our knowledge.

The Bill has been more than justified by the Ministers in charge and, despite the Opposition, it has had a good airing. That augurs well for a future Bill for England, which will be introduced in the new session. The test that was proposed for the Bill is its fairness, simplicity and accountability. Fairness is probably the first principle.

The burden of rates has fallen on too small a section of Scottish society. The Opposition would have us believe that the burden can be borne lightly, thus relieving non-payers. Is that the truth, however? Far too many of my constituents wrote far too many letters contradicting that view—there were 2,000 a week at its height. They are not rich. Many are elderly with admittedly biggish houses which have been family houses and which they are reluctant to leave because of happy memories. Are they to be relocated? Many have very little in the bank—sometimes as little as £500 or £600, but enough to attract no benefits, and some pay more than £1,000 a year in rates.

Those who advance the pathetic and curious argument that all who live in "big houses" are loaded should come to the more genteel parts of my constituency, such as Gourock, where they will see that genteel penury is no more attractive than the penury found in the most deprived areas. By paying rates of such magnitude, those people supported families in other areas who received many state benefits and enjoyed a rate-free existence, but they had to penny-pinch and save. In Committee we got nothing but the politics of envy and the size of people's houses from the Opposition. Such arguments do not pass the test of fairness.

The community charge would redistribute the burden. Of course some people will pay for the first time, but they will pay the equivalent of a packet of cigarettes a week for street lighting, dustbin collection, street cleaning, libraries, burial grounds, roads, sewers and clean water. That sounds like a bargain. Why should they not pay? It is a fair principle. Naturally, many better-off people may benefit, but bearing in mind the other burdens of taxation that are laid upon them, why not?

We should all attempt to contribute something to our society. It is a principle. Despite what the Labour party tried to tell us in Committee, the Scottish people are highly principled. For those who are not, perhaps accountability may for the first time impinge on their consciences. Perhaps then, local councils, which are mostly controlled by Labour, would not be able to use special bribery status areas quite as freely as they can at the moment to boost their electoral hopes.

Although the community charge is not a poll tax and therefore not a tax on the right to vote—there will be no direct connection with the right to vote — the connection may be established in a different way. It may have a direct bearing on the way in which votes are cast in future. Perhaps that, above all, is why the Opposition just do not like the Bill.

Strangely enough, the two main principles were disposed of relatively quickly in Committee, but hours of false outrage were expended on methods of collection. There were wild accusations about a betrayal of human rights. The whole nasty gamut of rhetoric emerged and

[Mrs. Anna McCurley]

fizzled out, but not before the Opposition were rowing among themselves on a point of principle. Victory did not go to the Front Bench, but to an elder statesman who is laying down the burden at the next election.

It seems that I am restricted by time, but I have one more thing to say to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin), who has just left the Chamber. We have heard of the proposals being made at the expense of Glasgow. Last weekend, there were five symphony concerts and three new restaurants opened. There is a healthy economy in Glasgow. Surely somebody must be benefiting. We should hear a bit more about areas such as mine which are not as well served as Glasgow and which have been milked dry by Glasgow for years. It is time that the balance was redressed, and I believe that the Bill can do that.

6.24 pm

Mr. Jim Craigen (Glasgow, Maryhill): My constituency will not benefit from the Bill. The figures show that all six wards within the Glasgow district will be worse off. In my written evidence in response to the Green Paper, I reckoned that between £8 million and £12 million would be taken out of my area's purchasing power.

We should be blunt about it. The Bill was born out of the panic which set into Scottish Toryism after the 1985 revaluation. It owes more to the plight of the Scottish Tory party than it does to reducing the difficulties of Scottish ratepayers. The poll tax being proposed will be no more progressive than the present rating system, with all its disadvantages. It certainly will not produce greater accountability because 80 per cent. of local authority revenue will be determined by the Government. It most certainly will not iron out the rating and valuation disparities between Scotland and England about which many of us received letters during the 1985 revaluation. I do not think that it will last because it lacks the consensus that is necessary for any system of local government finance.

I have listened to Ministers talk about this so-called radical system. The idea of a poll tax is so old that this dumb lot think that it is a novel means of taxation. I give the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) full marks. He laboured away in the House of Commons Library on his wee pamphlet, "A Case for a Poll Tax" and the desperate men on the Government Front Bench were so lacking in ideas of their own that they adopted it. They have been talking about reforming the rating system for the past 17 years. The right hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger) was talking about it in 1970 when I fought him as a Labour and Co-operative candidate. He was a longer serving Secretary of State for Scotland than most, but he did nothing to introduce legislation on the subject. It is the Conservatives who have set the agenda for rating reform.

I have been guillotined in this debate, so my final point is that the Government have a way of putting the most awkward things at the end of a Bill. I want more time to discuss the new revenue support grant, which is to replace rate support grant, and what it means in terms of the finance available to local authorities. Business men in England were asked by the Department of the Environment to comment on the Green Paper and the national non-domestic rate which is proposed. They expressed the fear that it might end up as another source of finance for the Government, rather like the road fund licence. Thus business men could contribute to the non-domestic rate while the Treasury filches the money.

With this Bill, Scotland is being asked to pay a heavy price to save a dwindling number of Conservative Members and Ministers who are on their way out anyway.

6.28 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): This has not been a pleasant debate or one which has reflected much credit on the House. I hope that, when the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mrs. McCurley) reads her speech, as no doubt she will, she will regret some of her opening remarks. We extend a certain traditional courtesy to our colleagues in the House, irrespective of party, but I think that she has gone some way to forfeiting that right in the future.

A 26-minute speech from the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst) did not greatly improve the tenor of the argument or the quality of life of any of us, but I suppose that we must put up with that.

I express thanks to my hon. Friends the Members for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton), for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) and for Paisley, North (Mr. Adams) and all the other Labour Members who have worked extremely hard on this Bill in Committee and had to put up with a great deal.

Many sour comments have been made during the debate and in Committee. If the Bill is such a triumph for Ministers—many splendid speeches have been made and much propaganda has been propagated by the Government in Committee—why are we faced with a guillotine? I can only assume that it is because Conservative Members have had to spend many hours listening to the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland. That is an occupation that lacks inspirational content.

I noticed that the hon. Gentleman was mentioned in the columns of *The Scotsman* the other day, praising the efforts and the effectiveness of my hon. Friend the Member for Cathcart. That uncharacteristically generous and balanced judgment arose because he was credited with certain remarks of mine. However, today, an apology appeared in *The Scotsman*. I understood and appreciated that those remarks were unintentionally attributed to the Under-Secretary of State but I recommend that precedent to him. If he followed it he would improve the quality of his output in future.

The management of the Bill, about which I feel strongly, has been mistaken and at times offensive. There has been a great deal of indecent haste, and there is a feeling that from the beginning the Government have expected there to be a guillotine, have been reconciled to one and have been prepared to force the Bill through in the minimum of time and with the minimum of effort. The whole thing has been extraordinary.

The questions posed by my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) cry out to be answered, but they have not been. Why does the Bill exist? Why have the Government suddenly abandoned their considered position? Why have they betrayed the work that has been done by Conservative Governments over many years on the problems of the rating system? The record confirms what many hon. Members have long guessed—that the Bill arose because of arguments of expediency, because of political opportunism and because of a fear about a rapid deterioration in the Tories' electoral

position in Scotland. That is not the basis for a sensible, far-reaching and significant reform of local government structure.

The House will remember — it has already been mentioned—that a Green Paper was published in 1981. We do not hear much about the Green Paper because it addressed itself to the arguments about a poll tax. It made the case against the poll tax extremely persuasively. That must be something of an embarrassment to the Government.

In August 1983 the present Administration produced their own White Paper. That White Paper contained the Government's decision that the rating system was fundamentally sound and that the alternatives should be rejected. The volte face, the climb down, is not an issue of principle, but, I repeat, a surrender to expediency.

The Secretary of State, who inherited that solution, is probably embarrassed. However, he has the admirable discipline of a trained advocate and presents a bad case without flinching.

The Leader of the House made no effort to justify what he was laying before the House. He did not suggest that there was a filibuster. He did not say that the guillotine was necessary for certain reasons. He said, in effect, that the Government had decided to have a guillotine and that it suited their convenience. That is not an impressive or a compelling argument for the motion.

It is easy to be cynical. It may well be that the arguments against a guillotine are no more than ritual rage and fury and that the Opposition are simply doing what the Opposition must do. Personally, I have no enthusiasm for guillotines. I have been a Labour Front Bench spokesman for five years. During that time — the Minister may take this as a compliment — there have been many highly contentious Bills. We have had the entire gamut of the war between local and central Government appearing in statutory form for consideration. However, during those five years we have had only one guillotine on a Scottish Bill.

I take no particular pride in guillotines. They are not some sort of machismo badge that the Opposition should strike and count at the end of every year to see what they have achieved. That is a ludicrous proposition. However, a guillotine in this case was inevitable because of the way in which the Government set about their business. There was a cynical clocking up of the hours.

The Leader of the House delicately said that the motion was not quite unprecedented, and he produced an example from a far distant place and a far different legislative subject. I have never served on the Committee of a Bill that has been guillotined, and I am a battle-scared veteran of Committee stages of Scottish Bills. I have never known a sittings motion that started off with double banking on day one, and on day two we met again at 9 o'clock. I cannot remember a Bill in which there has been so little interest in any sort of constructive debate.

I did not expect Ministers to give concessions on essential matters of principle which struck at the heart of the scheme. I recognise that they are ghirled to it and that they are thrawn and obstinately committed to this scheme for reasons that I believe are deeply mistaken.

It was always possible to have an intelligent, flexible and sensible approach at another tier, but I cannot remember any legislation where there has been more alarm, concern and anxiety about the practicalities, the nuts and bolts, how the scheme will operate and whether it can be operated. That comes not just from COSLA and local Labour councils, but from almost everyone who has expertise and conviction in this sector who has taken the trouble to consider the possibilities and to make comments and points about the legislation. We have had nothing from the Conservative party.

I was astonished at the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde, who brought forward a quite extraordinary doctrine. She suggested that the effectiveness of an Opposition was judged by the number of concessions made by the Government. If that is the way in which she judges the effectiveness of an Opposition, she may have an unhappy time when she is on the Opposition Benches. I know the hon. Lady well enough to know that she will pop up again, although I think that her chances locally are distinctly gloomy. I asked the House to look at that yardstick that was put forward, but it should agree that it hardly merits serious consideration.

The Government were determined to push the Bill through. They were determined to have as little delay and as little in the way of debate as they could get away with. The Leader of the House had to come forward and argue a case, almost by default, on that basis.

I have listened to the speeches this evening and I have not heard anything to change my mind on that. The hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) made a blistering attack. That attack was a sign of shining ability that no doubt persuaded other Conservative Members that he should return to the Back Benches. I was not impressed.

Mr. Allan Stewart: If the hon. Gentleman's analysis of the Opposition's tactics is correct—that they wish to be constructive and deal with technical points — why did they spend 25 hours on clause 1?

Mr. Dewar: The Leader of the House made the point that a good deal of progress had been made. We are at clause 20. The hon. Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Henderson) suggested that clause 1 was a simple matter. That may be the view of a simple mind. However, the clause strikes at the heart of a fundamental argument about the way in which we organise local government finance.

The truth is that we are considering a political gesture. This measure must go on the statute book. It will be borne like a talisman into battle in areas like Pentlands, Edinburgh, South and Eastwood to try to rally the Tory faithful and see the Conservative party through the dark days.

We object fundamentally to the proposed scheme. It is unrelated to the ability to pay. It will undoubtedly bring about a substantial switch in the contributions made and the percentages that areas give to local taxation between the more prosperous and the less prosperous.

I have no doubt that there are some attractive arguments for the scheme. I am certainly not one of those who would sweep aside the problems of people such as the widow to whom the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden referred. One must look at the balance of social justice that lies behind the scheme.

Let me give a warning—this is the only point that I shall mention in substance — to those who have calculated what their community charges might be and compared them with their current rates bills. One can hear the cash registers ringing as they rush to support the

[Mr. Dewar]

scheme. They should take a longer view, even if personal financial advantage is to be the way in which to judge something as far-reaching as this.

The hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) made a virtue of the fact that industry and commerce will be tied to the retail prices index, which means that the buoyancy revenue will fall on what was once the domestic ratepayer but is not the payer of the community charge. The hon. Gentleman grins with delight because he sees the narrow political advantage in that. However, he does not realise that many things could happen, such as new section duties, or the £21 million that the administration of this scheme will cost local government, or wage settlements funded at only 50 per cent. with the rest to come from rates. Instead of these additions being spread across the board, they will all fall upon the community charge. The comforting gap that the people in Pentlands, Eastwood and Strathkelvin and Bearsden think will be there for all time will suddenly start closing with alarming rapidity.

The gearing is vicious, and the community charge will start rising fast, not because of profligacy, irresponsibility or Socialist policies, but because of the escalator built into the scheme. I warn the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden, if he survives the next election—who am I to make a judgment on that?—that in a few years' time the widows about whom he is concerned now will not be thanking him for the community charge because in their eyes it will be becoming the monster that it is in ours now.

There is every reason for looking sceptically at and properly debating this Bill. There is the administrative nightmare with which we shall be faced when this incredible and unworkable scheme, which has been criticised from almost every side, is put into operation. There are the problems of second homes, hostels, students, collection, diligence and the register. These points have not been properly discussed because of the way in which the Government have set about their business.

As most of my hon. Friends would concede, I have considerable respect for the Committee procedure. Committees can be extremely valuable and productive. I look back with particular pleasure on a number of Committees, some of which I have shared with Conservative Members. This appears to have been rather an arid Committee, because of the approach taken by the Government, who have seen the Committee merely as a irritating procedural exercise that has to be completed. The motion shows no respect for the procedures of the House, and it has set, or threatens to set, some unpalatable precedents that Conservative Members may regret when, within a few short months, they find themselves on the Opposition Benches. It would be much more sensible if the Secretary of State would tell the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Ancram) that he is scrapping the guillotine motion and going back to a proper consideration of the Bill. That consideration should be done with flexibility, honesty and openness of mind, because that would produce better legislation.

6.44 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): The various Opposition parties have sought to convey fury at the timetable motion that the House is being asked to accept. That sound and fury would have been a bit more convincing if, for the greater part of the debate, there had been more than a dozen Scottish Labour Members in the Chamber. The fact that more than two thirds of Scottish Labour Members have failed to take any part, even by their presence, in the debate cannot be reconciled with the argument that this is a constitutional outrage. In addition, apart from the past five minutes, the Scottish National party has not been present for the debate and the Liberal party in Scotland has had no presence. Its sole contribution was the speech by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) who serves on the Committee.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): The right hon. and learned Gentleman is an honest man. Surely he will admit that on ritualistic occasions such as this, the last thing that Members of Parliament want to do is spend time listening to other Members of Parliament going on.

Mr. Rifkind: That is a most extraordinary admission from the hon. Member. His party has characterised the motion as a constitutional outrage, but so uninterested are they in it that not one of their members, with the solitary exception of the hon. Member for Rochdale (Mr. Smith), who graced us with his presence for five minutes, has thought it appropriate to be present on this occasion. If the people of Scotland could see the absence of interest by the Opposition parties in this debate they would come to a clear conclusion.

The House will be reminded of the remark on a previous occasion by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), who is Opposition Front Bench spokesman on trade and industry, during a debate on a similar motion during the last Labour Government:

"There is a growing conviction that to make too much fuss about a timetable is indulging in a certain amount of hypocrisy." — [*Official Report*, 7 July 1975; Vol. 895, c. 162.]

When the Leader of the House said last week that there would be a timetable motion, we got an indignant response from the two Opposition Front Bench spokesmen in Committee. Such was their indignation that they thought it appropriate to issue a joint statement, which was reported in the press. They protested that the Opposition had not attempted deliberately to delay the Bill. However, they had "argued forcibly".

I am sure that a number of my hon. Friends will have consulted the proceedings in Committee to see what this forcible argument amounted to. For example, they will have seen the contribution of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) when he introduced his amendment No. 41. He said:

"I hope that the Minister understands the words on the amendment paper or that his advisers can tell him what they mean, because I have no idea. Can the Minister give me an explanation?" — [*Official Report, First Scottish Standing Committee*, 15 January 1987; c. 330.]

The hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) the other Opposition spokesman, moved amendment No. 118, provided for the Opposition by COSLA. After explaining COSLA's views, he said:

"I confess that I do not understand that." — [*Official Report, First Scottish Standing Committee*, 22 January 1987; c. 584.]

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Brown) was in a slightly more difficult position. At least the two hon. Gentleman could vote for their amendments, because

they knew about them. He found, to his discomfiture, that he had no awareness at least one amendment on which his name appeared. He informed his colleagues:

"I have not been consulted about the matter and I am getting a wee bit tired of being the odd man out being totally misunderstood when I talk about an amendment." —[*Official Report, First Scottish Standing Committee*, 29 January 1987; c. 742.]

I am bound to say to the House——

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Not bound.

Mr. Rifkind: Well, I am going to say it.

I must say to the House that it may be contributions of this fluency from the Opposition that explain the conclusion of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) that the Committee had been a little arid. He suggested that that was the Government's fault, but let us consider not the Government's view or the Opposition's view of whose responsibility it is, but that of the Scottish press. He will know that that is not a great friend of the Conservative party or the Government.

I want to start with an independent newspaper; the *Glasgow Herald*, which, under the heading "Weak opposition" stated:

"The results so far have been undramatic, though there was some pointless backbench filibustering at the end of the year. The promised major offensive has failed to materialise."

The report continued:

"The result is another piece of ineffectual opposition."

I appreciate that Opposition Members may not consider that to be a very Socialist paper and may say, "Well, what would you expect the *Glasgow Herald* to say?" Let us consider what the Scottish *Daily Record* said. Opposition Members will agree that that newspaper is normally friendly to the Labour party cause. That paper stated:

"But Labour's promise to give rates reform a rough ride has never really materialised."

Mr. Foulkes: What about the *Sunday Post*?

Mr. Rifkind: I could quote from the *Sunday Post*, but I want to refer to a newspaper which is at least as much in tune with the Labour party as the Scottish *Daily Record*. I want to refer to the Glasgow *Evening Times*. What did that paper say about the party which it normally supports? Under the heading "Pathetic opposition" it stated:

"Scottish Labour MPs win no plaudits for their opposition to the Bill.

The problem for the Labour Party is that it has chosen to take the coward's approach on the question of rates.

It wants to change the system but does not know what to replace it with.

It suits their political purposes to have the rates loaded unfairly in favour of their own supporters."

The report concluded:

"But the Labour opposition to the Bill has been pathetic.

The party which glories and delights in its overwhelming lead in the Scottish opinion polls should perform better on such crucial issues."

If the debate in Committee has been arid, who is responsible for that aridity?

I want to refer to yet another Left-wing journal which has chosen to comment on the Committee's proceedings and the attitude of the Labour party. This a magazine entitled *Radical Scotland*—not exactly the most avid supporter of Conservative policy. In its latest issue, the journal states:

"Labour . . . have been loud in their condemnation of the Tory proposals, but have not come forward with any positive proposals themselves for any change, even minor, to local government funding. (Can it really be perfect?) They thereby lay themselves open to Tory jibes of 'defending the status quo', and appearing to become the party of reaction."

The report continues by claiming—this is perhaps the gem of them all—

"It seems that a recent move within Labour's ranks for positive proposals was knocked back (from the top) on the grounds that 'if we produce anything, it will just get attacked'."

I like to be a fair man on these occasions. I know perfectly well that it would be unreasonable for me to expect the Opposition or the country to accept the Conservative party's views of the Labour party's performance. However, when the *Daily Record*, the Glasgow *Evening Times* and *Radical Scotland* have reported in such unequivocal terms, we are entitled to say that the Labour party has not provided any opposition to the Bill because it does not know how to do so.

I recollect that on Second Reading, two delegations came to the House to lobby Members. One was from the Federation of Scottish Ratepayers. That delegation came to lobby in favour of the Bill and its members paid their own fares down. The other delegation came from the Confederation of Scottish Local Authorities, which has the appearance of a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Labour party. It appeared then and today and we are entitled to assume, unless there is evidence to the contrary, that they had their fares paid by Scottish ratepayers.

Mr. Dewar: Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman not agree that COSLA's composition is the result of the decision of the Scottish electorate, and that he has led his party to the worst set of local election results in political history?

Mr. Rifkind: No, the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues failed to answer the correct point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth). In its approach to the Bill, COSLA has sought to establish a private relationship with the Labour party and with Opposition parties. Instead of seeing its obligation to service the needs of all Members of Parliament, it has sought to be exclusive in the way that I have described.

The Bill is a radical and reforming measure, as the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) was kind enough to admit by quoting my earlier comments. He suggested that it was unacceptable because it resulted in everyone having to contribute to the costs of local government. He did not explain, what he should have realised, that all pay towards the costs of central Government. Everyone pays income tax or indirect taxes or, at the very least, VAT and other forms of indirect taxation. However, a substantial proportion of the adult population do not pay a penny towards the costs of local authorities. The hon. Member for East Lothian, a spokesman for the Labour party, did not seem to be aware that in Scotland about 750,000 Scottish adults who are not spouses or unemployed, the vast majority of whom are earning and pay income tax to central Government, do not under the present system pay a penny in contributions to local government.

The hon. Member for East Lothian and his colleagues must ask why they are defending a system which means that such people, many of whom earn more than old-age pensioners, do not pay a penny towards the rates raised by local authorities, while pensioners and others on low incomes who happen to be householders sometimes make substantial contributions.

[Mr. Rifkind]

The Labour party was correct to rule out local income tax, but by doing so it has emphasised what we have emphasised — that the only alternative to a discredited rating system is the community charge as proposed in the Bill. I have not the slightest doubt that, although it is impossible to achieve a perfect system of taxation, a system based on accountability, on the assumption that all adults who benefit from local authority services should make a contribution to the cost of those services, and which takes into account the ability to pay by a system which will provide up to 80 per cent. rebates for those who require it, should commend itself to the House. I therefore commend the motion to the House.

Question put:-

The House divided: Ayes, 287 Noes 187.

Division No. 89] **[7.00 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fletcher, Sir Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gorst, John
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Sir Carol
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trotter, Neville
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John

Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Francis Maude and
Mr. Tony Durant.

NOES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Anderson, Donald
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John McWilliam and
Mr. Tony Lloyd.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the following provisions shall apply to the remaining proceedings on the Bill:

Committee

1.—(1) The Standing Committee to which the Bill is allocated shall report the Bill to the House on or before 19th February 1987.

(2) Proceedings on the Bill at a sitting of the Standing Committee on the said 19th February may continue until Ten o'clock, whether or not the House is adjourned before that time, and if the House is adjourned before those proceedings have been brought to a conclusion the Standing Committee shall report the Bill to the House on 20th February.

Report and Third Reading

2.—(1) The proceedings on consideration and Third Reading of the Bill shall be completed in two allotted days and shall be brought to a conclusion at Ten o'clock on the second of those days; and for the purposes of Standing Order No. 80 (Business Committee) this Order shall be taken to allot to the proceedings on consideration such part of those days as the Resolution of the Business Committee may determine.

(2) The Business Committee shall report to the House its Resolutions as to the proceedings on consideration of the Bill, and as to the allocation of time between those proceedings and proceedings on Third Reading, not later than the fourth day on which the House sits after the day on which the Chairman of the Standing Committee reports the Bill to the House.

(3) The Resolutions in any Report made under Standing Order No. 80 may be varied by a further Report so made, whether or not within the time specified in sub-paragraph (2) above, and whether or not the Resolutions have been agreed to by the House.

(4) The Resolutions of the Business Committee may include alterations in the order in which proceedings on consideration of the Bill are taken.

Procedure in Standing Committee

3.—(1) At a sitting of the Standing Committee at which any proceedings on the Bill are to be brought to a conclusion under a Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee the Chairman shall not adjourn the Committee under any Order relating to the sittings of the Committee until the proceedings have been brought to a conclusion.

(2) No Motion shall be moved in the Standing Committee relating to the sitting of the Committee except by a member of the Government, and the Chairman shall permit a brief explanatory statement from the Member who makes, and from a Member who opposes, the Motion, and shall then put the Question thereon.

[Mr. Rifkind]

4. No Motion shall be made to alter the order in which Clauses, Schedules, new Clauses and new Schedules are to be taken in the Standing Committee but the Resolutions of the Business Sub-Committee may include alterations in that order.

Conclusion of proceedings in Committee

5. On the conclusion of the proceedings in any Committee on the Bill the Chairman shall report the Bill to the House without putting any Question.

Dilatory Motions

6. No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, proceedings on the Bill shall be made in the Standing Committee or on an allotted day except by a Member of the Government, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

Extra time on first allotted day

7. — (1) On the first allotted day paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings on the Bill for two hours after Ten o'clock.

(2) Any period during which proceedings on the Bill may be proceeded with after Ten o'clock under paragraph (7) of Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) shall be in addition to the said period of two hours.

(3) If the first allotted day is one to which a Motion for the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 stands over from an earlier day, a period of time equal to the duration of the proceedings upon that Motion shall be added to the said period of two hours.

Private business

8. Any private business which has been set down for consideration at Seven o'clock on an allotted day shall, instead of being considered as provided by Standing Orders, be considered at the conclusion of the proceedings on the Bill on that day, and paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the private business for a period of three hours from the conclusion of the proceedings on the Bill or, if those proceedings are concluded before Ten o'clock, for a period equal to the time elapsing between Seven o'clock and the conclusion of those proceedings.

Conclusion of proceedings

9.—(1) For the purpose of bringing to a conclusion any proceedings which are to be brought to a conclusion at a time appointed by this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee or the Business Sub-Committee and which have not previously been brought to a conclusion, the Chairman or Mr. Speaker shall forthwith put the following Questions (but no others);

(*a*) any Question already proposed from the Chair;

(*b*) any Question necessary to bring to a decision a Question so proposed (including, in the case of a new Clause or new Schedule which has been read a second time, the Question that the Clause or Schedule be added to the Bill);

(*c*) the Question on any Amendment or Motion standing on the Order Paper in the name of any Member, if that Amendment or Motion is moved by a Member of the Government;

(*d*) any other Question necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded; and on a Motion so made for a new Clause or a new Schedule, the Chairman or Mr. Speaker shall put only the Question that the Clause or Schedule be added to the Bill.

(2) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (1) above shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

(3) If an allotted day is one on which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) would, apart from this Order, stand over to Seven o'clock—

(*a*) that Motion shall stand over until the conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion at or before that time;

(*b*) the bringing to a conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion after that time shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

(4) If an allotted day is one to which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 stands over from an earlier day, the bringing to a conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion on that day shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

Supplemental orders

10. — (1) The proceedings on any Motion made in the House by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order (including anything which might have been the subject of a report of the Business Committee or Business Sub-Committee) shall, if not previously concluded, be brought to a conclusion one hour after they have been commenced, and paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings.

(2) If on an allotted day on which any proceedings on the Bill are to be brought to a conclusion at a time appointed by this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee the House is adjourned, or the sitting is suspended, before that time no notice shall be required of a Motion made at the next sitting by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order.

Saving

11. Nothing in this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee or Business Sub-Committee shall—

(*a*) prevent any proceedings to which the Order or Resolution applies from being taken or completed earlier than is required by the Order or Resolution, or

(*b*) prevent any business (whether on the Bill or not) from being proceeded with on any day after the completion of all such proceedings on the Bill as are to be taken on that day.

Re-committal

12. — (1) References in this Order to proceedings on Consideration or proceedings on Third Reading include references to proceedings, at those stages respectively, for, on or in consequence of re-committal.

(2) On an allotted day no debate shall be permitted on any Motion to re-commit the Bill (whether as a whole or otherwise), and Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith any Question necessary to dispose of the Motion, including the Question on any amendment moved to the Question.

Interpretation

13. In this Order—

"allotted day" means any day (other than a Friday) on which the Bill is put down as first Government Order of the Day provided that a Motion for allotting time to the proceedings on the Bill to be taken on that day either has been agreed to on a previous day or is set down for consideration on that day;

"the Bill" means the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Bill;

"Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee" means a Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee as agreed to by the Standing Committee;

"Resolution of the Business Committee" means a Resolution of the Business Committee as agreed to by the House.

Petroleum Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New clause 1

GRANTS FOR ABANDONMENT PROGRAMMES

"The Secretary of State may, after consultation with the Treasury, make grants to a person or persons who have submitted a programme under section 1 and which has been approved or revised under sections 4 and 6 for the purposes of implementing the programme.'.—*[Mr. Rowlands.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

7.10 pm

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

In Committee, we were reminded of just how much money in tax revenue has been obtained from the North sea since 1979. It was a staggering £352·4 billion, obtained by way of direct taxes from North sea oil, the largest fiscal windfall in modern British history — and the Government have been the beneficiaries of it.

At the same time we have become increasingly aware that a Government in the mid-1990s will begin to face the problem of repaying a significant proportion of those revenues as part and parcel of relief against the cost of abandonment. It is a sobering thought that although Governments have enjoyed this enormous fiscal windfall, the Government of the mid-1990s will not only have less revenue from the North sea — because production will have declined by at least 1 million barrels a day and because of the probable lower average oil price—but, as the abandonment programme gets under way and the costs begin to come in, it is likely that the Government will have to pay a very large proportion, possibly up to 85 per cent., of the cost of abandonment. Therefore, we are not discussing matters of marginal significance; we are talking about very considerable items of expenditure and tax relief at a time when the revenues which created the development and which have been enjoyed by this Government will be declining both in real terms and in terms of offsetting the cost of abandonment by means of tax relief.

I make no apology, therefore, for endeavouring by means of this new clause to open up debate about the fiscal arrangements that will prevail and to put forward the suggestion that we consider a grant structure as much as a tax relief system. As the Minister will recall, we considered whether the Government, even at this stage, knowing what lies ahead, should not hypothecate in some form or other existing revenue to cover future costs. After all, the Government will urge the oil industry to prepare for this eventuality in its accounting and even to put money into trust funds of some kind in advance of abandonment programmes. The Government, however, have not done this, and I do not suppose that they will hypothecate any percentage of current oil revenues from the North sea to cover the costs that a future Government must face.

We could not, although we wanted to, put down an amendment to that effect because it was inhibited by the scope of the financial resolution, so we decided to raise the issue and open up for debate methods of meeting these enormous costs in the coming decade, costs that will fall on the Government and taxpayer more than on the industry itself.

The reason why we should look at a grant system instead of tax relief is that the work of Professor Kemp showed that the tax relief system could be capricious. Abandonment costs in different fields and installations could attract tax relief of varying amounts, from 35 per cent. to 85 per cent. Such a capricious and unpredictable incidence of relief could bring confusion to the development of abandonment programmes. We identified some of the problems in Committee, and we return to the argument now in a rather different form by proposing in this new clause that the Secretary of State should have power to make grants rather than give tax relief.

One of the most valuable things that the Minister can do when he replies is to clarify the tax position. It would be very useful for everyone, particularly those outside the House, to have a clear statement from the Minister about the tax position. As I understand it, there would be three forms of tax relief on abandonment: against corporation tax, in relation to petroleum revenue tax, and in relation to royalty payments. When he replies, will the Minister make it absolutely clear what these reliefs are and what the existing position is? Could the whole of any abandonment cost be offset against PRT? Over what period could these costs be set against the various taxes? From the analysis carried out by Professor Kemp and from the informal discussions that other hon. Members and I have had with people in the oil industry, we know that under existing rules a company may, over the life of a field, pay PRT at an average rate of, say, 53 per cent., but receive little or no PRT relief on abandonment because of the incidence of the oil allowances. It is particularly in relation to PRT that I hope the Minister will help the House in clarifying the position.

Given the possibility that tax relief can be capricious and unpredictable and can vary widely, we believe that there is a case for considering a grant system as a better alternative for covering the cost of abandonment. The Minister and his Department have done some work on this and the Norwegians went into this in considerable detail. I have a considered report by the Norwegian Ministry of Finance and Customs on the whole question of the law regarding allocation of costs of removal of installation and tax. After the issue had been considered at some length, the report, on page 30, concluded:

"To utilise the tax system as a mechanism to allocate the removal costs between the public and the oil companies is unnecessarily complicated. Such a procedure would weaken the financial control with the removal, hereunder the cost-consciousness of the companies".

It decided that it would be far better to introduce some form of grant structure than to meet the cost by way of relief from taxation already paid.

The Norwegian system is that the companies would create a separate account for a removal project. The cost would then be clearly identified and the State would pay its share as the expenses were incurred during the course of the abandonment programme. The idea is to have a grant relating to the overall payment of tax made by a company on a particular field.

These are interesting and serious proposals. All that we are proposing in new clause 1 is to put into place the opportunity and power for the Secretary of State to do this. None of us knows how it will work out. We cannot be sure how large abandonment costs will be—at their gross it is estimated that they could be as high as £6 billion — but we assume that, with some form of partial

[Mr. Ted Rowlands]

removal, we are talking of a total of £3 billion to £4 billion. If the State has to pay back 85 per cent. in tax relief in the mid-1990s, at a time of declining oil revenues, there is a strong case for considering the alternative method of covering the costs. That is the conclusion of the Norwegians, having studied the matter carefully. We should not close the door on that option. That is why we have proposed new clause 1.

When we have determined the legislative framework for abandonment programmes, the next and most urgent task will be to create the financial framework for those programmes. Therefore, I ask the Minister to make a clear statement on the existing tax position by indicating what reliefs are available and the period over which they can offset the cost of abandonment. Does the Minister believe, as everyone outside does, that the tax relief system has a capricious character which could lead to considerable variations in the payment of tax relief on abandonment costs? Will the Minister at least consider the option of a grant structure if the system of tax relief is complicated and in some cases inequitable?

Before the Norwegians made their law, they consulted the major oil companies operating in the Norwegian North sea. Some of those companies also operate in our North sea. The oil companies expressed a preference for a grant structure. There are divided views in the oil industry. Until they know the tax position, they cannot make a decision. All we propose in new clause 1 is to give power to the Secretary of State to establish a grant system. We are saying not that such a system should be implemented, but that it is a reasonable option. It is in that light that we put forward new clause 1.

The Minister of State, Department of Energy (Mr. Alick Buchanan-Smith): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for proposing the new clause because it raises an important issue. Although we touched on it in Committee it is helpful and relevant to return to it because it is, I understand, still under discussion in the industry as a possible means of handling the financial aspects of abandonment. As the hon. Gentleman rightly said, the matter has also been discussed in Norway, although I do not think that anything has yet been approved by the Norwegian parliament, the Storting, as the route to be followed.

As I said in Committee, the way in which the Government eventually decide to pay their share of abandonment costs still needs further consideration. That will include consideration of the possibility of the non-fiscal, grant-aided approach that the hon. Gentleman mentioned. I am aware that some people in the industry have expressed a preference for that approach, although I believe that the United Kingdom Offshore Operators' Association is still considering whether to make a formal request to the Government that this be considered.

As I told the House on Second Reading, the Bill contains provisions which give an enabling power to amend royalties procedures so that abandonment costs may be carried back and set off against royalties paid earlier. This enabling power will be used only if the Government decide that the existing fiscal system of relief for abandonment costs should be maintained, possibly with some technical amendments. Against that background, I understand why the hon. Gentleman asks whether the other route might be considered as well.

The Government have not come to a final view, but if we go down the grants route I do not believe that it is necessary to provide the power now, so not providing the power in no way prejudices consideration of the non-fiscal route. The House should reflect that under neither route is it envisaged that very much in the way of grant or tax and royalty relief will need to be given for a number of years, although I acknowledge that when abandonment happens considerable sums of money may be involved. It is possible that one or two abandonments will take place earlier but the great bulk of abandonment is likely to be later in the next decade, possibly towards the end of the century and later.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Can the Minister tell us where the platforms are situated which are likely to face removal earlier?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: It is impossible to be specific because no company has yet come forward with proposals for abandonment. Of course, companies are not required to do so. One of the things that has marked the North sea, as we discussed in Committee, is the fact that most of the fields have so far performed better than was envisaged. That has meant that their life has been longer than expected. Speculation on when platforms are likely to be removed is like speculation on the price of oil—one is as likely to be wrong as right, so it is not speculation that I wish to undertake.

The point I was making is that this is some time away, so if a grant system were to be adopted it would be a considerable time before a significant number of payments had to be made. In those circumstances, it would be necessary to make legislative provision, which would have to be put before parliament in due course. Of course, we already have fiscal arrangements because the costs can be put against the taxes which the hon. Gentleman mentioned. The general arrangements are in place, although detailed arrangements would have to be discussed between the industry and the Inland Revenue. No doubt consultation would take place. Ultimately, it would be the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer to decide on the changes necessary to take full account of the details and the special circumstances that may arise.

We have in place tax arrangements which would allow the fiscal route to be followed. With that route, the need to repay royalties could involve adjusting royalty assessments for some years prior to abandonment. As we have those tax facilities in place, we decided that it was wise to use the opportunity of the Bill to make the enabling power applicable to such assessments from an early date as it is obviouslynot desirable retrospectively to amend the licence model clauses under which the assessments are made.

If I recollect correctly, in Committee the hon. Gentleman said that the carry-back power in the Bill might not go far enough. I said that in such cases, which would probably be isolated cases, if further carry back were necessary it could be dealt with by amendments to the individual licences. That illustrates that if we are to follow the fiscal route now in place we must legislate now. If, after further consultation with the industry, we decide to go down the route suggested in the new clause, there is not the same urgency to legislate now, although power would have to be taken at the appropriate time in order to be able to follow that route.

Mr. Rowlands: The right hon. Gentleman has confined his remarks to royalty payments and repayments for abandonment costs. Will he say something about PRT? Royalty payments bring in about £2 billion per year from the North sea, but PRT brings in about £6 billion, so the problems about PRT will concern us most.

7.30 pm

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The hon. Gentleman is correct. There is no doubt that the bulk of abandonment costs would be against PRT. If changes have to be made to the rules, the ability to make those changes already exists, but we do not have the necessary powers in relation to royalties. That is the reason for the Bill.

I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising this important issue. We have chosen this Bill to legislate in a specific way and I suppose that that shows that to some extent this is the preferred route to allow for abandonment costs. As I said earlier, I emphasise that no final decision has been taken and the route that the hon. Gentleman suggests is still possible. It is being considered by the industry and if the industry wishes to argue a case my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer and I will consult with the industry. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman seeks one route or the other. He is simply saying that this is an alternative route which might be used. Nothing in the Bill would prejudice the use of that route, and it does not require legislation at a later stage. Given that clarification, I do not think that the new clause should be pressed.

Mr. Rowlands: I am half comforted by what the Minister has said. It is at least clear that he has an open mind about the notion that we might pursue a resolution of the problem of abandonment costs by grant rather than by tax relief. He has said that he will keep the option open. I am a little less comforted by his account of the system and the tax position. We need much better and more urgent clarification of the tax position than he has given us. We also need that information earlier than the date he has suggested.

I got the impression that the right hon. Gentleman was saying that things could be sorted out in due course. The fiscal framework within which the abandonment programmes will be prepared is closely related to the important amendments to clause 2 and the matters of liability and responsibility. If the Minister feels that there is an urgent need for a legislative framework to prepare and bring forward abandonment programmes, there is an equal and similar urgency about resolving the fiscal framework within which these programmes will be prepared.

We support the idea of using joint operating agreements or similar agreements to establish proper liability and responsibility for abandonment programmes along the lines of the amendments that we will debate later. Many companies will negotiate, often with their smaller partners. In the BP Forties field there is a string of small interests on some of the licences and there could be negotiations on the joint operating agreements. Every company will say that it accepts the responsibility and the liability but the companies will want to know the fiscal position. Some of the difficulties in renegotiating and reorganising the joint operating agreements or similar agreements to establish liability and responsibility for abandonment programmes, will be affected by the lack of conclusion and uncertainty and doubts about the fiscal position.

The fiscal problems will come earlier rather than later. We know that some companies and some groups will consider whether or not to establish a trust fund to cover now their portion of the future cost of abandonment. Will that trust fund money be eligible for tax relief? That issue is bound to arise fairly soon, as will the nature and character of tax relief. I am grateful that we have taken action to cover the royalty relief provisions. We accept that that is an important change and the Minister will know that we have not opposed that provision, but have sought to clarify it. He will be asked about whether it is effective and comprehensive enough.

The real doubts and difficulties will arise over PRT. I said that this is the largest source of revenue from the North sea. With APRT, it is running at over £6 billion a year. That does not include the extra slab of enforced loans. It is a substantial part of the revenue from the North sea. One wicked thought that crossed my mind and might have crossed the minds of other hon. Members is that in the mid-1990s, as PRT revenues decline, it could be cheaper for the Treasury to abolish PRT rather than accept the liability of repaying it to cover abandonment costs. PRT has a direct bearing on production and profitability. In the mid-1990s, the repayments could come close to wiping out the revenue. A Chancellor stuck for cash will be tempted to abolish PRT when it is declining, at the very time when relief for abandonment costs would be needed.

I hope we have made the case to the Minister that these issues are not for the long term. They will be relatively immediate issues for companies to think about and resolve as they prepare their abandonment programmes and renegotiate and revise their joint operating agreements or establish similar agreements for responsibility and liability for abandonment programmes. As I said, I am half comforted by the Minister's comment that he has an open mind on these matters. I urge him to take a much more urgent look at the whole situation with the Inland Revenue and his Treasury colleagues, because we will need a fiscal framework just as much as we need a legislative one. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the clause.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 2

PERSONS WHO MUST SUBMIT PROGRAMMES

Mr. K. Harvey Proctor (Billericay): I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 2, line 25, leave out paragraph *(b)* and insert—

> '*(b)* a person who is a concession owner in relation to the installation for the purposes of that Act insofar as they relate to the relevant activities or who was a concession owner for those purposes when a relevant activity was last carried on from, by means of or on the installation;'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments: No. 2, in page 2, line 25 leave out paragraphs *(b)* to *(d)* and insert—

> *(b)* a person outside paragraph *(a)* who is a party to a joint operating agreement or similar agreement;
>
> *(c)* a person outside paragraphs *(a)* and *(b)* who owns any interest in the installation otherwise than as a security for a loan;

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

> *(d)* a company which is outside paragraphs *(a)* to *(c)* but is associated with a company within any of those paragraphs.'.

Government amendment No. 3.

Amendment No. 4, in page 2, line 31, at end insert—

'(2) In subsection (1), "relevant activities" means activities within paragraphs *(a)* and *(c)* (but not insofar as paragraph *(c)* refers to paragraph *(b)* of section 12(2) of the Mineral Workings (Offshore Installations) Act 1971.'.

Government amendment No. 5.

Amendment No. 6, in page 2, line 38, leave out paragraph *(b)* and *(c)*.

Government amendments Nos. 9, 10, 11, 12, 16 and 17.

Mr. Proctor: Before I speak to my amendments, I shall make some general observations as my amendments have been grouped with Government amendments.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend coming forward with these amendments. In Committee we had long, detailed discussions about recasting clause 2 and the consequential clauses. My right hon. Friend said that he had taken heed of our thoughts and would consider them. I am aware that constructive talks took place and continue to take place between my right hon. Friend, officials in his Department and the industry, whose interests are represented by UKOOA. Those deliberations have been fruitful and have produced the Government amendments, for which I and the industry are grateful.

However, having said that, I am tempted to introduce a note of caution and refer back to the amendments I have tabled. There are one or two matters of concern where the industry and, perhaps, hon. Members would like my right hon. Friend to go even further. My amendments refer to clause 2(1)*(b)*, which permits the giving of notices requiring submission to an abandonment programme for an offshore installation of

"a person who is a concession owner in relation to the installation for the purposes of that Act"—

the Mineral Workings (Offshore Installations) Act 1971—

"or who was a concession owner for those purposes when an activity within Section 12(2) of that Act was last carried on from, by means of or on the installation;".

Anyone following the argument so far will realise that it is rather technical and complicated. I understand that the industry believe that the wide definition of "concession owner" will cause injustice because of its application to installations that serve other fields—for example, those installations that act as gathering centres collecting production from a number of local fields for transmission by a large capacity pipeline to shore.

The definition of concession owner in relation to any installation is contained in section 12(2) of the Mineral Workings (Offshore Installations) Act 1971 as amended by the Oil and Gas (Enterprise) Act 1982. I will not read those definitions to the House now.

In Committee on 13 January, my right hon. Friend explained what he meant by the term "concession owner", when he said:

"With regard to off-shore installations, the concession owners will be the holders of the relevant petroleum production licences. The term concession owner is used in the Bill, and that is why the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney raised his question. I believe that he wanted to know what the antecedents were for its use. It is used to keep continuity with the offshore safety regime established in the Mineral Working (Offshore Installations) Act 1971, by reference to which offshore installations are defined in clause 16(1). I hope that that makes it absolutely clear."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee B*, 13 January 1987; c. 220.]

With due respect to my right hon. Friend, the industry does not believe that that has made the position absolutely clear. It is not clear to the industry which are the relevant licences, whose holders will be liable for abandonment of an installation. Does my right hon. Friend mean the production licence holders in whose area the installation is situated?

The industry's concern is best demonstrated by the example—hon. Members may have been given it in a briefing — of the Ninian central platform. It is a gathering centre for production from three fields as well as transmitting its produce down the main oil line that runs from the Ninian central platform to Sullom Voe. One such field is Heather, whose platform is connected by a lateral pipeline to the Ninian central platform. That lateral pipeline connects with a riser and top deck equipment on the Ninian central platform, which in turn joins the end of the main oil line on the platform.

7.45 pm

The Heather partners have no interest in the Ninian central platform or in Ninian production. Consequently, in all fairness, the industry believes that they should not be liable for the abandonment of the Ninian central platform. The industry would like my right hon. Friend to state whether the Heather partners are concession owners in relation to the Ninian central platform and, if so, whether they are consequently liable for its abandonment.

In materially applying the definition in section 12(2) of the 1971 Act to the facts, we arrive at the following formula:

"A person who has the right to exploit or explore mineral resources in the licensed area including the Heather field (Block 2/5) . . . shall be a concession owner for the purposes of this Act in relation to the Ninian Central Platform at any time if, at that time, there is carried on from, by means of or on the Ninian Central Platform any of the following activities, namely—

> *(b)* the conveyance in that area (Block 2/5) by means of a pipe or system of pipes, or minerals gotten (Heather production) . . . in the exercise of that right (the Heather licence)."

Conveyance means getting from point A to point B. The Heather production is conveyed through a system of pipes from the Heather platform via the Ninian central platform to Sullom Voe. That system of pipes crosses, and is supported by, the Ninian central platform. Similarly, the top deck equipment involved is located on the Ninian central platform. Without that platform, conveyance could not take place in exactly the same manner. The industry therefore considers that it cannot exclude the conclusion that the conveyance of Heather production in the Heather licence area, by means of a system of pipes crossing Ninian central platform, is an activity carried out through that platform. Consequently, the industry believes that Heather partners may be liable for that platform's abandonment.

The industry understands that Government lawyers take a different view from the lawyers that the industry have consulted. The Government lawyers consider—when current facts are applied—that only the holders of the production licences covering the Ninian field would be within the definition of concession owners in relation to the Ninian central platform.

I have demonstrated that that interpretation is, at the very least, open to question and doubt. It will be no protection in legal proceedings because, as my right hon. Friend will be aware, judges are not allowed to consider

our deliberations, or the correspondence between the Government's lawyers and lawyers for the oil companies or UKOOA.

The basis on which the industry is supporting the Government's amendments to the Bill relates to clause 3 and amendment No. 9 to it, which gives relief from lifting the corporate veil to make unrelated and associated companies liable for abandonment, provided that adequate arrangements have been made by persons within paragraphs *(a)*, *(b)* or *(c)* of clause 2(1) to ensure that a satisfactory abandonment programme is carried out. As the extent of persons within paragraph *(b)* is uncertain, that relief could easily be lost to the industry.

That and the basic inequity of making unrelated fields liable for abandonment of an installation in which they have no interest seems too high a price to pay for continuity with the offshore safety regime. Continuity is a matter of tidy legislative housekeeping not necessity.

Clearly, there is a dispute on this matter between the Department's lawyers and the industry's lawyers as to the meaning of the term "concession owners". Scope should not be left for lawyers to disagree on that matter, because inevitably that will lead to expense and ultimately to grievance. I am not arguing about who is right and who is wrong. Both sides have consulted very sophisticated and, presumably, expensive lawyers, and there is disagreement. The matter is demonstrably unclear and must be resolved. Therefore, I urge my right hon. Friend to reconsider the matter. It has been considered in Committee, but I urge my right hon. Friend to consider it again and to look at it with the same flexibility and courtesy that were the hallmarks by which he conducted the proceedings in Committee.

Mr. Rowlands: I am not quite sure of the best way to proceed with the amendments. I was waiting for the Minister to explain them, or to come in first. However, perhaps it would be convenient if I intervened at this stage. We should like the right to pursue these matters again after the Minister has introduced his amendments.

It is a pity that we are taking these in one sweep, because two separate issues are contained in this clutch of amendments. One set deals with clause 2 which relates to pipelines, and the other with installations. In Committee we realised increasingly that the two sets of amendments had to be looked at separately because they presented separate problems and arguments. Therefore, we are having to consider an enormous collection of amendments that deal with pipelines and installations. I shall have an initial shot, but I should like the right to return to the battle when we have heard the Minister——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I shall, of course, do my best to accommodate the hon. Gentleman, but I am sure that he realises that we are on Report and not in Committee.

Mr. Rowlands: I was trying to suggest that the House will be put in some difficulty because of this large group of amendments on such wide and separate issues, including several significant changes that the Government introduced to their own Bill as a result of our discussions in Committee. We need to digest those changes, and the Minister needs to explain them to us.

To avoid any doubt — we said it enough times in Committee — we have a common objective in devising a proper clause 2. That is to make sure that that liability is properly placed, the responsibility is clearly identified, and the financial consequences of abandonment are guaranteed. Those basic principles and objectives are shared by all hon. Members. There is no difference of opinion about the objective that we seek to achieve in clause 2. We want the liability clearly and properly placed upon those who should be liable and we want the responsibility for preparing, developing and implementing the abandonment programmes clearly identified. Obviously, we need financial arrangements to guarantee that the state does not pick up more of the tab than it should.

Such an objective requires that there should be no doubt or confusion about the law. The hon. Member for Billericay (Mr. Proctor) made that point. We have not signed his amendment because, as he will notice, we are trying to do it differently, by omitting the offending sub-paragraph about concession owners. However, we have no difficulty in supporting his amendment and are willing to join him in pressing it.

We should ensure that there is absolutely no doubt abour our common objective, which must not leave any confusion or doubt in legislation or in the law. It is because there is doubt and, as the hon. Gentleman said, because there is a genuine difference of legal opinion about the paragraph that he and we are seeking to amend, that we are expressing concern and anxiety at this late stage.

As we know, when faced with the problem of trying to place the responsibility and to identify those upon whom to serve the notices under clause 2, the Government chose a catch-all method. It smacked of the Inland Revenue which, when in doubt, serves a notice upon anybody who is walking past to make sure that it does not miss anybody. It tries to catch anybody and anyone in the hope of eventually catching those it wants to catch. That solution caused considerable worry and concern to the industry and also to hon. Members in Committee.

Quite properly, after continuous consultation in Committee, the Minister announced that he intended to recast parts of clause 2 to meet the legitimate worries, concerns and objections. The amendments tabled by the Minister today go a long way to fulfilling his commitments.

I know that it might seem rather churlish of us to pursue that point again, but it is essential. The Minister decided — we supported the principle — that instead of serving notices on almost everybody under the wide and sweeping powers of clause 2, notices should initially be served on the operators, on those who are named on the licence or on those in partnership in a joint operating agreement. As the Minister knows, we not only support that proposition, but advocated it from the first day of the Committee stage. I said that the simplest and least confusing way would be to place the responsibility and liability upon those who would be uniquely qualified to deal with those problems — the operators and the co-licensees involved with the installations. We felt that that was where the burden of notice-serving should go.

The Minister substantially met that point, by his amendment to clause 2 and, more significantly, by amending clause 3. That showed that he would not serve notices on all possible subsidiary interested parties until the operator and the co-licensees had had the fullest opportunity, within a decent time scale, to establish proper collective liability, to the Minister's satisfaction. Why spoil

[Mr. Rowlands]

that important recasting of this part of the Bill by clinging to that part of the clause, which has caused, and which continues to cause, such genuine confusion?

As I have said, we have a common objective. An essential aspect is to avoid further confusion or doubt about where the liability or responsibility should rest. However, by clinging to the subsection, the reference to "concession owner" is still causing confusion and concern, despite the attempts of the Minister and his Department to persuade the industry that it does not mean what it says.

Therefore, there is no reason or case. We wait, with considerable interest, for the Minister to identify exactly who will be caught by the term "concession owner". So far, we all agree that notices should be served first and foremost on operators. We believe that notices should be served on those parties who form, belong to or are part of a joint operating agreement on any installation. We have accepted that there should also be an opportunity to serve notices at a later date, if need be, upon other persons who have an interest, but who do not have a secured loan—in other words, not a bank. We accept that, albeit reluctantly, as will be clear when we debate amendments Nos. 7 and 8. We have even accepted the principle of serving notices on associated companies, thereby piercing the so-called corporate veil. We even support the Government to that extent.

Who, then, are we talking about, other than those categories who are at present in the North sea? Can anyone name an installation that is not covered by any one of those definitions? We have hunted high and low for exceptions. Where are they? All we have come up with are the curious arrangements on the Ekofisk borderline which are the subject of Orders in Council under the Town and Country Planning (Minerals) Act 1981. I have the block numbers with me and should be grateful if the Minister will tell us whether this is what he is after. There are midline stations in block 36/22 and block 37/4 and there is a gas compressor station in block 14. Some of those are covered by Orders in Council.

8 pm

The problem is that no joint operative agreements are in force for those installations, nor are they under any operator. Surely they are covered by the third category, of a person with an interest other than in a secured loan. People own them and their ownership is not difficult to identify. They have been the subject of Orders in Council and they would be covered under the provision of a person with an interest. Are these the unique installations that the Minister is trying to cover in his term "concession owner"?

We cover operators and everybody who is party to an installation through a joint operating agreement or something similar. If that does not catch everybody, we cover people with an interest in any installation, other than one based on a secured loan, and associated companies. So we cover all the possibilities of those with an interest in North sea oil installations. If the Minister has these three extraordinary cases in mind, surely they too are covered by the broad definition of a person other than an operator or a co-licensee who has an interest in an installation. Therefore, those exceptional cases, which are covered by Orders in Council, would be covered by that provision. What in the name of heaven is the phrase "concession owner" doing in the clause? For what installation is it necessary to have that provision?

I do not wish to repeat the case made by the hon. Member for Billericay and his illustration of the connection between the Heather and Ninian central platforms. Such doubts have been represented to us all. I am not a voice for the industry—far from it; the last thing it would want is to identify with many of my views—but I have had to listen to a sensible case made by sensible people who know the score and are obviously worried about the consequence of leaving those words in the Bill without proper definition.

On the first batch of amendments — the Government's amendments relating to installations, the amendment of the hon. Member for Billericay and our amendments—I hope that the Minister will make this final concession and ensure that not an ounce of doubt is left in anybody's mind about responsibility and liability and the persons on whom notices will be served. Otherwise, the Minister will spoil the very thing that all of us have sought to do in recasting clause 2.

Now I must turn to the second half of the batch of amendments, dealing with pipelines. In Committee, pipelines loomed larger and larger during our discussions. I do not know how pipelines loom, although installations loom, but I am speaking metaphorically. Perhaps it would be better to say that we began to follow the pipelines issue increasingly carefully. We realised, and even the Minister admitted, that genuine new issues were arising about programmes to deal with abandoned pipelines.

It is difficult to find out where responsibility lies. Under the Bill, in the incredible gas-gathering structure of the North sea, where one set of pipelines was linked to another, liability would run with that link. A person who did not own the pipeline in question but whose pipeline was linked to it could suddenly be liable for the abandonment of that other person's pipeline. The Minister recognised that, and towards the end of our proceedings identified the route that he intended to take. That was to take advantage of the little-used section 33 of the Petroleum and Submarine Pipe-lines Act 1975 to serve designation orders and to define the ownership of the pipeline.

We thought that was fine. Applying the test for the Bill—that it leaves no confusion or doubt—we thought that that was marvellous and that, through the designation orders, we would identify the ownership of the pipeline clearly. In that way everyone would know what they were liable for and for which pipelines they were responsible. I thought that was an excellent solution. But again, the Minister has inserted a belt and braces provision and has thrown another category in on top of that, instead of sticking to a clear, simple, well defined basis.

Designation orders would establish the ownership of pipelines in the North sea. The provision in section 33 allows for consultation with the industries, so agreement could be reached on who owns a pipeline. But then on top of that we have another subsection to cover a person outside paragraph *(a)* who owns any interest in the whole of the pipeline other than as security for a loan.

Who is that? If, under the 1975 Act, we are to designate the ownership of the pipeline system in the North sea, which other people will have an interest? We shall have established the interest through the designation process.

Who else could be caught under this provision, having defined the whole ownership of the pipeline system? Who else could possibly be included in that category?

Rather than a simple, clear, well-defined identification of liability, there will again be doubt and anxiety about whether other people can become liable for pipelines in which they have a marginal or nominal interest, to say the least. That has been the problem from the start with the construction of clause 2. We have done a great deal to change it and we welcome the Government's amendments, because they meet many of the points raised by us in Committee. Our doubts and anxieties were shared by the Minister—we make no party point about this—but he has still left confusion and doubt. Otherwise we would not have received the representations that we have which have led to our amendments.

I hope that tonight the Minister will go a step further and amend this provision on installations. If not, I hope he will tell us exactly whom he is trying to catch by the concession owner provisions, and that he will clarify the position on pipelines.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I am happy to respond to the debate. As the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) said, we share a common objective. Indeed, I share also the view of my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mr. Proctor) about what we are trying to achieve. The only difference that may be between us on this matter is whether I shall achieve what my hon. Friend, the hon. Gentleman and I seek to achieve and, indeed, whether I shall go too far. I certainly welcome the opportunity to try to clarify the position.

I shall deal first with the amendment moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay. That deals with a more limited matter. None the less, it is important to the industry within the much wider-ranging changes that I propose in the amendments that I hope to have the opportunity to move formally at a later stage. I hope that I can reassure my hon. Friend and the House on this matter. Our objectives are identical. I do not have any difference with him or any other hon. Member about what we are trying to achieve.

My hon. Friend asked me whether what he and I are trying to achieve is absolutely clear in legal terms. I hope that I shall be able to reassure him on that matter. From discussions in Committee and subsequent discussions with representatives of the oil companies and with my legal advisers, I certainly believe that the position is absolutely clear in the Bill as drafted.

The effect of the term "concession owner" is critical to the Bill. I reiterate what my hon. Friend has said. It has the same meaning as section 12(2) of the Mineral Workings (Offshore Installations) Act 1971, as amended by the Oil and Gas (Enterprise) Act 1982. For the purposes of the 1971 Act, to be a concession owner in relation to an offshore installation a person must have the right to exploit or explore mineral resources or store and recover gas in an area, and one or more qualifying activities must be carried on from, by means of or on the installation. The qualifying activities are, in summary, the exploration or exploitation of mineral resources or the storage or recovery of gas, the conveyance of minerals or gas and the provision of accommodation. I have spelt that out in some detail because the definition is complicated.

I ask my hon. Friend whether he has appreciated the precise application. To illustrate that point, I shall refer to the precise example that he gave and the type of application that he thought led to the confusion. The example that my hon. Friend gave related to the Ninian central platform. As he correctly described, it serves as a gathering centre for production from three fields — Heather, Magnus and North Alwyn, as well as its own. The oil is gathered there for subsequent transmission down a pipeline to Sullom Voe. These four fields—this is an important point — are in different licensed areas. My hon. Friend has suggested that the licensees of the Heather field, for example, could be concession owners in relation to the Ninian central platform because the production from Heather is conveyed through a system of pipes through the Ninian central platform to the shore.

8.15 pm

I must refer closely to the words of section 12(2)*(b)* of the definition in the 1971 Act, as amended by the Oil and Gas (Enterprise) Act 1982, which my hon. Friend and I mentioned earlier. Subsection 2*(b)* refers to

"the conveyance in that area".

That is a critical phrase. It means the area of the concession. It goes on:

"by means of a pipe or system of pipes of minerals gotten, or gas being stored or recovered, in the exercise of that right."

Again, that is a critical phrase because it refers to the right granted by the concession.

I understand the concerns of the industry. Therefore, I have looked closely at this matter and not only taken the legal advice available to me but also consulted parliamentary counsel. It is clear to them that the words "in that area" in the paragraph to which I referred limit the operation of the conveying function by reference to which a person may be a concession owner in relation to an offshore installation to the area of the concession. I shall put it another way. I have tried to follow closely the provisions of the Act. Putting this matter into layman's language, the holder of a petroleum production licence cannot be a concession owner for the purposes of the Bill in relation to an offshore installation situated in a different licensed area simply because some of his petroleum passes over or through it on its way to the shore. That is the legal explanation. I am reassured — I take seriously the Committee debates and what my hon. Friend said—that the Bill as drafted precisely covers this point. The Bill does not require any further amendment. I hope that, with reference to the previous Act, I have reassured my hon. Friend about that point.

Mr. Rowlands: I have closely followed the Minister's remarks. I shall pose a question in layman's terms in the hope that he can give an affirmative answer. Could not the Heather partners, who have no interest in the Ninian platform or production, possibly have liability for the abandonment of the Ninian central platform? If the Minister will confirm that point, at least we will know that we have translated the legal language into a practical example.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: That is right. The hon. Gentleman has correctly translated my interpretation of the legal situation.

This is an important point. It is one about which, even following discussions, some representatives of the oil industry have been concerned. I hope that my spelling out of this matter will have helped to reassure them why I am so confident that this measure is correct. I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay that I do not seek to rest

[Mr. Buchanan-Smith]

on reassurances that, I appreciate, could have no force of law. I rest my case on what is in the Bill, which, in turn, is based on previous legislation.

I wish to refer now to my substantial group of amendments. In doing so, I shall cover some of the points that the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney raised. I am glad to be able to respond to the Committee and to the House. I appreciate that, because of the way the Bill was drafted originally—this was a point of concern at all stages of deliberation from Second Reading—there was genuine concern that the Bill was cast rather too widely. It was considered that we could have achieved our purposes effectively without ranging so wide. I was glad to have the reassurance of the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney that in certain circumstances one must maintain ultimate protection for the taxpayer, but that we should go down a rather more sensible road. That is what I have tried to do, and that is why I gave the commitment in Committee on 13 January.

The amendments introduce a trigger mechanism into the arrangements for serving notice outside the immediate licensees of installations and parties to joint operating agreements, or designated owners in the case of submarine pipelines. I am sorry that this has involved such a complicated and formidable batch of amendments. However, I warned the Committee that might be the case.

There are two amendments to clause 2. Amendment No. 3, which relates to installations, introduces for the first time parties to a joint operating agreement or similar agreement — I emphasise that, because it does not necessarily have to be a joint operating agreement—as persons to whom notice may be given under clause 1. That is a logical development, and I believe that it was accepted in Committee, because it is under the joint operating agreement that the conduct of operations in the licensed area will generally be regulated.

Thus, as far as installations are concerned, the Secretary of State will in the first instance have three groups of persons upon whom to draw in giving notice, as we are retaining power to give notice to the person who has registered the installation, pursuant to the Mineral Workings (Offshore Installations) Act 1971 and "concession owners", as defined in that Act, with whom I dealt a moment ago. That is necessary to cover the situation where, for example, there is no joint operating agreement because there is only one licensee.

Where there is a joint operating agreement, the person who has registered the installation and the concession owners will invariably be parties to it. New paragraphs *(d)* and *(e)* of clause 2(1) identify the parties to whom notice under clause 1 may be given at a later stage—that is, if those companies to which I shall initially be looking to complete the arrangements referred to in amendment No. 9 to clause 3 have been unable to do so. They are similar to paragraphs *(c)* and *(d)* in the Bill as originally drafted, except that here again we have fulfilled a commitment that we entered into in Committee to take out of the scope of clause 2 a person whose sole interest is as security for a loan, such as a bank or an institution. That is covered by amendment No. 3.

Amendment No. 5, which is the second important amendment, concerns pipelines and it parallels the first amendment. The groups of persons to whom notice may be given are essentially similar to those in the existing clause 2(2), except that once again we have excluded banks and institutions, whose sole interest is as security for a loan, from the ambit of paragraph *(b)*. We have also removed the possibility that the owner of a small part of any pipeline system should be made liable for the abandonment of an entire system by introducing a reference to

"the whole or substantially the whole"

of the pipeline in paragraph *(b)*.

That is the first batch of amendments, which define more closely those upon whom notices may be served.

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: As we are on Report, I should like to follow the amendments through logically. That might be helpful to the House. The hon. Gentleman can then make a speech and I shall pick up any points that he makes.

The important point about these changes we propose to clause 3 is that, by having provided new definitions, we ensure that there is a particular sequence of events so that a catch-all situation becomes a fallback and long stop, not a first stop. That is why amendment No. 9 to clause 3, to which I referred briefly a moment ago, is critical. The amendments to clause 3 provide the trigger mechanisms that enable the Secretary of State to serve notice on the wider classes of companies referred to in clause 2.

Subsection (1A) stipulates that the Secretary of State may not serve a notice before 1 July 1988 on the companies in the wider classes to which I have just referred—that is, to associated companies and companies owning an interest in the installation or pipeline but which do not, however, fall within subsection (1) *(a)*, *(b)* or *(c)* or subsection (2) *(a)* of clause 2. The purpose of this date is to enable companies to which notice has been given to enter into appropriate abandonment arrangements. We recognise that this may not always be easy, but we have to guard against providing an opportunity for unnecessary delay.

We believe that the date 1 July 1988—although I do not claim that there is anything desperately magical about it—provides, in practical terms, a reasonable balance between not requiring things to be done too quickly and preventing companies from unnecessarily delaying putting in place the kind of arrangements that I should like to be put in place through the joint operating agreement, or a similar agreement, between the parties to the licence. There will, of course, be no compulsion on the Secretary of State to give notice more widely, once that date is agreed. He will still be able to exercise a certain amount of discretion, and I have no doubt that in practice the parties will be in touch with the Department of Energy. If they believe that a satisfactory arrangement is within reach, although the precise date has not been complied with, I am quite sure that they will want the Secretary of State to hold his fire. I am also quite sure that in such circumstances any reasonable Secretary of State would do so.

New subsections (2A) and (3A) prevent the Secretary of State from serving notice more widely in respect of either offshore installations or submarine pipelines where he is satisfied with the arrangements, including financial arrangements, which have been made for abandonment by the persons to whom notice has already been given. The

effect of this is that the Secretary of State may not give notice more widely where satisfactory arrangements have been made and where they continue in operation.

New subsection (4A) enables the Secretary of State to serve notice more widely, either because the persons to whom notice has already been given have failed to submit an abandonment programme or because a programme, for one reason or another, has been rejected by the Secretary of State. This is the first circumstance amounting to default to which I referred in Standing Committee. The second circumstance of default is provided by the new subsection (2A) to clause 6 — amendment No. 17 — which enables the Secretary of State to propose that any of the wider classes of companies mentioned in clause 2 should become liable to secure that an abandonment programme is carried out, where a person who is already under such a duty has failed to carry it out, or seems likely to fail. The Secretary of State can therefore step in if at any time after approval of a programme he becomes concerned as to the financial status of the parties concerned.

I have attempted to deal with the main amendments. There are other amendments, but I assure the House that they are of a purely consequential nature. However, I hope that my explanation has followed through the sequence of events and that I have reassured the House about what I have achieved. Nevertheless, there is one matter to which I should like to return. I have dealt with the amendments of my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay and I hope that at the same time I have covered most of the points that were raised by the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfyl and Rhymney. However, I do not think that I have yet answered adequately his second amendment that deals with pipelines.

Mr. Rowlands: Before the Minister deals with my pipelines amendment, I should point out that he has not answered the question that I put to him about concession owners. Who is a concession owner who is not an operator, a co-licensee or a person with an interest in the installation?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: We need this term to cover all the licensees. It is conceivable that there may be no joint operating agreement. We may not always know who owns an installation. We always know who the licensees are. That is why it is important to follow it through that particular route.

8.30 pm

I shall turn to the point on pipelines that was made by the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney. I confirm that it is our intention, in the first instance, to give notice under clause 1 to designated owners of pipelines. The designation exercise is under way already. One of the reasons why I have chosen this route is that we already have the power. I hope that I reassured the hon. Gentleman in Committee as to why we have chosen that route. It is our intention to follow the industry's practice and avoid the potential difficulties that were mentioned in Committee with respect to spur lines, T-junctions and so on.

However — this is where I am not happy with the hon. Gentleman's second amendment — we need the opportunity to give notice more widely should there be default in submitting a programme or in carrying it out. That is the purpose of paragraphs *(b)* and *(c)*, which the hon. Gentleman is seeking to remove by amendment No. 2. I have referred to amendments which affect that part of the Bill.

I hope that I have reassured the House on these points. This is an important part of the Bill. Indeed, it is the crux of the approach to the method of abandonment. On Second Reading this issue was raised, but no solution was identified. The full debates in Committee were of considerable help to me and to my Department in forming our view of the best approach, while ensuring that we protected the taxpayer. We have reached a solution which not only prevents powers from being used too widely, but gives the ultimate protection, which I hope will not be necessary.

I look to licensees, and those who work in a joint operating agreement, to put abandonment arrangements in place, either through the joint operating agreement or through some parallel agreement. If that is done, there should be no need to cast the net more widely. It has given us an opportunity to change the Bill quite substantially. I welcome the contructive way in which Members on both sides of the House have approached it. I hope that there will not be too many lingering doubts left.

Mr. Rowlands: With the leave of the House, I would like to reply. It would be churlish to carry on quibbling. the amendments represent a substantial change to the Bill, particularly the amendment to clause 3, which we did not debate because we were in wholehearted agreement with it, including the deadline of July 1988. That deadline will help people to concentrate their minds.

It is mind-boggling to believe that there are anonymous or pirate installations in the North sea, the ownership of which is not known to the Department of Energy. I hope that the Minister will check how many of those there are. It will be difficult, having served a designation order on the owners of pipelines, to find another group of people who have a whole or substantial interest in it — somebody separate from those covered by a designation order. We will have to wait and see in both cases.

We take considerable comfort from the specific illustration that has been presented to us, which could have caused concern. The Minister was assuring and legally put his head on the block by saying that the worries and concerns that we had are not valid. In the light of that, we will not be pressing our amendments.

Mr. Proctor: With the leave of the House, may I say that I will not be pressing the two amendments that I tabled, for similar reasons to that of the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands). It appears to me that the Government amendments mean that we are moving away from the sub-machine gun approach to the preciseness of the sniper's shot. For that reason, the amendments are to be supported and welcomed.

My right hon. Friend stressed the importance of the timing and phasing of the powers that are available to the Secretary of State. That is important and is underlined in the amendments. With regard to my amendment Nos. 1 and 4, I thought that my right hon. Friend went as far as he could in making crystal clear what he believed the position to be. I rest content, having heard that tonight, and beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendments made: No. 3, in page 2, line 29, leave out from beginning to end of line 31 and insert—

[Mr. Proctor]

'*(c)* a person outside paragraphs *(a)* and *(b)* who is a party to a joint operating agreement or similar agreement relating to rights by virtue of which a person is within paragraph *(b)*;

(d) a person outside paragraphs *(a)* to *(c)* who owns any interest in the installation otherwise than as security for a loan;

(e) a company which is outside paragraphs *(a)* to *(d)* but is associated with a company within any of those paragraphs.'.

No. 5, in page 2, line 38, leave out [illegible] beginning to end of line 40 and insert—

'*(b)* a person outside paragraph *(a)* who owns any interest in the whole or substantially the whole of the pipe-line, otherwise than as security for a loan;

(c) a company which is outside paragraphs *(a)* and *(b)* but is associated with a company within one of those paragraphs.'.—*[Mr. Buchanan-Smith.]*

Mr. Rowlands: I beg to move amendment No. 7, in page 2, line 53, leave out 'one-half or more' and insert 'more than one half'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it may be convenient to discuss amendment No. 8, in page 3, line 10, leave out 'or' and insert 'and'.

Mr. Rowlands: This gives an opportunity to have one last look at one of the potentially contentious issues in clause 2—the piercing of the so-called corporate veil by the provision in clause 2 to serve a notice on a company associated with another company and make it responsible and liable for abandonment. Rather than attack the principle of it, we have used these two amendments to uncover how far and to what extent the associated company chase will take. We have questioned the definition of ownership, put down in subsection (5), where it says

"one half or more of the issued share capital of the company".

The controlling share, surely, is 51 per cent. A company cannot be said to be in control of another company if it has joint ownership. Therefore, we want to know why just one half. Why not more than one half, 51 per cent., which everyone would identify as a controlling share? Having written all these paragraphs out—*(a)* *(b)* *(c)* and *(d)* —to define ownership, on top of that, it is said:

"or if it has power, directly or indirectly, to secure that the affairs of the company are conducted in accordance with its wishes."

In other words, although we have a definition of ownership in paragraphs *(a)* *(b)* *(c)* and *(d)*, on top of that we have the word "or", and another definition of what could be a controlling interest, irrespective of the definition in subsection 5. We want the Minister to get the antecedents and parentage of these definitions, because they are important.

Although we understand why the Minister has chosen to introduce the principle of seeking to go behind one company back to a parent or associated company in the ultimate possible serving of notices, the Minister ought to be as worried as we are about the precedent that that is creating. If that becomes model legislation for other member states, some British companies that have a marginal interest in an installation in another part of the world — perhaps in the south China seas or off the Malaysian coast — and if other nations pick up this legislative model and serve notices on British parent companies, which might have the most marginal involvement in companies that are responsible for installations in other nations' waters, we could find that those companies go to see our ambassadors and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to make representations, only to be told that the powers that are being used against them are modelled on British legislation.

The definition opens a wide door. The Minister might think that the British Government will behave sensibly, but British companies could become liable for abandonment programmes in which they have only a marginal interest. A serious precedent is being created and the House should not let it go through without being aware of its dangers.

We are seeking clarification and want the Minister to tell us where the definition comes from. We did not debate this part of the Bill thoroughly in Committee.

Mr. Proctor: I should not like the House to feel that the Opposition have a monopoly of concern in this matter. It was raised by both sides in Committee. Anxiety remains, for the reasons that the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) has given.

There are many joint venture agreements involving British companies and companies from other countries where there is a 50:50 per cent. shareholding and no absolute control. A deadlock can no doubt occur. I wonder whether it is fair for such companies to be caught by the 50 per cent. rule. I should be grateful for my right hon. Friend's comments.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: We did not debate this area of the Bill in detail in Committee and I quite understand why the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) seeks clarification now. I am happy to try to provide that clarification.

Clause 2(5)*(a)*, which the hon. Gentleman would amend, provides a test of control when one company has, or is entitled to acquire, one half or more of the issued share capital of another company. The hon. Gentleman said that the clause appeared to redefine control when he spoke on Second Reading. He assumed that control involved ownership of 51 per cent. of the share capital. He is quite right to say that the clause provides for a 50 per cent. test of ownership. It does that for one reason—to catch what is called the deadlock company. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mr. Proctor), who has great knowledge of these matters, understands that. That happens when a company has been set up by collaborating companies, often for a specific project, and each company holds 50 per cent. of the new company's shares.

8.45 pm

Amendment No. 7 would not catch that type of deadlock company. The hon. Gentleman also said that the 50 per cent. test raises major issues and suggested what might happen to British companies abroad if our provisions were applied more widely. He will be familiar with the terms of the model clauses in the petroleum production licences such as those set out in part III of schedule 2 to the Petroleum and Submarine Pipe-lines Act 1975, which provides a test of control of one third or more for certain purposes. Those provisions have worked satisfactorily in practice and have posed no difficulty for the industry or the Government.

Amendment No. 8 would change the thrust of what I call the tailpiece to subsection (5), which provides that a company may exercise control for the purposes of part I,

even though it does not fulfil any of the criteria in paragraphs *(a)* to *(d)*, because it has the power to ensure that the affairs of the second company are conducted in accordance with its wishes. Amendment No. 8 makes that an additional rather than an alternative requirement. That would defeat the purpose of the test which looks to the realities of a company's circumstances rather than to its circumstances on paper.

I confirm that there is an element of catch-all. We want to ensure that there are no difficulties or gaps, so that the proper protection of taxpayers' interests can be assured. It is better to have the Bill in its present form and to have the test as an alternative, although we hope to apply the other tests. In those circumstances, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will feel able not to press the amendment.

Mr. Rowlands: The definition of ownership here and the one third rule as provided in the Petroleum and Submarine Pipe-lines Act 1975 apply to completely different circumstances. I understand that the latter relates to the disposal of ownership of licences. I can see why there should be a provision to ensure that licences cannot be disposed of without the consent of a Minister. That is quite a different concept from creating a liability, which is one way in which to transfer a valuable asset. I should like to be clear that I have taken up the right reference. Governments have every right to know whether ownership changes and therefore to lay down a one third ownership rule, but we are talking about something quite different here.

I shall not press our amendment, but I did not find the Minister's answer very satisfactory. He did not answer the question asked by the hon. Member for Billericay either. There are many joint ventures in the North sea oil industry and the definition of 50 per cent. or more would catch them. We shall not press the amendment, but not because we are satisfied with the Minister's response.

I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendments made: No. 9, in page 3, line 19, at beginning insert—

'(1A) The Secretary of State shall not before 1st July 1988 give a notice under section 1(1) to a person within paragraph *(d)* or *(e)* of section 2(1) or paragraph *(b)* or *(c)* of section 2(2).

(2A) Subject to subsection (4A), the Secretary of State shall not give a notice under section 1(1) in relation to an offshore installation to a person within paragraph *(d)* or *(e)* of section 2(1) if the Secretary of State has been and continues to be satisfied that adequate arrangements (including financial arrangements) have been made by a person or persons within paragraph *(a)*, *(b)* or *(c)* to ensure that a satisfactory abandonment programme will be carried out.

(3A) Subject to subsection (4A), the Secretary of State shall not give a notice under section 1(1) in relation to a submarine pipe-line to a person within paragraph *(b)* or *(c)* of section 2(2) if the Secretary of State has been and continues to be satisfied that adequate arrangements (including financial arrangements) have been made by a person or persons within paragraph *(a)* to ensure that a satisfactory abandonment programme will be carried out.

(4A) Subsections (2A) and (3A) shall not apply if there has been a failure to comply with a notice under section 1(1) or if the Secretary of State has rejected a programme submitted in compliance with such a notice.'.

No. 10, in page 3, line 22, leave out 'subsection (1) of section 1' and insert 'section 1(1)'.

No. 11, in page 3, line 25, after 'give', insert '(subject to the preceding provisions of this section)'

No. 12, in page 3, line 25, leave out 'that subsection' and insert 'section 1(1)'.—*[Mr. Buchanan-Smith.]*

Clause 4

Approval of programmes

Dr. Godman: I beg to move amendment No. 13, in page 3, line 38, at end insert—

'(3) Before approving a programme with modifications or subject to conditions which will allow an installation or pipeline or parts thereof to remain on the seabed the Secretary of State shall satisfy himself as to—

(a) any potential effect of the programme on the safety of surface or subsurface navigation;

(b) the rate of deterioration of the material left and its present and possible future effect on the marine environment;

(c) the risk that the material left will shift from its position at some future time;

(d) the costs, technical feasibility and risks of personal injury associated with removal of the installations or pipelines;

(e) the potential assignment of liability from damages resulting from any installation or pipeline or part thereof left on the seabed;

(f) the determination of a genuine new use or other reasonable justification for allowing the installation or pipeline or parts thereof to remain on the seabed, and

(g) the identification of the party responsible for maintaining the aids to navigation deemed necessary to mark the position of any obstruction to navigation and for monitoring the condition of the remaining material.'.

The contents of this amendment owe a great deal to a certain International Maritime Organisation document —NAV 33/WP. 4/REV1 dated 15 January. Some might call this plagiarism, but I would say that, in the context of this Bill and this debate, we had a borrowing requirement and we exercised it in a most sensible manner.

Removal programmes will be costly and intricate. Experts in this sector have mentioned the finance involved in removing platforms. Incidentally, I have long argued that we should be talking in terms of total removal and not partial removal. An expert, Mr. N. G. Boyd of Taywood-Santa Fe Ltd. said:

"The cost of totally removing a platform, taking account of inflation over say a 20 year life, may, in monetary terms, exceed the original capital cost of the installation and this cost will be incurred at a time when production and hence revenue has ceased."

The activities involved in removal range from the preparatory work, the shutdown, the well plugging and abandonment down to the towing away and disposal of such installations and pipelines.

It is reasonable to say that at this moment we do not have much experience of this form of maritime demolition work. I am right in saying that only one platform has so far been removed from United Kingdom waters. That was a small satellite platform that was situated in approximately 100 ft of water and had a jacket weight, complete with piles, of only 400 tonnes. The cost of the removal of that platform was reported at the time—1978—to be about £2 million.

One can imagine the cost of removing a structure of, say, 40,000 tonnes, situated in, for example, 500 ft of water. That would be an immensely costly business. However, in spite of those financial considerations and the inherent difficulties associated with removal and partial removal, we must, at all times, consider the interests of other maritime industries such as maritime transport and fishing. In that respect, paragraph *(a)* of our amendment emphasises the need for the Secretary of State to pay close

[Dr. Godman]

regard to the navigational implications of removal. I am not necessarily here talking of nuclear submarines, which are surely the most sinister vessels ever built in a shipyard.

Paragraph *(b)* and subsections *(c)*, *(d)* and *(e)* would, I am sure, be welcomed by fishermen throughout the United Kingdom and throughout the EEC's fishing nations.

Paragraph *(d)* is concerned with deterioration of the material left on the seabed. I refer in this context to the potential dangers that are associated with toxic and hazardous chemicals and their effects upon marine life. Paragraphs *(c)* and *(e)* refer to:

"the risk that the material left will shift from its position at some future time."

Paragraph *(e)* refers to:

"the potential assignment of liability from damages resulting from any installation or pipeline or part thereof left on the seabed."

Those implications could be of critical importance to fishermen as they go about their lawful activities. Similarly, paragraph *(b)* emphasises the need, inter alia, to pay careful attention to the health and safety needs of those involved in what will be extremely complicated and potentially dangerous work.

With regard to the health and safety needs of those involved in the demolition of the installations I should like to ask the Minister a question, to which perhaps I should know the answer. I am sure that he will give me the answer. Does the Explosives (Age of Purchase Etc.) Act 1976 extend to the use of explosives throughout the United Kingdom's territorial waters, and, if that is the case, can I take it as given that the Act extends to the carriage and use of explosives by foreign personnel on foreign registered vessels involved in, say, felling, or as some call it, toppling, a structure in United Kingdom waters?

If the answer is in the affirmative, does the Minister and his Department envisage changes in the Explosives Act, the object of which would be to make that potentially hazardous occupation a little safer? I should be grateful if the Minister would respond to those questions when he replies. I am sure that the officials in the Box have the answers at their finger tips. I have not, and I ask the question because, at this moment, there are few people —I am talking principally about the divers involved in the offshore oil and gas industries — who have wide experience of the use of explosives in deep waters.

I am right in saying that the explosives that have been used to demolish wells have been used in vaporising them. I am sure that the Minister and his officials understand that term better than I do. I have been told by experts that vaporising wellheads and other subsea structures is a crude and inexact art. What is achieved, if that is the word, with this crude, inexact use of explosives is a scattering of debris in the area of the structure which is being dismantled. I have been told that in some cases even heavy explosive charges have been lowered down in wire baskets at the end of a long wire—it is a crude and inexact business—but the process has been wholly wasteful. I am given to understand that the Norwegians, once a well has been demolished by explosives, drag heavy trawling gear across the area of the installation, to ensure that the debris is at an acceptable level for the interests of the fishermen. I am sure that if I have got that wrong, the Minister will correct me. As I am sure that the Minister will agree, these are important questions, to which I shall refer on Third Reading.

Paragraph *(g)* acknowledges, reasonably, that pipe infrastructures may need to stay in place, since the existence of such infrastructures might well encourage the development of nearby fields. I refer the Minister to the debate that we had in Committee and to his positive contribution, in which he said that his Department was most interested in the use of artificial matting to cover over those sections of the pipeline that are subjected to natural phenomena such as scour.

I may seem sceptical about the idea of changing these platforms into rafts or reefs for the growth and exploitation of shellfish colonies. Such a project may work successfully off the coastline of Alabama in the United States, but I am not sure that it would work off the coastline of Scotland. However, my mind is open enough to be dissuaded of my prejudice if possible.

9 pm

The last section points to the need to maintain navigational aids in perpetuity. The Minister may not be able to answer my next point because it may be the responsibility not of his Department but of that of the Secretary of State for Transport. The cost of these navigational aids might be partially met by the imposition of light dues. That question needs to be addressed.

The monitoring of the remaining material will be a crucial issue for fishermen. Again, there are many implications. The amendment highlights some of the issues associated with the removals of platforms and pipelines. These issues are of considerable importance to other maritime industries, principally the fishing industry.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): The amendment has a useful place in the debate because it details the heart of the dilemma of the Bill which, as the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) said, includes many unknowns, in terms of both costs and technology, that have not been explored fully. What follows on from the Bill will have to expand considerably from its basis. Both the users of the sea who might be affected by the partial removal of the platforms and the operators of platforms that will be removed need to know the implications and the ongoing liabilities, and where they stop and the lines are drawn. The amendment addresses itself to some of those problems, so it is useful to probe, for the record, the great deal of unfinished business that the Bill leaves. It has only begun to explore the process of what is involved.

When the Bill becomes law, and the industry and the Government go on to try to work out the implications of removing installations, the debate will centre on the need to limit liability in terms of both space and time.

Many of us believe that the total removal of a platform will always be the best possible solution if it is achievable within a realistic framework. If that course is followed, the problem of liability does not apply. The installation is removed and the sea bed, to all intents and purposes, is returned to normal. However, we all understand the difficulties and costs involved in the removal of platforms and we understand that these problems require us to consider the possibility of something less than partial removal.

I must express concern that the worries of the people who installed the platforms in the first place must not be allowed in any way to modify the pressure for ensuring the most effective removal and monitoring of what remains. Cost considerations must obviously be taken into account.

However, these considerations must not be allowed to dilute the commitment to find ways, if possible, of removing platforms or making them acceptable and safe.

The amendment identifies the problems that exist in breaking up, migrating and marking and, if damage occurs, of identifying liability. That point relates to amendment No. 1 moved by the hon. Member for Billericay (Mr. Proctor). We must know what operators are liable for and the operators also need to know. Consortia change and we need to know whom to approach.

If we could stick to the ideal principle of total removal, we would avoid those problems. However, I accept that it is sensible in this enabling Bill to allow for that possibility. The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) may not necessarily believe that the amendment will be incorporated in the Bill. However, it is a marker which encapsulates the list of relevant problems and I hope that the Minister will acknowledge that it addresses relevant considerations. The industry and the Department of Energy must come to grips with these problems.

Once the Bill becomes law, I hope that the Minister will stimulate and, if necessary, commission more intensive research into identifying and dealing with these problems. Only in that context are we likely to modify or reassure the views of those people who are rightly concerned about anything less than partial removal. At the moment I believe that those people are right to be worried. I can hardly blame them for standing out for total removal as the ideal way to solve the problem.

Mr. Ernie Ross: Throughout the early stages of this Bill, Opposition and Conservative Members identified areas of international law, international responsibilities, legal and moral responsibilities, areas of environmental concerns and areas of new technology and the possibilities which that new technology would bring to job prospects in the industry. At the moment, the industry has seen a great reduction in the number of people employed building structures for the North sea. We argued that those people might be usefully employed while we were deliberating in Committee on the training and procedures which the Bill would hopefully establish. We hoped that that training would be the responsibility of those who placed the structures and pipelines off our shores.

In Committee we identified those responsibilities and there was much concern on the Government and Opposition Front Benches about the draconian character of parts of the Bill. I am sure that the Minister recalls the debate that he had with my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rolands) about the draconian nature of clause 4 and the lack of arbitration which my hon. Friend explained had existed in previous legislation. When the Minister suggested that no criteria existed, my hon. Friend said that, if criteria were published, they might be the backcloth against which the Secretary of State's proposals could be decided. If his proposals were found to be too strong, those affected by his decisions who had stayed within the published criteria could be allowed arbitration. Now that criteria have come from the meeting of the International Maritime Organisation, will the Minister reconsider what he said about the draconian nature of clause 4? Does he believe that it would be right to provide for arbitration, given the criteria that now exist?

From reading the report of the Committee stage, when the Minister gave us an idea of how the International Maritime Organisation discussions had gone, and from an examination of the draft guidelines and standards which are contained in the document mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman), one can see the hand of the Minister or his Department in those guidelines and standards. It might be useful to take a few minutes to examine some of the guidelines and standards and question the Minister to discover how he intends to pursue them. When he gave us an idea of what they were likely to be, it was against the background that the United Kingdom input into the discussions was along the lines outlined by the Minister during the debate.

Although we could not participate in those discussions, it was as though there had been a fly on the wall of the Committee Room and a fly on the wall of the committee of the International Maritime Organisation. Both committees were determined to ensure that wherever and whenever possible we should return the environment to its natural state, or to as near a natural state as possible, before our structures and pipelines invaded that environment.

It was right to pursue those matters in Committee and for us to suggest that the guidelines be incorporated in the Bill. Although, after listening to the Minister, we may decide not to push the amendment, perhaps it could be incorporated in a future licensing round or in a joint operating agreement between the Government and the operator.

Another useful debate in Committee concerned the experiences of my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook), who reminded us of his formative years as a junior construction engineer. He said that, had he been aware of his grave responsibility when he was involved in the nuclear industry, he might have taken a little more time in the construction of nuclear installations.

9.15 pm

My hon. Friend certainly gave us the benefit of his training. He said that, if one was ever in doubt about who was responsible for different parts of a project, one should consult the contract documents and in them one would find, set out quite clearly, the responsibility for each activity undertaken.

The amendment, which has been drafted from the International Maritime Organisation's guidelines, gives the Minister some indication of how Opposition Members want him to approach future joint operating agreements and how we would like to see this legislation put into practice. Could the Minister tell us if he intends to pursue those areas in the IMO document which were not agreed and which are, therefore, in parentheses?

For instance, paragraph 2.2 of the document refers to "The determination of any potential effect on . . . (the location of commercial fishing areas)".

I should like to hear, as would the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow, from the Minister if he intends to pursue this assiduously and to have the parentheses removed, so as to make this phrase part of the paragraph rather than something that is not agreed.

In paragraph 2.3 we have a reference to monitoring parts of structures left on the seabed and their impact "on navigation (or the marine environment)".

Once again, those words are in parentheses. We had a very long debate on the effects on the marine environment and

[Mr. Ernie Ross]

voiced our concern that it should be returned to as near its natural state as possible. Will the Minister assure us that he intends to have those parentheses removed and make the statement part of the general guidelines?

Paragraph 3.4 says:

"In situations where entire removal is technically unfeasible or would involve extreme cost, or an unacceptable risk to personnel or marine environment . . . the coastal state may determine that it need not be entirely removed."

It would be helpful if the Minister could tell us just who would determine the criteria so that we knew exactly how he intended to pursue that clause in future discussions.

The amendment offers the Minister an opportunity to make it quite clear that the success enjoyed by his representatives at the IMO meeting will be built on, and also to indicate to the industry and those outside who are listening to our debate that he is determined to ensure that when all this is over we shall return the environment as nearly as possible to its previous state.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I am grateful to my two hon. Friends who have demonstrated that the Opposition has reached international standards in drafting an amendment; as the Minister will perceive, our amendment is very much a response to the expertise and involvement of the International Maritime Organisation.

The amendment is very important and, although we will not spend very much time on this debate, it is right that we ask the Minister, if he disagrees with the amendment, to tell us in precise detail where his disagreements lie. Is there any part of the amendment with which he disagrees?

My hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) is right to press the point that we must leave the environment in decent order. As chairman of the Council of Europe's committee for the environment, I would hate to think that all the work that we have done here would lead to my committee receiving complaints from another national assembly about the responsibilities of Britain not being properly exercised. The Minister must respond positively to the amendment.

The Minister may feel it impossible to accept the amendment as it stands, but many interest groups and the industry need to know where the Government stand. Some other member states of the International Maritime Organisation have been more precise. The Soviet Union takes the view that there should be no exemption to the 300 m depth limit. France and the United States of America do not wish to see many exceptions to the general rule. We are not sure where the Government stand. The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) would prefer total removal, but he is realistic. We need to know how much realism the Government will show. So my hon. Friends are entitled to ask these questions, and the amendment is justified.

My hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman), in a brief but substantial contribution, reminded the House of the enormous costs involved. He also reminded us of the substantial risks which the fishing industry could face if the Government do not apply satisfactory standards. As a Member sponsored by the National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers, a small but important union whose members are trained and frequently use explosives, I have not yet heard that the Department has consulted my trade union about the use of explosives in industry. Certainly I am worried about the concept of vaporisation. My hon. Friend caused several of us to be anxious; his fears may need less relief than mine.

Dr. Godman: I am sorry if I gave my hon. Friend the vapours. No doubt he will readily acknowledge that there is a world of difference between using controlled explosives in a coal mine, although there are dangers there, and using explosives to remove structures several hundred feet below the surface of the sea.

Mr. Hardy: I accept that. I was coming to the point that there are very strict controls on the use of explosives in collieries. The point that my hon. Friend made about vaporisation suggests that there must be strict controls on the use of explosives offshore. I hope that the Minister has received adequate advice on the matter.

We have not spent long on the amendment, but the Minister must recognise that we need to know where the Government stand. The industry is entitled to know that, and the House certainly is. While the Minister may not be prepared to accept the amendment, I am sure that he will agree, in view of our consideration of the matter in Committee, that the House should have not necessarily a long response but one that is firm, positive and clear.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I assure the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) that, when the amendment appeared on the Order Paper it did not take long to trace its parentage. One should always be proud of one's children. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman no doubt felt it worth while to expose the amendment to the full light of scrutiny in the House.

I address one word of caution particularly to the hon. Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) who is perhaps interpreting the IMO document too widely. If he had considered the whole document, he would have noticed that what is in the body of the amendment is referred to in the document as "preliminary draft guidelines". No phraseology could be more tentative. The hon. Gentleman should have read further into that document. He asked me whether I would also adopt the parts of the document that are in parentheses. If he had read a bit further, he would have discovered that those parts are in parentheses because they were believed to be beyond the competence of the sub-committee that was considering the matter. I hope that the hon. Gentleman does not found too much on this point.

The work of the IMO is important, but as it and the sub-committee acknowledged, it deals primarily with navigation. There will be discussion in other interanational forums about matters other than navigation, important though it is. When we looked at this in Committee, we recognised that navigation is important and that it underlies the policies followed in the IMO, in the United States and in the Soviet Union.

This is an important document and my officials took part in its preparation. It is obviously at an early stage of consideration and has many more processes to go through over a considerable time. It is a good starting point and I commend the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow for choosing a topic that helps to concentrate our minds on the way we should approach these issues. As we have all recognised from the beginning, and as I have never sought to hide from the House, the Bill is simply a beginning, a framework. That is because we are preparing for a situation which probably will not arise on any scale until the mid-1990s.

Some people may say that it is unnecessary to bring in such provisions as early as this. That is a wrong approach. It is necessary to start to concentrate people's minds now, because there is a great deal of work to be done. I have never tried to make any apology for bringing in these provisions so early even though some of the Bill's provisions, especially clause 11 which we are discussing, are tentative. That is because there is so much work to be done. The international regulations on which the amendments are based will be subject to a great deal of refinement and once they are agreed the Government will have to observe them. They will become a major part of the conditions; hence one of the reasons for the general nature of clause 11. It will enable us to provide a flexible system which can change over time to meet, perhaps, even developments at international level.

I hope that the House recognises that this is a realistic and practical approach. In clause 11(2) we have sought to describe the main areas that we think the regulations should cover. We have been careful in the wording of that clause, without prejudice to the generality of clause 11(1). That leaves us with enormous room, so that if other circumstances arise, they can at least be covered. The Committee broadly welcomed what we sought to specify in clause 11 — broad headings and broad categories, which I hope cover most of the points raised in this debate and in committee. The effect on navigation underlies the IMO document and, of course, we are bound under international obligations to take account of standards and safety regulations.

The deterioration of material and its effect on the marine environment has already been covered to some extent in clause 11(2)*(c)* in its provisions for the prevention of pollution. At the same time we have—this is important because it underlines the preliminary nature of the Bill—embarked upon an extensive research and development programme. The House will be aware that the research and development programme is being sponsored by the Science and Engineering Research Council and my Department is playing a considerable role in that programme. It is examining the effects on the environment, including the fisheries criteria. Therefore, we already have work under way in this important area.

9.30 pm

Matters of personal injury are obviously important and there is a question of prescribing under clause 11(2)*(a)*, standards and safety requirements. Of course, that is important in any circumstance and not just in the instance of abandonment. It may require special provisions, but there can be regulations under this clause.

I want to reassure the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow that there is a full weight of offshore safety regulations and that these will remain in force while the dismantling takes place. I am glad to have had the opportunity to say that those regulations already exist in addition to what may be introduced as a result of this legislation.

The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) laid particular emphasis—again, rightly so—on liability for damage. That is something that the oil companies will have to address and obviously that will have a certain relevance in relation to costs. Such things are covered by the provisions relating to standards of inspection but there could be a provision in a programme for monitoring. Therefore, any liabilities for something that is left only partially removed could be covered within that programme should the Secretary of State so require. Therefore, the House is absolutely right to draw attention to that, and it may well be something that the industry, in the years ahead, will need to consider in the overall costs of an abandonment, in whatever form. Again, that is adequately covered by the umbrella nature of the regulations that will be brought in later under clause 11.

We have had a good opportunity yet again this evening to go over all the main areas of importance. None of them are exclusive to each other, but each has a different importance attached to it and is important to different interests. We must think not only of the interest of the oil industry and the costs that may be involved but of the many other matters covered in the amendment and clause 11, which provides an opportunity for full account to be taken of the other users of the sea whether navigators, fishermen or anyone else.

I welcome this opportunity to reiterate that all the issues are important. When standards are worked out, whether they are the result of a research and development programme—for example, the use of explosives—or of the international standards to which this amendment is specifically drawn, or whether they relate to some of the interests of the other users of the sea covered under the regulation-making powers of clause 11, I hope that we have made provision, at this early stage, to ensure that all those important points are covered.

I thank the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow for giving us another opportunity, finally to debate all these important subjects.

Dr. Godman: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 5

Failure to submit programmes

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I beg to move amendment No. 14, in page 4, line 13, leave out from 'sum' to 'for' in line 14.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Government amendments Nos. 15, 19 and 20.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy), with his customary assiduity, drew attention in Committee to the interest that may be charged on any sum that is outstanding where the Secretary of State has prepared an abandonment programme, and said that it should be a commercial rate. Although I was unable to accept the hon. Gentleman's amendment at that stage, I undertook to consider the matter further and, hopefully, to make the wording more precise. I have done that, and a similar point arises in relation to clause 9.

In considering the amendments, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will perhaps feel that he has got two for the price of one and that that will be some consolation for the fact that I did not respond more positively to the earlier amendment that he moved.

Mr. Hardy: I wish briefly to express my appreciation to the Minister. The Department of Energy obviously has an interest in the matter as we were seeking to protect the Secretary of State for Energy from some of the ravaging

[Mr. Hardy]

demands made by his right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. We know that interest rates are already, sadly, very high and gravely burdensome in Britain. However, it may be that the industry would rather pay the commercial interest rate than a charge which a rather rapacious Chancellor of the Exchequer may wish to levy in some future year when the Government's coffers are not quite so swollen with the results of privatisation.

It would be churlish of me to continue and, in any case, we do not have the time. However, I am extremely grateful to the Minister. We accept the amendment with considerable pleasure.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 15, in page 4, line 16, at end insert—

'(5A) The rate of interest payable in accordance with subsection (5) shall be a rate determined by the Secretary of State as comparable with commercial rates.'. — *[Mr. Buchanan-Smith.]*

Clause 6

Revision of programmes

Amendments made: No. 16, in page 4, line 37, leave out 'or *(d)*' and insert ', *(d)* or *(e)*'.

No. 17, in page 4, line 45, at end add—

'(2A) The Secretary of State shall not propose that a person who is or has been within paragraph *(d)* or *(e)* (but no other paragraph) of section 2(1) or paragraph *(b)* or *(c)* (but not paragraph *(a)*) of section 2(2) shall have a duty to secure that a programme is carried out unless it appears to the Secretary of State that a person already under that duty has failed or may fail to discharge it.'.—*[Mr. Buchanan-Smith.]*

Clause 9

Default in carrying out programmes

Amendments made: No. 19, in page 5, line 49, leave out from 'sum' to 'for' in line 50.

No. 20, in page 5, line 52, at end insert—

'(4A) The rate of interest payable in accordance with subsection (4) shall be a rate determined by the Secretary of State as comparable with commercial rates.'. — *[Mr. Buchanan-Smith.]*

Schedule 1

Amendment of Existing Licences

Mr. Hardy: I beg to move amendment No. 22, in page 19, line 22, at end insert—

'(1B) The Minister may not give a direction under Clause 1A—

(a) when to do so would impose an unreasonable economic burden on a proposed programme of development in respect of any part of the licensed area;

(b) in respect of any part of an oil field (whether or not it is such for the purposes of the Oil Taxation Act 1975) for which a programme of development had been served on the licensee or approved or consented to by the Minister under Clause (15) before .....date..... 1987,

(c) in respect of any offshore installation on which the proposed separate measuring or weighing appliances are to be installed, at a date later than that on which the installation was first approved or consented to by the Minister under Clause (15) or in respect of which a programme of development was served on the licensee under that clause.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments: No. 23, in page 23, line 3, at end insert—

'(1B) The Minister may not give a direction under Clause 1A—

(a) when to do so would impose an unreasonable economic burden on a proposed programme of development in respect of any part of the licensed area;

(b) in respect of any part of an oil field (whether or not it is such for the purposes of the Oil Taxation Act 1975) for which a programme of development had been served on the licensee or approved or consented to by the Minister under Clause (15) before .....date..... 1987,

(c) in respect of any offshore installation on which the proposed separate measuring or weighing appliances are to be installed, at a date later than that on which the installation was first approved or consented to by the Minister under Clause (15) or in respect of which a programme of development was served on the licensee under that clause.'.

No. 24, in schedule 2, page 32, line 25, at end insert—

'(1B) The Minister may not give a direction under Clause 1A—

(a) when to do so would impose an unreasonable economic burden on a proposed programme of development in respect of any part of the licensed area;

(b) in respect of any part of an oil field (whether or not it is such for the purposes of the Oil Taxation Act 1975) for which a programme of development had been served on the licensee or approved or consented to by the Minister under Clause (15) before .....date..... 1987,

(c) in respect of any offshore installation on which the proposed separate measuring or weighing appliances are to be installed, at a date later than that on which the installation was first approved or consented to by the Minister under Clause (15) or in respect of which a programme of development was served on the licensee under that clause.'.

No. 25, in page 28, line 14, at end insert—

'(1B) The Minister may not give a direction under Clause 1A—

(a) When to do so would impose an unreasonable economic burden on a proposed programme of development in respect of any part of the licensed area;

(b) in respect of any part of an oil field (whether or not it is such for the purposes of the Oil Taxation Act 1975) for which a programme of development had been served on the licensee or approved or consented to by the Minister under Clause (15) before .....date..... 1987,

(c) in respect of any offshore installation on which the proposed separate measuring or weighing appliances are to be installed, at a date later than that on which the installation was first approved or consented to by the Minister under Clause (15) or in respect of which a programme of development was served on the licensee under that clause.'.

No. 26, in page 29, line 39, at end insert—

'(1B) The Minister may not give a direction under Clause 1A—

(a) When to do so would impose an unreasonable economic burden on a proposed programme of development in respect of any part of the licensed area;

(b) in respect of any part of an oil field (whether or not it is such for the purposes of the Oil Taxation Act 1975) for which a programme of development had been served on the licensee or approved or consented to by the Minister under Clause (15) before .....date..... 1987,

(c) in respect of any offshore installation on which the proposed separate measuring or weighing appliances are to be installed, at a date later than

that on which the installation was first approved or consented to by the Minister under Clause (15) or in respect of which a programme of development was served on the licensee under that clause.'.

No. 27, in page 30, line 12, at end insert—

'(1B) The Minister may not give a direction under Clause 1A—

(a) When to do so would impose an unreasonable economic burden on a proposed programme of development in respect of any part of the licensed area;

(b) in respect of any part of an oil field (whether or not it is such for the purposes of the Oil Taxation Act 1975) for which a programme of development had been served on the licensee or approved or consented to by the Minister under Clause (15) before .....date..... 1987,

(c) in respect of any offshore installation on which the proposed separate measuring or weighing appliances are to be installed, at a date later than that on which the installation was first approved or consented to by the Minister under Clause (15) or in respect of which a programme of development was served on the licensee under that clause.'.

No. 28, in page 26, line 26, at end insert—

'(1B) The Minister may not give a direction under Clause 1A—

(a) When to do so would impose an unreasonable economic burden on a proposed programme of development in respect of any part of the licensed area;

(b) in respect of any part of an oil field (whether or not it is such for the purposes of the Oil Taxation Act 1975) for which a programme of development had been served on the licensee or approved or consented to by the Minister under Clause (15) before .....date..... 1987,

(c) in respect of any offshore installation on which the proposed separate measuring or weighing appliances are to be installed, at a date later than that on which the installation was first approved or consented to by the Minister under Clause (15) or in respect of which a programme of development was served on the licensee under that clause.'.

No. 29, in schedule 2, page 31, line 48, at end insert—

'(1B) The Minister may not give a direction under Clause 1A—

(a) When to do so would impose an unreasonable economic burden on a proposed programme of development in respect of any part of the licensed area;

(b) in respect of any part of an oil field (whether or not it is such for the purposes of the Oil Taxation Act 1975) for which a programme of development had been served on the licensee or approved or consented to by the Minister under Clause (15) before .....date..... 1987;

(c) in respect of any offshore installation on which the proposed separate measuring or weighing appliances are to be installed, at a date later than that on which the installation was first approved or consented to by the Minister under Clause (15) or in respect of which a programme of development was served on the licensee under that clause.'.

No. 30, in page 34, line 14, at end insert—

'(1B) The Minister may not give a direction under Clause 1A—

(a) When to do so would impose an unreasonable economic burden on a proposed programme of development in respect of any part of the licensed area;

(b) in respect of any part of an oil field (whether or not it is such for the purposes of the Oil Taxation Act 1975) for which a programme of development had been served on the licensee or approved or consented to by the Minister under Clause (15) before .....date..... 1987;

(c) in respect of any offshore installation on which the proposed separate measuring or weighing appliances are to be installed, at a date later than that on which the installation was first approved or consented to by the Minister under Clause (15) or in respect of which a programme of development was served on the licensee under that clause.'.

Mr. Hardy: I hope that the Minister does not think that I am ignoring the pretty full response that he offered at our last sitting in Committee, when he responded to a series of amendments which I had tabled to deal with the question of measurement. His response then was extremely interesting. However, I think that the Minister will understand that he is dealing with a complex and important matter and that he may welcome the brief opportunity to reassure the industry a little more fully and perhaps in a little more detail as to the effect which the provisions of schedules 1 and 2 would have in relation to measurement, especially on the question of the development of satellite platforms, which are essentially unmanned and which therefore cannot have separation and measurement equipment upon them. That was the basis of my concern in Committee.

The Minister will understand that if we are to seek the 625 trillion cu ft that was identified as an alternative to the purchase of the Norwegian Sleipner gas, satellite platform development may be essential. Therefore, it is right that we have tabled amendments to deal with this subject. The Minister knows that we shall not press them to a Division. However, I hope that he will accept that the amendments have been tabled so that a proper assurance can be given and so that the oil and gas industries will know that they have the backing of hon. Members on both sides of the House for a proper policy of adequate extraction of our offshore reserves. It would be frightful if reserves were not properly exploited but were left sterile, never to be tapped, because of the short-sighted fiscal arrangements.

The industry should be assured that the arrangements will not be short-sighted and that proper management of our offshore reserves will be maintained. We have tabled the amendments to give the Minister a chance to offer the industry reassurance because the hesitation which may have been involved in the Bill initially could well have aroused anxiety which should not be fostered. The Minister might like to take this opportunity to relieve and remove those anxieties.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I am glad to respond to the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) in the spirit in which he moved the amendment. I recognise, as I did in Committee, that there is anxiety about this, in particular about the effect that the provisions in the Bill as drafted may have on satellite developments which in the years ahead could prove, and indeed are already proving, a useful source of development in the North sea, and about ensuring that we exploit our resources to the full. I consulted the industry and had discussions with individual Members on this, as my officials have. I believe that we have met their anxieties, but it may be helpful quickly to go over some of those points tonight.

First, I should make an important preliminary point which must not be overlooked. Although these provisions apply to existing licences, they are not automatic requirements. They apply only if a direction is given by the Secretary of State, and it is important to remember that. Perhaps we did not dwell sufficiently on that point in Committee.

The amendment highlights particular points of concern, and perhaps by taking the amendment I can give

[Mr. Buchanan-Smith]

the assurances that he seeks. Paragraph *(a)* in each of the amendments seeks to prevent the Secretary of State from giving a direction when to do so would impose an "unreasonable economic burden". I said in Committee, and I repeat tonight, that these provisions will be applied with full regard to economic considerations. It is self-evident that it would not be in the interests of the Department to discourage development; instead, we must seek to encourage it, as we have always done.

Paragraph *(b)* seeks to prevent the new arrangements applying in respect of part of an oilfield. In certain circumstances that may be necessary, but broadly the intention is to continue to accept unitisation agreements where a field straddling two or more licensed areas is worked and developed as a unit, and the licensees' shares of petroleum won and saved are determined by application of agreed unitisation factors to the quantity measured for the field as a whole.

Paragraph *(c)* seeks to ensure that the new arrangements may not be applied in respect of existing installations. As I have said, there is no intention to alter the method agreed for an existing field, except where it is proposed to make use of an existing field's facilities in measuring petroleum won and saved from another field.

As I have made clear to the industry, and endeavour to make clear to the House again tonight, we are not seeking to apply some elaborate gold-plated standards of measurement for the sake of it. The provisions will be applied consistently with our general philosophy of ensuring that worthwhile developments can go ahead while revenues are protected. My Department's gas and oil measurement branch works closely and regularly on a practical level, not only with UKOOA, which has raised some of these anxieties, but with the Institute of Petroleum and individual oil companies on developments in good oilfield practice in these times of rapidly changing technology. I assure the House that we shall certainly always have regard both to good oilfield practice and to economic considerations.

I hope that with this opportunity to repeat those assurances, perhaps even more specifically than I have done previously, the hon. Gentleman will withdraw his amendment. I thank him for the opportunity to repeat them again.

Mr. Hardy: The Minister will recognise that I am grateful for those assurances which will be looked at closely by the industry. I certainly accept his point about unitisation and he was right to make it as clearly and specifically as he did. We are completely reassured about the arrangements for two separate fields. However, I have a remaining anxiety. I shall not press the Minister to respond to it this evening, but I hope that he will attend carefully to it. My anxiety may not be justified. I do not claim to be a professional geologist and I have no claims to whatever other professional qualifications proliferate for offshore discovery, development and technology.

The remaining anxiety related to the possible position of one field. One field may consist of many reservoirs. Given the small fields, particularly the small gas fields that must be developed without crossing the interests of one field or another, the development of satellite platforms may require a more positive system of approval than so far is envisaged. I am glad to note from the Minister's comments that it seems to be clear that the Department of Energy does not intend to adopt such a system of measurement requirement or fiscal regulation as would prevent use of satellite platforms.

9.45 pm

Given that remaining anxiety, which may be worth another examination by the Department between now and the time that the Bill reaches the other place, it would be churlish of me not to thank the Minister for the detailed response that he offered in Committee and for his further response — which I am sure he will agree was better made this evening — to relieve the remaining anxieties within the industry, which faces considerable problems in regard to abandonment programmes.

It was rather sad that an important piece of legislation concerned with abandonment should also have had schedules cluttered up with almost incomprehensible terminology about taxation and measurement. It may have been better to introduce a small Bill on a rather more leisurely basis in regard to this draconian measure. I quote the word "draconian" from the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross). It was used frequently in Committee and on Second Reading. I am glad that the Government will not be quite so draconian about measurement.

I am obliged to the Minister for the explanation and assurance that he offered to the House, and I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Order for Third Reading read.—[Queen's consent, on behalf of the Crown, signified.]

9.48 pm

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

We have reached the final stage of the Bill in the House of Commons, subject to anything that may happen in another place. In some ways it has been a strange Bill with which to work. We are dealing not with a future hypothetical situation but with one that will arise and about which many understandable uncertainties have been expressed. Ours will be one of the first major offshore areas in which abandonment of installations is likely to arise. To that extent we are treading new ground and preparing a new road. The Bill has meant that we have had wide debates. It has allowed many diverse considerations to be involved. None the less, I express my thanks to all those who participated in the debates. We have accepted not only the challenge of preparing for the 1990s, but the difficulties in which we labour. We have also sought to provide a structure for abandonment when, in many ways, if we had had the necessary knowledge and experience, it would have been more satisfying to be able also to legislate for the details of abandonment. None the less, we were right to proceed with the Bill in this way.

We are dealing with a large and important sector of the British economy. It is important that the industry knows in what conditions and framework it must work. The Bill also underlines the opportunity taken to update legislation. As the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) mentioned, the Bill has given us an opportunity to deal with matters such as measurement.

The Bill highlights and demonstrates the continuing need for co-operation between the Government and industry. This Bill simply provides a framework. I hope

that the co-operation that there has been over its drafting and during its parliamentary stages, including the constructive changes that have been introduced with the approval of both sides of the House, will continue when the important regulations and international standards have to be drawn up before we tackle the first abandonment. The international background will be of particular importance.

I hope that research and development will continue on a satisfactory basis. We do not yet know enough about how some of the abandonment procedures will be carried out, or about their effect on the environment. This programme has therefore been embarked upon and I hope that details will emerge from it as to how to frame the regulations.

We are referring to a national resource that lies under the sea. The sea is used by many other people for thoroughly legitimate and long-standing purposes, such as navigation and fishing. A great deal of consultation went into the preparation of the Bill. I urge all those who are involved — the oil industry, shipping and navigational interests and the fishing industry — to continue to co-operate so that conflict can be avoided and to ensure that we make the best possible use of these resources for the nation as a whole.

9.52 pm

Mr. Rowlands: I echo and second many of the Minister's sentiments. It was the ancient scholar Livy who observed that laws are as mortal as man. For the last five or six years the Minister and I have debated many measures. In most cases, the lines have been drawn and the trenches have been dug. Eventually we have been guillotined and the Government have had their Bills. I hope that some of those Acts will not be immortal. However, there was genuine co-operation over this Bill. We are trying to anticipate a problem that will arise in the next decade or so. Some of us may still be Members of Parliament when the first abandonment takes place, and we have begun a legislative process to prepare for that day. The good boy scouts' principle lies behind the Bill: to be prepared in good time for the day when we have to tackle the enormous problems surrounding the abandonment of these North sea installations.

When we began consideration of this Bill, we faced the nightmarish concept of leaving behind in the deepest North sea large physical structures, sawn off below the waterline, that could cause considerable concern to fishermen, mariners and navigational interests. We have been debating how to provide an international framework of standards as well as a national set of regulations to deal with the abandonment of important installations.

I do not want to be too philosophical, but man is transient. So, too, are Governments. Sometimes we abuse the environment and our resources. We must ensure that having enjoyed the fruits of the North sea, in terms of the minerals that have been won and the oil and gas that have been delivered, we leave the North sea in the best possible condition and ensure that it is compatible with environmental standards of the highest quality. That has been behind much of our argument. It has been a pleasure to serve on this Bill because we have had a genuinely consultative process and the Bill has changed a lot as a result. We give the Bill our full support.

9.54 pm

Mr. Proctor: I congratulate the Government on introducing what has readily been regarded as a timely measure. By addressing the future now, they have cleared away a great deal of uncertainty among the industry and other interested parties.

This is an important Bill. We are concerned with expenditure of between £5 billion and £6 billion and the abandonment of 160 installations and associated pipeline activities. The Bill is important because of our international obligations in this respect. It is important to ensure that the burden does not fall on taxpayers. The Bill is important for fishing and navigational interests and for the oil industry. I am glad that my right hon. Friend stressed the continuing importance of the oil industry to prosperity and growth in the economy.

As the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) said, this was a truly consultative and co-operative effort. The Bill is now much better than when we discussed it on Second Reading. Much of the reason for that is my right hon. Friend, and our thanks go to him for piloting it through so well.

9.56 pm

Mr. Bruce: I welcome the tone and content of the Minister's speech. It is important that people realise that the Bill puts down markers for the future. It would be wrong to assume that Parliament has taken a clear view on the best way foward, as we do not have the information to do that.

We have set the framework within which to approach problems. It is important to give the Bill a Third Reading in that spirit. There are problems which must be dealt with and we need a framework for that. As the Minister said, we must increase research and development and consider the possible impact of abandonment before we can make a decision.

I still believe that less than total removal would be a concession. As the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) paraphrased me by saying, that might turn out to be a realistic concession because all interested parties believe that it is sensible. As long as people understand that we have established a framework and nobody assumes that their solution has been endorsed and act on that basis, we will have started down the right road.

It is important that people who are concerned with how we remove installations do not believe that Parliament has given them any exemptions from dealing with the matter comprehensively. The Minister knows that all interested parties will examine the regulations closely. It is essential that everybody is consulted and carried before any regulations are imposed.

With those qualifications in mind, I am happy to endorse the Bill and look forward with interest to see how this major issue develops.

9.58 pm

Mr. Ernie Ross: The Minister will not be surprised to hear that I want to push him even at this late stage to gather research and development findings which emerge during the next few years. We are at the very forefront of this new technology and if British industry and technology are to advance there must be some determination to gather such experience.

[Mr. Ernie Ross]

It is clear that, unless we are outbid by the Japanese or a large American multinational, we may have to co-operate with our European partners to get contracts. It is certainly true that British business men will have to co-operate. We are talking about large sums of money and the removal, or partial removal, of these structures. Companies will be concerned, because it is new technology, and they will wish to ensure that company confidentiality is maintained. The Minister should establish a central gathering area.

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for Third Reading stood adjourned.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Petroleum Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

10 pm

Dr. Godman: I welcome the early introduction of the measure. While I accept that maritime demolition work will not start until the 1990s, we need to prepare in a sensible and realistic way. I acknowledge that some research work is being carried out, but more needs to be done. The work of removal will be highly technical, costly and, for some, potentially hazardous.

The marine environment should be restored to its former condition in the interests of the fishermen of the United Kingdom. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) said, there are potentially exciting employment opportunities here. It is essential that we grab those opportunities, particularly in Scotland. Here we can talk of construction as well as maritime demolition in terms of the construction of crane barges, barges to transport sections to the shore, tugs and other ancillary vessels and structures. We must not allow foreign firms to dominate the novel work of maritime demolition. It has been a pleasure to welcome the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Housing (Scotland)

10.2 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Ancram): I beg to move,

That the draft Housing Support Grant (Scotland) Variation Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 14th January, be approved.

Mr. Speaker: I understand that it will be for the convenience of the House to discuss also the second order:

That the draft Housing Support Grant (Scotland) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 14th January, be approved.

and the prayer:

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Housing Revenue Account Rate Fund Contribution Limits (Scotland) Order 1987 (S.I., 1987, No. 11), dated 7th January 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 20th January be annulled.

Mr. Ancram: Full details of the Housing Support Grant settlement are set out in the report.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it necessary to take all the orders together? Is it possible to take them separately?

Mr. Speaker: I put this to the House at the beginning.

Mr. Foulkes: I did not hear you.

Mr. Speaker: I certainly put it to the House. The House agreed that that should be done. The Minister is already on his feet.

Mr. Ancram: Full details of the Housing Support Grant settlement are set out in the report which accompanies the draft Housing Support Grant Order. In view of the time limit on the debate, I shall not burden the House with excessive detail. I shall explain the thinking behind these proposals and the limits that have been set out in the Housing Revenue Account Rate Fund Contribution Limits (Scotland) Order.

We have reached agreement with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on the formula for the distribution of housing support grant this year. I should like to place on record our thanks to the convention for its contribution to our discussion.

Mr. Foulkes: The Minister has just put on record his grateful thanks to the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities. Is that the same COSLA that the Secretary of State for Scotland, in an arrogant and impudent speech earlier this evening, described as a wholly owned subsidiary of the Labour party?

Mr. Ancram: Whatever COSLA may or may not be, the discussions that we have had on the formula and the contributions that it made to those discussions were constructive and useful. Therefore, it is only right that in this instance I should record my appreciation of COSLA's part in them.

In the housing support grant settlement for 1987-88, the Government have aimed again at concentrating resources on those authorities which, in our view, require them. We have estimated eligible expenditure at £288·5 million and relevant income at £242 million. Housing support grant will therefore total £46·5 million. This will be distributed among the 25 authorities which we believe will incur deficits on their housing revenue accounts in 1987-88.

I should explain to the House that in response to representations by a number of authorities and hon. Members, and with the agreement of the convention, we have made a major change in this year's grant formula. Since the inception of HSG, the formula has incorporated a notional per head income amount on the income side of the equation to represent rate fund contributions to authorities' housing revenue accounts. Since 1985-86, however, the Secretary of State has used his statutory power to set limits on the amounts of rate fund contribution for which authorities may estimate. The notional amounts in the HSG formula, for that reason, have moved out of line with actual rate fund contributions. As a result, some authorities have received less grant, and others more, than had actual rate fund contribution figures been used. Overall, authorities as a whole benefited from the previous formula, but for 1987-88, if we continued to follow this approach, authorities would in total have received less than the figure arrived at using "real" RFC limits. For 1987-88, therefore, we have incorporated in the HSG formula a rate fund contribution figure for each authority based on a pro rata distribution of £30 million across Scotland according to council house stock numbers, or the authority's 1986-87 statutory rate fund contribution limit, whichever is the lower.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I urge the Minister to give the most sympathetic consideration to Inverclyde district council, given the massive unemployment and housing problems with which it is afflicted.

Mr. Ancram: I know that the hon. Gentleman on all these occasions obviously and understandably presses the interests of Inverclyde district council. In the change in the formula that we have made, it is generally accepted that we are now working on a more realistic basis. In this year's settlement we have reached a position which is more favourable than it would have been overall had we not made the change in the formula. We have answered the legitimate concerns which have been expressed to us in previous years by certain district councils which felt that they were losing out by what had by that time effectively become an artificial assumption within the formula.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): Rather than fudging around with a lot of phoney language in response to the question of my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman), would the Minister make it clear to him that Inverclyde district council will receive no housing support grant whatsoever this year?

Mr. Ancram: The point that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) fails to appreciate is that we work by a formula. If he consulted his friends in COSLA, he would find that they agreed that this formula change should be made because, overall, it produced a more beneficial effect. Within a formula there will obviously be those who gain and those who lose.

Dr. Godman: In view of what my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) said, the Minister must surely acknowledge the massive problems that face Inverclyde district council? I am not worried about the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mrs. McCurley). Inverclyde district council faces massive

[Dr. Godman]

problems. Its unemployment continues to rise remorselessly. The Minister knows that. I am making a plea for help for that council.

Mr. Ancram: We operate housing support grant on a formula, and I could not treat Inverclyde outside that formula.

Mr. Maxton: Oh, come on.

Mr. Ancram: I rather suspect that if the hon. Gentleman were ever, unlikely though it may be, to find himself with my responsibilities, he would find that where there is a formula that requires to be applied, he has to apply it. That is what is happening here.

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Foulkes: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ancram: I will give way to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Foulkes: That must mean me.

Mr. Forsyth: Will the formula take account of large numbers of empty houses? I cannot speak for Inverclyde, but I think that it has more than its fair share of houses that Labour authorities continue to leave vacant.

Mr. Ancram: My hon. Friend makes a valid point. However, the formula is not as sensitive as that. It deals with the stock held by the council, whether that stock is occupied or empty. It is important for Labour Members, as well as my hon. Friends, to appreciate that a formula improvement that takes account of real rate fund contributions as opposed to assumptions is better than the previous formula. I rather suspect that some Labour Members representing district councils will agree with that. In the case of certain councils, I am sure that the line that has been taken by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) will not be acceptable. I give way to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Foulkes: The Minister has misunderstood the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman). I am not asking for special consideration for Cumnock and Doon Valley in the formula. We are saying that not enough money is available to maintain houses either through housing support grant or the rate fund contribution. This is a cut in funding.

Does the Minister recall that I sent him a letter and a survey carried out by the Dalmellington tenants association, which showed the number of houses needing repairs and the number of houses with dampness? Will he admit that Cumnock and Doon Valley is not being permitted enough funds to enable it to carry out proper repairs?

Mr. Forsyth: Give way.

Mr. Foulkes: I wish that the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) would shut up. He is rabbiting on. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh?"] The hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mrs. McCurley) has crept into the debate at last.

Will the Minister admit that, if the money were available to Cumnock and Doon Valley district council, the housing at Dalmellington would be properly upgraded and maintained, and any that were empty would be immediately snapped up? The council is unable to do that because the Minister is cutting its allocation.

Mr. Ancram: I listened with a great deal of interest to what the hon. Gentleman said. On occasions, I have to call him my hon. Friend, for reasons into which we need not go.

Hon. Members: Oh.

Mr. Foulkes: I make it clear that this is because I am a Quaker.

Mr. Ancram: I am a little surprised by the hon. Gentleman's allegation. I received his letter, and I am concerned about the structural problems in the housing stock of Cumnock and Doon Valley and the problems of dampness and condensation. I am sure that he was as appreciative as his council when its HRA allocation, which deals with the public sector stock, was increased by the extraordinary amount of 31 per cent. this year. How he can make these allegations, I fail to understand, unless his council has not yet informed him of the provisional allocation that it has received. I shall carry on because certain of his other points will be answered by what I say.

The end result of the formula change is that all authorities in HSG will benefit in 1987-88. Aggregate grant is £2 million higher than in the current year and £16 million higher than if we continued with the previous formula. I would have thought that for that reason, if for no other, local authorities, quite apart from COSLA, would welcome the change in the formula.

Mr. Maxton: Perhaps the Minister will clarify this point for the record. I think that he is a man who believes in some truth. Would it be better if he compared last year's housing support grant order in terms of money with this one? In that case, of course, there is a reduction of more than £4 million.

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Gentleman is aware that that is due to the variation that occurs as a result of changes in the interest rates. The real figure for the housing budgets of councils is affected if interest charges are lower than was expected. If interest rates moved in the opposite direction, I suspect that if I was to suggest that the amounts were higher because of that, the hon. Gentleman would be the first to challenge me. It is right that I should consider the figures after the interest rates are taken into account rather than to play with them in the way in which the hon. Member for Cathcart is playing with them.

The point about which Opposition Members cannot argue is that a formula which produces about £16 million more than the previous formula must be acceptable, and in general terms, I would have thought that the Opposition would welcome that, although I accept that at times we are surprised by the Opposition's response.

Local authorities' expenditure on housing is, of course, very sensitive to changes in interest rates and we are again applying an average rate of interest to authorities' individual volumes of debt — 10·4 per cent. has been assumed in this settlement. If, however, in practice, interest rates prove to be significantly different from our current assumptions, we will bring forward an appropriate variation order in due course. The 1986-87 variation order before the House today reflects a similar undertaking given at this time last year. Because average pool interest rates have fallen from 11 per cent. to 10·6 per cent. during

the year, HSG, as the hon. Member for Cathcart explained, is reduced for this year by £6·2 million to a revised amount of £44·5 million.

The figures in the housing support grant orders reflect our continuing concern to balance the undoubted need for expenditure on housing against our responsibility to control public expenditure as a whole. This is particularly the case in the amounts that we have allowed for management and maintenance expenditure. We are at present, in conjunction with the convention, involved in a review of these allowances. But, for 1987-88, we have uprated the management and maintenance provision in the 1986-87 settlement by 7 per cent., which is well above the rate of inflation. Rightly we believe that to be generous. In the light of present inflation rates, that should allow some real growth on repairs expenditure. The new figure is £303 per house—a total of £253 million.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Does the Minister accept that many authorities, including West Lothian, are now becoming deeply worried about the problems of rewiring as the housing stock reaches a certain age? The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities has given the figure of 118,200 houses which need rewiring. Do the Government dispute the COSLA figures? I recognise that this is a difficult problem.

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Gentleman knows that COSLA set out a series of figures which I have not been prepared to accept and have asked COSLA to justify. I believe that there has been a degree of double counting.

Mr. Maxton: Of course there has.

Mr. Ancram: I wish that the hon. Member for Cathcart would stop muttering, "Of course there has been a degree of double counting." It took me six months to get him to admit that double counting had occurred in the first place.

We are all concerned to try to discover the real extent of need in Scottish housing and to meet that within the available resources. I will consider the question of capital allocations that I have made available this year in due course.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Briefly, in the light of the Minister's comments about the level of investment required and the doubt that exists within his Department about the COSLA figures, will he respond positively to the request made by COSLA in December for a working party of officials to examine some of the problems on a joint basis and provide figures about which we can all agree?

Mr. Ancram: I have told COSLA that I do not rule out the possibility of joint discussions at an official level. COSLA issued a series of figures last year and I have made a detailed response to them. I said that before we had joint discussions, I wanted to receive and consider COSLA's reaction to my response. That is a fair position for me to hold.

On the income side, we are assuming for the purposes of the settlement that rents will increase by £2 per week over 1986-87 order levels, bringing rents to £15·85 in order terms. Taking these housing support grant assumptions together with the Government's decisions on rate fund contribution limits, with which I will deal shortly, we estimate that average council house rents will rise by about £1·32 per house per week in 1987-88. This will result in an average weekly rent for Scottish local authorities of about £14·34 per week.

Mr. Foulkes: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Ancram: This is a short debate and I have been very generous in giving way. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to intervene later in my remarks, I shall give way then.

Mr. Foulkes *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The Minister is not giving way.

Mr. Ancram: I shall return to rents later in my speech and, depending on the time available, if the hon. Gentleman wishes to intervene then, I shall consider giving way to him.

Let me turn now to the Housing Revenue Account Rate Fund Contribution Limits (Scotland) Order 1987. It is right to consider this order at the same time as the housing support grant orders, because they all directly affect the income side of authorities' housing revenue accounts.

The Government must take difficult decisions about the total resources which the country can afford to devote to housing, against the competing pressures on public expenditure as a whole. Although I am pleased to have been able to increase housing support grant because of the formula change, as I have already outlined our policy continues to be to reduce indiscriminate subsidies to enable us to devote greater resources to investment in the general housing stock.

Between 1981 and 1985 many authorities, by keeping rents unnecessarily and artificially low, and by requiring ever higher contributions from ratepayers to balance their housing revenue accounts, chose to forfeit £112 million of capital expenditure consents which could and should have been used to carry out modernisations, to deal with dampness, condensation and similar problems. However, since we took the statutory power to limit rate fund contributions, first exercised in 1985-86, this trend has been reversed. We have reduced the RFC aggregate from a non-statutory advisory limit of £120 million in 1984-85 to £43·7 million for 1987-88, as set out in the order before the House tonight. We have increased capital allocations on the HRA block each year by more than the RFC reductions required. For 1987-88, for example, the RFC limit aggregate is £26 million lower than for 1986-87, and this has contributed to a £40 million increase in the provisional HRA allocations next year as compared with 1986-87. The HRA allocation, at £362 million, is for the third year running substantially up in real terms. During the three years, the increase has been £135 million, or very nearly 60 per cent. over the level of three years ago.

Next year's allocations will again be augmented by authorities' ability automatically to carry forward underspends of up to 3·5 per cent. of the issued allocations. But capital allocations alone no longer provide a comprehensive picture of investment in council housing. As a result of the covenant scheme facility which we have temporarily made available, mainstream capital investment is likely to be boosted next year by a further £60 million and £215 million in total during the next three to four years. Investment in the Scottish council housing stock in 1987-88 will, therefore, be about £100 million, or over 30 per cent., higher than in the current year. Indeed, the increase over just three years is approaching 90 per

[Mr. Ancram]

cent. and clearly demonstrates the Government's concern to enable the real problems in the housing stock to be tackled. I have to say that if today's problems are the legacy of past underinvestment and lack of proper repair and maintenance, a great deal of responsibility for those problems must lie with those who made policy between 1974 and 1979. *[Laughter.]* Oppositions Members laugh.

When the Labour party last held office, capital investment in Scottish housing by public agencies—the local authorities, the Housing Corporation, the Scottish Special Housing Association and new towns—fell in real terms by a massive and damaging 37 per cent. Since this Government came to office, we have turned the tide such that the figures for next year represent a real term increase of over 5 per cent. since 1979. That is the measure of the Government's commitment to dealing with Scotland's housing problems.

In setting an aggregate limit to rate fund contributions of £43·7 million, we have consulted widely about the implications of the individual limits set. The distribution of this aggregate took account, initially, of the number of council houses in each authority. We subsequently invited representations and considered carefully the implied rent increase and rent level in 1987-88 in each authority. As a result of those representations, we made upward adjustments for six of those authorities. Of course, rent implications for the 56 housing authorities vary widely. We took the view that rate fund contributions should be set so that, on the basis of reasonable assumptions on expenditure, individual authorities' average rent increases need not be higher than £2 per week and that no authority——

Mr. Foulkes *rose*——

Mr. Ancram: —should be required to raise its average rent level to more than £17·15 per week.

If the hon. Gentleman will bear with me, I will give way just once more in a moment.

In this calculation we again assumed that authorities would spend 7 per cent. more on management and maintenance than last year. As a result, we calculate that the average rent increase next year will be about £1·32 per week.

Mr. Foulkes: On the £1·32 per week rent increase, could the Minister express that as a percentage? Could he confirm that the average percentage increase is well in excess of 10 per cent.? Since inflation and wage increases are well below that, how does he expect the ordinary council house tenant to be able to pay for that huge rent increase?

Mr. Ancram: If the hon. Gentleman will bear with me, I am about to come to the point of percentages in comparative terms. The effect of our decisions in these orders on Cumnock and Doon Valley would be an estimated rent increase of just above the average that I have given.

Mr. Foulkes: How are they going to pay for it?

Mr. Ancram: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will just bear with me.

I expect we shall hear some exaggerated claims from Opposition Members about the effect of these limits upon rent levels. It is worth looking at what has happened in the past. In the equivalent debate last year I predicted that rents would rise by up to £1·60 per week. In the event, the actual rent increase turned out to be just under £1·50. If rents go up by the £1·32 we are forecasting next year—and this figure was not disputed by the convention when I met it in December—the average council rent will stand at £14·34 per week in Scotland. The rental figures that I am giving are not unreasonable.

Two points are worth emphasising. First, the £14·34 average next year is well below the current year's average council rent of £16·55 in England and Wales and below current rent levels in housing associations, the Scottish Special Housing Association and new town houses and the prevate sector in Scotland.

Secondly, although we hear much from the Opposition Benches about local authority rent increases over the past year, let me remind the House of some figures given in answer to the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Raynsford) on 3 December 1986, which showed that registered rents, that is, fair rents independently assessed, in Scotland rose faster between 1979 and 1985 than local authority rents—by 174 per cent. against 135 per cent. Those are rent increases set not by councils but by independent assessment. In 1985 they stood at £2·64 per week higher than the local authority figure we are forecasting for 1987. Of course, if tenants have genuine difficulty in meeting their housing costs, relief is available to them through the housing benefit system.

Just in case the hon. Member has any interests in Kyle and Carrick, which I think may touch on part of his constituency, I might point out to him that the increase in rent involved in the figures that I have given tonight, in terms of our estimate, would be only 21 pence. I am sure that he, among others in the area, would welcome that.

In conclusion, let me emphasise that the figures included in the orders before the House tonight are designed to reinforce our policies for housing in Scotland across the whole range. Reductions in rate fund contributions and housing support grant, taken together, are evidence of our continuing determination to concentrate on using the resources available for housing on capital investment.

Indiscriminate subsidies are wasteful and do not encourage efficient management by authorities. The reduction in rate fund contributions will offer relief to hard-pressed ratepayers, and it has contributed towards further increases in capital expenditure. These increases, totalling nearly 60 per cent. over three years, together with the 7 per cent. increase for management and maintenance expenditure built into the calculations, will ensure overall that tenants benefit by a higher standard of housing provision.

We have consulted widely on the orders. I am satisfied that the figures they contain are fair and reasonable. I commend the orders to the House.

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It was clear when the debate started that items 3 to 5 on today's Order Paper were to be taken together; the House had earlier consented to that. What was not clear, however, was that the Minister would take the best part of half an hour to address the House on the business. I am seeking your help, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is there any way in which we can undo the undertaking to deal with these matters together

so that the debate may be extended for three hours? That would allow the Opposition to reply adequately to the puerile case that was made by the Minister.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is not possible to extend the debate by the length of time that the hon. Gentleman wishes, because the House previously made a decision by motion to take the orders together. I remind the House that Mr. Speaker put the question to the House—I was present when he put it—about taking the orders and prayer together, and the House did not dissent.

10.31 pm

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): I accept your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As the Minister will demand the right to reply to the debate, he will take up almost half the debating time. That is ridiculous, in a short but important debate.

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Gentleman should not have intervened.

Mr. Maxton: The Minister says that I should not have intervened. I made only one short intervention.

I have heard of generosity, but generosity from this Minister cannot be believed. If he had applied the formula that he used in previous years he would have cut the housing support grant by £13 million instead of by only £6 million. I suppose one could call him generous for doing that.

The Minister then suggested that the Government have been inordinately generous because tenants in council houses have benefited from the marvellous works that this beneficent Government have done. He seems to think that they are a marvellous lot and that everyone will finish up voting for them. What a laugh.

Let us consider the facts. Let us start with the housing support grant. Let us see what has happened under this Government. In 1979, housing support grant was £213 million. By 1984-85, it was down to £120 million. By 1985-86, it was reduced to £90 million. In 1986-87, it was reduced to £51 million. This year it is being reduced again to £46·5 million. Those are all in cash terms and are not affected by inflation. In cash terms alone the reduction in housing support grant has been 75 per cent. Yet the Minister tried to tell us that he was being generous in increasing the capital allocation by some 5 per cent.

Let us examine the total package for this year. The rate fund contribution has been reduced from £70 million to £44 million. The housing support grant has been reduced from £51 million to £47 million. Those figures compare with £90 million and £64 million respectively in 1985-86. I accept that capital allocations have gone up from £325 million to £362 million. If we look at the totality of what is being spent on housing by the Government and the amount of money they allow local authorities to spend, we see that it was £446 million in 1986-87, and that it will be £453 million in 1987-88. That is an increase of £7 million and that includes this so-called enormously generous capital allocation. That is an increase of about 2·5 per cent., well below the rate of inflation. In real terms, it is once again a cut, even if we include those "generous" capital allocations.

There are now only 25 housing authorities in Scotland receiving any form of rate fund contribution or housing support grant. Two thirds of the total housing stock in Scotland receives no subsidy at all. Every time the Minister gives these "generous" capital allocations, of course, it is the tenants through their rent who have to pay the interest on any capital loans taken out by local authorities. Sometimes the Minister tries to create the impression that a capital allocation is a sum of money that he gives to local authorities in grant. Of course it is not: it is money that the local authorities have to borrow.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Maxton: The Minister made a long speech. I want to make a short speech so that other hon. Members can join in the debate. Every time a local authority borrows money, the tenant has to pay the interest in his rent. That is exactly what the Government intend.

My hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) asked about the percentage increase in rent. On average it will be 16 per cent. That is nearly four times the rate of inflation and more than double the estimated rise in earnings in that period. My hon. Friend is right when he says that many poor people who are waged cannot get housing benefit. They will struggle in order to meet those increases, because £1 or £1·20 or £2 a week which is more likely to be the average will hit them hard. We have to look at what the Government give in support to local authority housing and what has been given in the past.

At present, only 12 per cent. of total council house costs come from central Government and 88 per cent. comes from the tenants in rent. In 1979-80 the rents made up only 47 per cent. of council house costs and grants made up 53 per cent. Council house tenants suffer under the Government. We in the Opposition do not suffer in that way because very few of my hon. Friends live in council houses. The tenants have suffered enormously as a result of what the Government have done. Repairs are not now carried out. The expenditure on repairs on council houses in Scotland has gone up by 50 per cent. in cash terms between 1979 and 1985-86. The rate of inflation in that period was 74·5 per cent. That means that there has been a massive cut in repairs by local authorities. We have seen higher rents, poorer repair services and fewer opportunities to move house because there has been a lack of new building and renovation of older properties. What has happened?

Mr. Ancram: What about empty housing?

Mr. Maxton: The Minister keeps on saying that, but of the empty housing in Scotland, 4 per cent. of privately owned property stands empty, 11 per cent. of privately rented property stands empty, but only 2 per cent. of council housing stands empty. The Minister's argument about council housing does not stand up.

Mrs. Anna McCurley (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde) *rose*——

Mr. Maxton: I shall certainly not give way to the hon. Lady.

We should study the figures that have been drawn up by COSLA—they are based on figures provided by the Scottish Office. The Minister should remember that when he tries to evade the evidence. The figures relate to the condition of housing—that is what matters to people. Out of the 854,000 council houses in Scotland, 332,900

[Mr. Maxton]

need modernising; 118,200 need to be rewired; 314,000 suffer from dampness or condensation, and 50,000 need major or structural repairs.

Of course, one can double count. One can spend a great deal of money to cure the dampness and condensation in a house without modernising it or vice versa. Any fool could work that out — even this Minister. COSLA estimate that it would cost £880 million per year for the next ten years to get the existing Scottish housing stock in order.

Scotland faces a major housing crisis and the tenants in council houses are facing major problems. However, at the end of the day, the Government simply do not care and nor does the Minister. Their only concern——

Mrs. McCurley: Rubbish.

Mr. Foulkes: You do not care either, Shirley Temple, so shut up!

Mr. Maxton: The Government are interested in cutting housing expenditure so that they can give bigger tax cuts to their wealthy friends. They are not interested in the 50 per cent. of people who live in council housing—it does not concern them. They are looking for cheap votes by giving tax cuts, but at the same time hitting the poorest and weakest in our society. I ask my hon. Friends to join me in the Lobby to vote against these orders.

10.43 pm

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood): We have heard what might be described as a fairly traditional speech from the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton). It had little to do with the order and did not challenge the essential philosophy that was stated by my hon. Friend the Minister with his customary clarity.

My hon. Friend outlined a policy which will reduce indiscriminate subsidy and concentrate scarce resources on capital expenditure. The hon. Member for Cathcart did not say whether the Labour party agreed that that was an essentially sensible housing policy. Instead, the hon. Gentleman's speech totally disintegrated into an irrelevant discussion about tax cuts.

I agree with the basic thrust of what my hon. Friend the Minister said, but I am extremely disappointed that he has not gone further. The Minister can confirm that both housing authorities in my constituency, Eastwood and Renfrew, have fallen out of housing support grant. Therefore, we are talking of public expenditure of £46·5 million in Scotland, none of which benefits my constituents. Unless I am persuaded otherwise, that is therefore a logical reason for me and a number of my hon. Friends to vote with the Labour party. If it were successful in defeating the order, housing support grant would be abolished—clearly to the benefit of my constituents.

Mr. Bill Walker: While my hon. Friend is contemplating which way to vote, will he remember that in 1979 some £50 million was spent on housing benefit, whereas the current figure is more than £500 million? That aid is going to the individual householder directly from the public purse. It is massive support for individual householders in Scotland—in fact, more than 50 per cent.

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. He has cut my speech by making a point that I was about to make. When resources are scarce, it makes sense to concentrate them on individuals in need, not to spend them indiscriminately on broad, general subsidies.

When my hon. Friend the Minister replies to the debate, if he is left sufficient time to do so, I hope that the will confirm the position for Eastwood and Renfrew districts. Will he emphasise that there is no need to be defensive about a reduction in housing support grant? The logic of a sensible housing policy is to concentrate resources on people and on capital expenditure. I hope that he will confirm that next year he will, at the very least, announce a substantial reduction on the present support grant figure.

10.46 pm

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): I read in the *Standard* tonight that someone asked the Prime Minister what she had changed; she replied, "Everything". She has certainly changed the pattern and level of housing finance, and the effects of that have been both socially damaging and financially unjust.

I never cease to be amazed and, indeed, saddened by the number of people who ask me to help them obtain a house. All hon. Members must have experienced that. The great majority are genuine cases living in inadequate circumstances. What do we do?

We raise the matter with the local authority, but we know that it cannot help because there has been no new build, and there are no plans to begin any.

Mrs. McCurley: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that if a certain party in this House ended political patronage in the disposal——

Mr. Foulkes: Name that party, oh name that party.

Mrs. McCurley: We have in our midst a mimic—a highly inadequate and untalented mimic. I believe that if one does not have talent, one should keep quiet—[HON. MEMBERS: "Sit down then."] Does the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) agree that if there was not a certain degree of political patronage in assigning local council houses, that might end some of the problems?

Sir Russell Johnston: This hon. Gentleman does not agree, actually.

I was saying that there had been no new-build and no money to start any. Most of those who come to me for help do not have a hope of obtaining a mortgage. I imagine that that experience must be shared by Conservative Members, so I am surprised that they are not also shocked. After all, this is supposed to be the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless—to make no mention of the disabled.

This Housing Support Grant (Scotland) Variation Order could be called the Housing Support Grant (Scotland) Contraction Order. When the Government took office, half of the housing revenue account in the Inverness district came from housing support grant, but the figure has now dropped to 16 per cent.—although I admit that, even at that level, it is better than a great many districts receive. In Aberdeen it has gone from 40 per cent. to 1·8 per cent., and next year it will disappear. In Strathkelvin and Bearsden it has gone from 32 per cent. to nil.

At first, councils tried to compensate by increasing the rate fund contributions, but, as we know, the Government cut that back. What was left? As the hon. Member for

Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) said, rents. In Aberdeen, rents have doubled as a percentage of the housing revenue account from 45 to 79 per cent. The Scottish average is 82 per cent. Rents have increased by 165 per cent. in the past seven years. As the hon. Member for Cathcart said, that is at least four times the rate of inflation. I accept that some increases were necessary, but I do not accept that it is fair that rents should now have become such a proportion of the housing revenue account. Inevitably, that means that council tenants are now funding general community services, such as the operation of the homeless persons Act through their rents. That is not reasonable.

One can see the consequences in the growth of housing benefit payments. If the Government introduce the cash-limited fund under the provisions of the Social Security Act 1986, which they can, I can see a mad scramble for what is available, and heaven knows what will happen then.

The Minister said that we were all concerned with the real extent of need. Therefore, why do we not have a housing condition survey? He also said that he did not rule out joint discussions. His dynamism makes one dizzy. Even if there is a dispute about COSLA figures——

Mr. Foulkes: He is almost as dynamic as the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan).

Sir Russell Johnston: Mr. Deputy Speaker, is there any way of keeping Shirley Temple's friend quiet?

Even if there is a dispute about the COSLA figures—and there is such a dispute, as both the Minister and the hon. Member for Cathcart have said—there cannot be any dispute about the scale and the gravity of the Scottish housing crisis, nor will the proposed capital allocation do anything other than slowly mitigate it.

With so many hon. Members wishing to speak in the debate, I can make only a brief contribution. I end by saying that I was quite struck by the Minister's ringing assertion—that is the only way of describing it—at the end of his speech when he said that the capital allocation had risen by five per cent. since 1979. He said "that that is the measure of the Government's commitment." I suppose that, on that at least, he was right. He is the Minister with the five per cent. commitment.

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Gentleman can make any assertions that he wishes as to whether a 5 per cent. real-term increase since 1979 is adequate. As a member of the Lib-Lab pact, why did he support a reduction of 37 per cent. in real terms during the period of office of the previous Labour Government?

Sir Russell Johnston: We do not need to go into history at the moment.

Mr. Bill Walker: Because it is uncomfortable.

Sir Russell Johnston: A lot of history is uncomfortable, as the hon. Gentleman will find when the election comes.

10.53 pm

Mr. Alexander Pollock (Moray): I welcome the chance to say a few words in this short debate on Scottish housing orders. The Minister will recall that last July we had a debate on housing in the Scottish Grand Committee, when I raised several matters with him. He will no doubt also recall that at that time I urged the Government to increase support for the new-build programme. Since then, there has been some encouraging news. Indeed, the housing capital allocation from the Scottish Office for 1987-88 is good news for my constituency of Moray. The housing revenue account allocation of £5 million represents a remarkable 93 per cent. of the district councils own bid and is an increase of 11 per cent. over the allocation of last March. The non-HRA block for the private sector is even better, with a 100 per cent. allocation of Moray district council's bid. That is most encouraging, and I congratulate the Minister on his response.

Of course, I must advise the Minister and the House of the important role of housing associations in new house provision, especially for those with special needs. I saw an excellent example of that last October when I had the honour of opening a new development at Buckpool undertaken by the Hanover housing association. I should like to remind the House of what I said on that occasion:

> "Of the seventy-seven Hanover schemes in Scotland, this Buckpool development is the eleventh to be tenanted by the elderly in Moray. It is worthy of note that Hanover Housing Association were the recipients of commendations for two earlier schemes in Moray at Rothes and Elgin . . .
>
> I have no doubt that it is precisely because of the excellent record of the housing association movement . . . that the Government have invested over £100 million in Scotland for the sixth successive year and have enabled 24,000 houses to be added to the association's stock since 1979."

Since then, I have received details of further proposed housing association developments elsewhere in my constituency in Buckie, Keith and Dufftown, again all funded through the Housing Corporation from allocations by central Government via the Scottish Office.

Mr. Foulkes: That is something for the *Banffshire Herald*.

Mr. Pollock: It is indeed.

That, in turn, has been followed by both good, and possibly bad, news on funding. The Secretary of State, in his statement to the House on 9 December referred to the extra funding for the Housing Corporation, making a total of £123 million in Scotland. That sum was warmly welcomed by the Housing Corporation. But there is a worry about the provisional allocation of resources for 1987-88 announced at the turn of the year by the Housing Corporation. I have already written to the Secretary of State about this and I am sure that the Minister is also aware of the problem. It relates to achieving the right balance between extra assistance for housing needs within Strathclyde and the provision of needs elsewhere in Scotland. I hope that he can respond sympathetically when his decision is made.

Finally, I must speak of a matter raised in the July debate and touched on by the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston). It relates to ascertaining the true condition of the present housing stock. At that time I made clear the willingness of Moray district council to take part in a pilot survey which would be part of an early initiative to find out the state of the housing stock. In reply, the Minister made it clear that he might be willing to embark on such a scheme for two pilot authorities in 1987. If he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wonder whether he could say what progress has been made on reaching a decision on pilot schemes in Scotland. That would be of general and particular interest.

10.58 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I should like to ask four clear, related factual questions.

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

First, COSLA states in its brief that 332,900 houses need remodernising. Do the Government accept that figure? If not, what is their figure? Secondly, COSLA says that 118,200 houses need to be rewired—a subject on which I interrupted the Minister. Do the Government accept this figure, or do they have a better figure of their own?

Third, COSLA says that 314,000 houses suffer from dampness and condensation. Again I repeat the same question: do the Government accept this figure, or do they have a better figure?

Fourthly, COSLA says that 150,000 houses need major or structural repairs. Again I ask the Government: do they agree with this figure, or do they have a better figure?

I promised to be extremely brief. The Minister will recollect that, when he was a well-received and very successful Conservative candidate in the West Lothian constituency, as was the hon. Member for Moray (Mr. Pollock), communities such as Whitburn and Blackburn, and also parts of Livingston, faced very real problems because of deterioration. The housing stock was built at a time when suddenly the rewiring, for reasons that were not the fault of the tenants or the local authority, or even the builders, deteriorated. Do the Government accept this problem of sudden deterioration? In particular, do they accept the COSLA figures? If they do not, the Government had better produce figures of their own.

11 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I, too, shall be brief and will endeavour to concentrate my remarks on the orders and to relate them to the history of this matter.

Does my hon. Friend the Minister agree that when we took office in 1979 there was a problem over the housing stock in Scotland and over the way in which local authorities were tackling the difficulties that faced individual tenants? We are concerned about individual tenants who are living in houses where there are problems.

Part of the difficulty was that many local authorities believed it to be their duty and responsibility to offer the same conditions to each of their tenants. They said that, if there were to be a fairly substantial input from ratepayers as a contribution towards rent support, it should go to everyone, regardless of whether or not they could afford to pay the rent in full.

We decided to provide aid to those who needed it and we have provided support in two ways. Support went to local authorities that used it to provide for tenants on a collective basis. Through housing benefits, we have also provided help for individual tenants. Indeed, the majority of help to tenants has been provided through housing benefit. It goes directly to the tenant and it pays part of the rent—often the whole of the rent.

The increase from £50 million in 1979 to £500 million today represents a real change in housing support. It goes directly to individual tenants, it is paid out of the public purse and it provides help for those in need. We are proud of that policy. It is wrong to adopt a blanket approach to the use of public money. Aid should go to those in need. A caring society looks after those who, for whatever reason, cannot provide for their own needs. That is the aim of our housing policy.

11.3 pm

Mr. David Lambie (Cunninghame, South): These orders will drive another nail into tenants' coffins. It is a further attempt by the Government to disregard Scottish traditions and to attack and discriminate against Scottish tenants. Cunninghame district council tenants are now facing a rent increase of £2·50 a week because of these orders. That is a 25 per cent. increase in rent, and the kind of increase that the council has never tried to impose before.

The increase has been brought about by three actions of this Government. This year, Cunninghame district council will receive no housing support grant. In fact, it has received nothing since 1983-84. It last received housing support grant when the influence of the last Labour Government was still being exercised. That was in 1980-81. Cunninghame district council then received just under £5 million. Therefore, the grant has been reduced by this Government from £5 million to nil.

The limit this year on the rate fund contribution is just under £800,000. That will have a rent impact of £2·28 a week. The council can do nothing about it. Last year, the limit on the rate fund contribution was just over £2 million. This year, there is a 77 per cent. reduction. That is because this Government have failed to control interest rates. Interest rates of between 10 and 11 per cent. are being charged on houses, although in most other industrialised countries the interest rates on houses are between 3 and 6 per cent. In Japan, interest rates are 3 per cent.

The withdrawal of the housing support grant, the limit on the rate fund contribution and the failure of the Government's economic policy to control interest rates has meant that my district council is faced with that reduction. The people whom I represent, who live in council houses, face rent increases of £2·50 per week. That is a continuation of the attack on people who live in public sector housing. The Urban Development Corporation—another major housing authority in my constituency—is allowing substantial increases in rents. The rents of the Urban Development Corporation are currently the highest of the new towns in Scotland. The Scottish Special Housing Association, which is under direct Government control, has increased rents by an average of 9 per cent., and in most of the areas that I represent by between 9 per cent. and 15 per cent. That is another attack by a south of England owner-occupation Tory Government against council tenants in Scotland.

I was surprised to hear the Minister and other Tory Members talk about indiscriminate subsidies. We are dealing with council housing, which receives no subsidy. The tenants in Cunninghame district council receive no housing support grant. The Minister did not mention the billions of pounds that the Government are paying in tax relief on interest on mortgages above £30,000. The hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) did not mention the indiscriminate subsidies to the Prime Minister, who bought a house for £400,000 and has the cheek to claim an income tax rebate on her mortgage. Nobody mentioned the richest family in Britain, the royal family, who are buying indiscriminately——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Our conventions do not allow the hon. Gentleman to say that.

Mr. Lambie: The royal family are buying houses for members of their family, and they are claiming income tax rebates on the mortgage below £30,000.

I do not represent the rich people of Britain, or the rich people of the south-east of England, who have a tradition of owner-occupation. I represent council and public sector tenants, who are not receiving the indiscriminate housing subsidies that the Minister talked about, unlike the Prime Minister and all the people who are buying their houses. I represent the people who have been forced to live in council houses and pay increases in rent that they cannot afford, and a constituency where every third man is unemployed. That is why I will be voting against these orders.

I shall tell my electorate that unless we get a change of Government and of policy with regard to housing, so that the working people of Scotland get their share of these indiscriminate subsidies, we will never get fair treatment. That is why I am looking forward to the general election, to get rid of that crowd and get the representatives of the council tenants back in power in Britain, when we will get a fair deal.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I call Sir Hector Monro.

Mr. Foulkes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Would it be in order, just once, to have a Scottish debate without another contribution from the hon. Member for Dumfries?

11.9 pm

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I shall just have to ignore the painfully rude intervention of the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes).

The hon. Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie) should spend a little more time thanking the Government for the many new jobs that have been brought to his constituency. His constituents would be much more grateful for that than the rubbish that he has been talking for the past 10 minutes.

We appreciate the increase of £68 million in capital allocation for 1987-88. At £362·5 million, housing revenue account is up £40 million, or 12·5 per cent. To listen to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton), however, one would think that the money had been reduced. On a three-year average, there has been an increase of 60 per cent. Non-HRA money affects the private sector and helps the building industry.

Mr. Foulkes: See what I mean? I cannot understand a word he says. We put up with it all the time.

Sir Hector Monro: It has increased substantially—by £28 million, or 24 per cent. Opposition Members, who are jeering away on the Back Benches, do not seem to realise that there is a substantial increase in money available for housing in Scotland.

Annandale and Eskdale has got 88·5 per cent of its bid, which is a 10 per cent. increase, and its HRA bid of 96 per cent. is an increase of 25 per cent. It is especially grateful for the HRA supplementary of £450,000 for 1986-87, out of a total of £1·5 million for Scotland.

For Nithsdale, which my hon. Friend the Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Lang) also represents, it is impressive to see that HRA expenditure is going up by 15 per cent. in 1987-88 and that non-HRA expenditure is going up by no less than 114 per cent. That must be good for local building contractors.

I join my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) and others in their tribute to the housing associations for the important part that they are playing, especially when housing is required for special needs. We should not miss out the Scottish Special Housing Association and fail to comment on the standard of housing that it provides.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North was right to stress the importance of housing benefit to the tune of £500 million, which has been completely ignored by the Opposition Front Bench. It is important to support people who are least able to afford good housing.

Scotland has benefited enormously from the sale of council houses, which was so vehemently opposed by the Opposition. That policy has successfully enabled many people in Scotland to own their own homes. Whatever the Opposition have said, and whatever is their reason for voting against this increased expenditure on housing in Scotland, the Government have done a first-class job.

11.13 pm

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): There is no doubt on this side of the House that housing allocations for the coming year are grossly inadequate and unable to deal with our bad housing situation.

Two questions must be asked. First, have the Government added to housing resources and, secondly, is the allocation adequate to meet the problems now to be found in the public sector? I was struck by the good briefing provided by the Convention of Scottish local Authorities, which showed that there is not all that great an improvement in the 1987-88 figures over the 1984-85 figures. It says that resources have been increased by £7 million between 1986-87 and 1987-88. This is a reduction of about 2 per cent. when inflation is taken into account. It also drew to the attention of those hon. Members whom it saw the fact that there is still a backlog in the repair grants in the private sector from 1984, when the 90 per cent. grants were abolished. That shows the extent to which the Government have been failing.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) has made it clear that about 68 per cent. of local authorities now receive no rate support grant, and the city of Dundee has not had such a grant for 1983-84. Those of us who have to deal with constituencies with a large council house sector are all too well aware of the human misery that comes from repairs not being carried out in time, of problems of dampness that cannot be dealt with properly because of the slow down in insulation programmes, of the delays in carrying out repairs, particularly towards the end of the financial year, when the local authority has to wait for the new financial year to get access to cash, and of the slow-down in modernisation programmes. All of these are bad enough to describe, but, if we had to live with such housing conditions, there would be a squeal of pain, horror and anxiety from the Tory Benches, for a change.

The Government's statistical bulletin shows that in the first quarter of 1986 only 14 houses in Dundee were demolished. I refuse to accept, from my knowledge of the city's housing conditions, that that dealt with the problems of our housing. In that period, there were only two public tenders, and only 265 private sector grants. Table 8 in the bulletin shows that although starts were better, at 131 houses, that was completely inadequate. Of that number, 35 were private starts, 19 were Scottish special housing

[Mr. Gordon Wilson]

association starts, 77 were housing associations starts, but there were none by local authorities. The district was not able to supply the housing needs, particularly in the specialised housing sector. There were 46 completions—24 from the housing association sector, and 22 from the private sector. Such a record is inadequate to deal with the housing problems of one of Scotland's major cities.

Despite the letter that I recently received from the Minister, there is a question mark over what share of increased resources coming from the Housing Corporation will go to housing associations on the east coast. There is a great fear that what limited money is available will be taken to Glasgow and Strathclyde, and people on the east coast will not get a fair share of the cash.

It is hardly surprising that, of the rising unemployment in Dundee, a large part is caused by lack of employment in the building sector, because of lack of activity. People are unnecessarily laid off work when a good job could be done, which would upgrade the existing housing stock and provide desperately needed specialised housing.

11.18 pm

Mr. Ancram: We have had a useful debate on these grant orders. It has been instructive for Conservative Members to find out how many Labour Members seem unaware of what allocations have been going to their areas. It was interesting to note that my hon. Friends appeared to be well aware of the way in which the Government have increased allocations and met the problems in Scotland's housing stock.

Mr. Maxton: Answer the questions.

Mr. Ancram: I am about to do so, but it is only right that first I set the debate in context.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) made it clear that in his area the HRA was increased by 23 per cent., and 100 per cent. of the non-HRA bid was met. I know that the people of Eastwood will be grateful for that and will not see it in the same terms as Labour Members. My hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mrs. McCurley), who made an excellent intervention, told us that 100 per cent. of her housing revenue account was met and that there was a 17 per cent. increase. The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) seemed unaware that he had had an increase this year of 31 per cent. in his HRA——

Mr. Foulkes: I do not have an HRA.

Mr. Ancram: Over the past three years the hon. Gentleman's HRA capital allocation — the hon. Gentleman seems to think that he does not have one, but if he checks he will find that his district council does.

Mr. Foulkes: That is different.

Mr. Ancram: He will find that his district council has enjoyed an increase of 111 per cent. over the past three years, nearly double the average increase for Scotland as a whole. I find it difficult to accept from the hon. Gentleman that he is not grateful for that and that he does not believe that that will go a long way towards meeting the housing problems in the area that he represents.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) raised a number of specific matters that were based on COSLA figures. I have some difficulty in answering his questions because his figures do not tally with those that appear in the COSLA paper that was presented to me in the summer of 1986. I shall be interested to learn why there are differences between the hon. Gentleman's figures and those of COSLA. The hon. Gentleman referred to the problems of condensation and dampness, which were mentioned by the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson). It is worth reminding the House that because we recognise these problems we have encouraged local authorities to concentrate their efforts on tackling the difficulties. To that end, we have issued special allocations amounting to £61 million over three years. We made it clear at the time that we were issuing them that we did not expect £61 million to be the total sum spent on tackling condensation and dampness. The allocations were additional to those that would have been made and we made them in the hope that we would encourage housing authorities to move faster on these serious and difficult problems.

The latest check-list figures — these are the figures that we use because they come from the councils—tend to suggest that the increase in allocations is having the desired effect. Over the past year the number of houses requiring treatment for condensation has fallen by 37,000 or over 15 per cent. That is a reduction from 28 per cent. to 24 per cent. of the total stock. If we take the total of affected stock in the third category, which is the most severe, we find that there has been a reduction from 25 per cent. to 12 per cent. Over the same period the percentage of the total stock affected by dampness has reduced from 7·7 to 4·7. These are the figures that are provided to the Government by the local authorities in their check lists.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) stirs in his place, but the figures suggest that, contrary to the argument that he has advanced of a deterioriation, the problems of condensation and dampness have been reduced. We should recognise that and congratulate the local authorities on responding to the encouragement that we have given them and tackling the problems.

Mr. Maxton: The Minister might make it clear that all COSLA's figures come from the same check lists.

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Gentleman has heard me say that because of that, and because we were supplied with the same figures, we question the figures that have been put to us this evening. Housing surveys would present only a general picture of the problems in Scotland, and accordingly the check lists provide a sounder basis for assessment.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): While any diminution in levels of condensation and dampness is to be welcomed, what steps are the Minister's Department taking to monitor the supposed decrease? I paid a visit to one of the most difficult housing areas in Dunfermline on Monday with representatives of the two local authorities concerned and it was manifestly clear that whatever the authorities believe—and I am not knocking the local authorities—the tenants, having rising aspirations and rising standards, are faced with the problem of rising dampness and rising condensation.

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Gentleman asked what steps we are taking to monitor progress. We look closely at the

check lists which are returned to us by the local authorities, to assess what changes have occurred in comparison to previous years, to evaluate the trends and to decide what problems exist within the housing stock. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has welcomed the fact that those check lists show that the encouragement that we have given, which means that authorities will spend £135 million—or 60 per cent.—more than they were spending three years ago, is beginning to have some effect.

Mr. Bill Walker: Before my hon. Friend concludes his remarks, will he carefully consider the point that I raised about housing benefit and the way in which that relates to the percentages given from the Opposition Front Bench? The Opposition Front Bench obviously took no account of housing benefit when they calculated the public financial support given to local authority housing in Scotland. If the Opposition work out percentages without considering all the inputs, they will always come up with the wrong answers. If they feed in rubbish, they will get rubbish out.

Mr. Ancram: When my hon. Friend made that very percipient intervention, I nodded in agreement, because he is absolutely right. The hon. Member for Cathcart, as always, gave only part of the figures. If he considers the total provision for housing, he must take into account the housing benefit. If there is a rental effect, that benefit may be replacing some of the indiscriminate subsidies that were paid before.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) was absolutely right. The figure of housing benefit paid in Scotland in 1979-80 was £58·925 million. The 1986-87 figure was £503·075 million. If the hon. Member for Cathcart had been honest with his figures, he would have had to have taken those figures into account.

The hon. Member for Cathcart continued to quote figures and claimed that there was an increase of only £7 million next year in the capital allocations. He said that the rise was from £446 million to £453 million. I remind the hon. Gentleman that the capital allocations issued in March last year for the current year were £441·5 million. The provisional allocations for next year with both blocks together on the same basis is £510 million — a £68 million increase and a 15·5 per cent. increase overall. The hon. Gentleman does himself and his credibility no favours by diminishing the figures.

The hon. Member for Cathcart also claimed that only 25 authorities in Scotland were still in housing support grant. He did not mention the fact that the number of housing authorities in housing support grant will be higher in the coming year than last year because of the change in the formula that I have mentioned.

My hon. Friend the Member for Moray (Mr. Pollock) raised a number of important points, in particular matters relating to the Housing Corporation. The Housing Corporation will be submitting its annual development plan to me. I will want to consider that carefully and I will bear in mind the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Moray and others.

My hon. Friend the Member for Moray also referred to the pilot scheme for a local housing condition survey. I can confirm that Moray district council was approached but declined to participate and my original offer was not fulfilled.

I always enjoy the speeches made by the hon. Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie). Tonight he told us about the requirement to increase rents by more than £2·50 within Cunninghame district council. Our estimate, as a result of the orders under discussion tonight, is that there will be an increase of £1·07. I am sure that there are very good reasons why Cunninghame district council has decided to make a higher increase than that. What is more interesting, in the light of what the hon. Gentleman said, is that Cunninghame district council's rents are the lowest in Scotland at only £10·53. If our increase was added, they would rise to £11·60, but they would still be among the lowest in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Will my hon. Friend bear in mind the fact that we must relate Scottish figures to English figures? Is it not true that, under the orders, Scottish rents will still be lower than those in England?

Mr. Ancram: Yes. I made it clear in my original remarks that that will remain the case. Indeed, with average manual workers' wages in Scotland at about the same level as those in England, it is interesting to note that a lower proportion of that income is spent on rent than it is south of the border.

I hope that the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) will support the orders, because the councils of Inverness, Lochaber and Nairn will receive more housing support grant in 1987-88 than they did this year. I am sure that he will welcome that and will be in the Lobby with us tonight.

In this debate, as usual, we have heard from the Opposition nothing but tales of destruction and deterioration in Scotland's housing stock under this Government. May I point out that under this Government 140,000 new houses have been built—a 3·5 per cent. increase in the total stock at a time when the population is falling. The Government are proud of that figure. Under the Government, the number of sheltered dwellings has trebled to more than 22,400 compared with the figure under the Labour Government. On the same basis, the number of amenity dwellings has trebled to more than 8,500. During the past three years, capital allocations for local authorities have increased by almost 60 per cent. More local authority dwellings were improved last year —45,000—than in any of the previous 10 years.

That is a record of which the Government can be proud, and I ask my hon. Friends to support the orders.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Housing Support Grant (Scotland) Variation Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 14th January, be approved.

HOUSING (SCOTLAND)

Resolved,

That the draft Housing Support Grant (Scotland) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 14th January, be approved.—*[Mr. Ancram.]*

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (SCOTLAND)

It being one and a half hours after proceedings on the first motion were entered upon, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the Order [6 February], to put the Question on the remaining motion.*

Motion made, and Question put forthwith,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Housing Revenue Account Rate Fund Contribution Limits (Scotland) Order 1987 (S.I., 1987, No.

[Mr. Ancram]

11), dated 7th January 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 20th January, be annulled — *[Mr. Maxton]*:—

The House divided: Ayes 94, Noes 169.

Division No. 90] **[11.32 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Craigen, J. M.
Dalyell, Tam
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hardy, Peter
Haynes, Frank
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley, N)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Livsey, Richard
Loyden, Edward
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Maxton, John
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Nellist, David
O'Brien, William
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Redmond, Martin
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Strang, Gavin
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Welsh, Michael
Wilson, Gordon

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tony Lloyd and
Mr. Ron Davies.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Budgen, Nick
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carttiss, Michael
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hayes, J.
Hicks, Robert
Hirst, Michael
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Jackson, Robert
Key, Robert
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
Major, John
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mather, Sir Carol
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Francis Maude and
Mr. Gerald Malone.

Question accordingly negatived.

Settle-Carlisle Railway Line

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Boscawen.]*

11.44 pm

Mr. David Maclean (Penrith and The Border): I should like to preface my remarks tonight by thanking all my parliamentary colleagues who have lent me their support and encouragement for this debate. In particular, I thank my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling), my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Waddington), my hon. Friends the Members for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) and for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Watson), and the hon. Gentleman, my friend, the Member for Carlisle (Mr. Lewis), who is recovering from an illness or he would be with us tonight. All of them were fighting for the retention of this line even before I was elected, and I pay tribute to their valiant efforts.

I am grateful for the opportunity to introduce another debate on the Carlisle to Settle line. The House will be aware that I initiated a debate on 12 March 1984, shortly after my maiden speech in this House. Since that time a lot has happened and the main arguments have been conducted outside the parliamentary arena while the transport users consultative committees inquiries were taking place. Now that these inquiries have been concluded and the report of the TUCC is lying on the Minister's desk, it is appropriate once again to return the argument to the political arena. It is also important to have this debate because we have before us a unique report. Never before in our history can we have had a joint report from two committees which ends with the words:

"On the basis of the undoubted hardship the closure of the line would cause together with the strength of the commercial case presented for its retention, the Committee strongly and emphatically recommend that consent to British Rail proposals to close the Settle to Carlisle line be refused."

It is my intention to put on record on the Floor of the House some of the comments from the joint TUCCs' report which make up that emphatic recommendation.

When I gave evidence to the inquiry at Appleby last year, I said to the chairman:

"I do wish to make clear that in addition to the hardship evidence which I shall present here today, I shall avail myself of the opportunity to use the direct line to the Minister. I shall show to him that British Rail have adopted a policy of wanton neglect of this line, that they have failed to spend a fair proportion of the Exchequer subsidy on it; failed, until very recently, to market it properly and deliberately or negligently changed trains timetables to discourage use. I shall seek to show to him that the line is of strategic diversionary importance as we shall see this coming Easter weekend when approximately 66 trains will be re-routed over it. We all know that it is part of our great engineering heritage but it can also be part of an exciting enterprise future if it was integrated into a proper tourism development plan, perhaps with the injection of private capital."

I did not anticipate at that time that the TUCCs would look at factors other than hardship and, I am delighted to say, come to some very firm and sensible conclusions. First, I want to tell the House about the hardship that would be occasioned to my constituents, and particularly to those in Appleby.

The TUCCs concluded that very severe hardship would be caused to elderly and disabled people travelling to Carlisle to make hospital visits, for essential shopping needs and to visit friends and relatives. They also said that people travelling to destinations in the Leeds direction and beyond to visit relatives or for other essential purposes, and those for whom no private transport is available, would suffer hardship.

The TUCCs also concluded that severe hardship would be caused to mothers and others travelling with babies and/or young children who find travelling by bus more arduous than by train and who would have difficulty making the interchange between bus and train at Penrith. In addition, the TUCCs listed all those other cases where there would be considerable hardship and an element of hardship caused to my constituents.

Of crucial importance is the TUCCs' conclusion on how to alleviate that hardship. They said:

"The committees believe that there is no way of satisfactorily alleviating the hardship that would be caused to those using Appleby station and those benefiting from the existence of the railway."

That is a devastating and quite conclusive comment, but in addition to the rail users living and working in Appleby, the committees also identified others who would suffer if the line closed. For example, 16 per cent. of economically active residents in Appleby are engaged in jobs generated by tourism, and it is clear that closure of the Settle to Carlisle line would have a serious effect on the town's economic fortunes.

The Minister will see that the committees have also dealt with through services on the Carlisle to Settle line, and I think it is fair to say that they were highly suspicious of the timetabling and re-routeing changes that had taken place, confirming the suspicion held by many of us that British Raid had adopted closure by stealth tactics that have now, thankfully, backfired. The committees concluded that there would be many cases of severe and considerable hardship caused to through travellers if the line closed, and said that any proposals for alleviating hardship produced by British Rail would, if effected, benefit comparatively few people.

Many constituents who have written to me have pointed out the strategic importance of the Settle to Carlisle line in its own right, and also its importance as a diversionary route on those all too frequent occasions when the west coast main line is out of action. Again, the committees were more inclined to believe the survey done by the Friends of the Settle to Carlisle Line Association showing that the line was used for diversionary purposes on many more occasions than British Rail was prepared to admit.

However, British Rail's preferred diversionary route is apparently the Cumbrian coast line, which is so eminently suitable for diversionary purposes that current coaching stock using this line has iron bars fixed over the windows preventing passengers from putting their heads out because the trains pass so close together. Every time a west coast main line train is diverted British Rail proposes to solve that problem by instituting single line working and issuing verbal warnings to passengers not to stick their heads out of the window. Therefore, quite rightly, the committees concluded:

"The Cumbrian Coast Line would not provide an acceptable alternative for diversionary services. It appears that very high expenditure will be necessary to improve the line capacity and journey times for diverted services. Indeed, it struck the Committees that British Rail's approach to the diversionary potential of this line lacked credibility and was somewhat haphazard."

They are the TUCC's conclusions, not mine, but they happen to coincide.

[Mr. David Maclean]

Let me turn briefly now to financial matters. Here we have some difficulty because the TUCCs pointed out:

"Throughout the public hearing the Committees repeatedly asked British Rail to substantiate its case for closure by providing estimates of the cost required to renovate and maintain the Settle to Carlisle line and the savings that would be effected if the line closed. This request was always declined. The Committees much regretted this decision, not least because it limited British Rail's participation in the public hearing."

I do not have the time to go into those matters tonight, but I would urge my hon. Friend to consider carefully the detailed financial arguments presented by the TUCCs. Those arguments are unique because no TUCC in the past, to my knowledge, has ever attempted to untangle British Rail's financial case.

Much has been said about the cost of repairing the Ribblehead viaduct, but all that I want to say tonight is that I will contrast the wanton neglect of it with the repair work that has just been done to the 40-arch Welwyn viaduct in Hertfordshire as featured in *Railnews* in November 1986. That viaduct has been waterproofed in eight weekends at a cost of £160,000. The article states:

"This will protect its brickwork from damage by water penetrating from the track above, and had the work not been done now the cost of repairing long term damage to the Viaduct would have been many times greater."

No wonder the TUCCs said:

"The Committees were surprised that British Rail did not take the opportunity to replace the waterproof membrane when it singled the track over the Ribblehead Viaduct in January 1985."

Over the past two years we have had so many conflicting reports of the cost of repairing this viaduct, and, indeed, the other structures along the route, that I have come to the conclusion that we must have an independent consultant's report on it, commissioned by the Minister. How can my hon. Friend reach a sound conclusion if there is so much doubt about the structural and engineering soundness of the line? Therefore, I must press my hon. Friend most strongly tonight to commission a firm of internationally renowned structural engineers to carry out a full independent study of the Ribblehead viaduct and the other viaducts and tunnels along the route so that we can have definitive answers, once and for all, on the real repair costs and thereby settle this argument for ever.

Although British Rail was reluctant to produce figures on the line, happily many other organisations were keen to submit financial evidence. I have just received a letter from the secretary of the Friends of the Settle to Carlisle Line Association, which states:

"I think the most important topic at the moment is the British Rail press release of December 22nd. This is said to be a statement of finance upon which the closure proposal is based. We think the figures are misleading, and this statement deserves very close examination.

A few points are: it mixes Capital Expenditure in with the Revenue position; it ignores the cost of the proposed alternative rail and bus services; it offsets Interest and Depreciation of as yet unbuilt Sprinter units against Current Revenue; it says only 10 per cent. of passengers are making 'essential' journeys — as if that is relevant! In fact this means that as 90 per cent. of passengers must be travelling for the pleasure of the Settle and Carlisle itself, 90 per cent. of Revenue would not transfer to the proposed alternative service, i.e. closure would mean a loss in income of £900,000 per year.

In short, this statement is a woefully inadequate presentation of the BR case for closure, yet it is all that members of the public are being allowed to examine."

I entirely agree with that statement, and I ask my hon. Friend to use his powers to examine the financial case much more closely than can Back-Bench Members.

Also of particular significance is the case presented by Mr. Album, a solicitor acting for the Friends of the Settle to Carlisle Line Association. His financial memorandum amply exposes the illogicalities and inconsistencies in British Rail's financial case and, as I know that my hon. Friend has a copy of that memorandum, I urge him to study it very closely indeed. If he does, he will come to the same conclusion as the TUCCs, namely:

"On the basis of the financial evidence submitted at the public hearings by objectors and, in particular, that submitted by the Joint County Councils and the Joint Action Committee and in the absence of any detailed financial information or submission from British Rail, the Committees were convinced that there was no case for closing the line on financial grounds."

Indeed, the committees came to the opposite view, namely:

"It is the unequivocal view of both Committees that the assets which comprise the infrastructure of the Settle to Carlisle line should be fully exploited by all the appropriate sectors of British Rail — InterCity, Provincial, Parcels and Freight — for the benefit of customers and to maximise revenue."

Finally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I turn to the marketing of this line—or rather the lack of marketing, which has been British Rail's approach in the past. British Rail has discovered to its surprise that, with a minimum of promotion, a market for the line clearly exists. British Rail should be congratulated on its marketing initiative, small and under-resourced as it is, but the results have been spectacular. We now have evidence that the line has doubled its income in the last year and a record number of trains are now running on it. The TUCCs' report states:

"It is acknowledged within British Rail that the Settle to Carlisle line is, in relative terms, one of the provincial sector's most financially successful lines in that it more than covers its operating costs."

But the report went on to say:

"It has been firmly established that the line ranks as a marketable product with long term growth potential within British Rail's network provided the will is there."

On Monday of this week my hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for tourism gave a special £230,000 cash grant to boost tourism in the north of England, with an additional £20,000 to boost tourism in Cumbria. That initiative is widely welcomed by my constituents, but there is no point in adopting that aggressive marketing stance if British Rail does not exploit to the full the potential of this line of tourism and related activities.

My constituents and my hon. Friends know that the Carlisle to Settle line offers an opportunity for sustained growth and, with it, increased efficiency and profitability. We all conclude just what the TUCCs unanimously concluded:

"Whereas British Rail did not make a detailed case for the closure of the Settle to Carlisle line, the Joint County Councils, the Joint Action Committee and, indeed, hundreds of individual objectors convinced the Committees that there is an overwhelmingly strong case for its retention."

When my hon. Friend studies the report, I am sure that he will come to exactly the same conclusion.

Mr. John Watson *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Does the hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Watson) have consent to speak from the hon. Member for Penrith and the Border (Mr. Maclean) and the Minister?

12.1 am

Mr. John Watson (Skipton and Ripon): I do, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I am grateful for the opportunity to participate in the debate. I can be quite brief because I simply wish to make two points that may not have been fully aired in the debate during the past year. First, it is now almost 20 years since this line was last considered for closure. In 1967, the conclusion reached was that the line should remain open.

It is instructive to look at what has happened to the passenger figures in the 20 years since then. About 230 passengers used the line from Settle station in my constituency in July 1967. In July 1985, the last year for which figures are reliably available, the number was 1,470. That is an increase of 540 per cent. in 20 years. For Skipton, the figure 20 years ago was 640 passengers per week. In 1985 that figure was 3,860—an increase of 503 per cent.

It seems rather perverse that at a time of falling passenger numbers and revenues across Britain as a whole, British Rail should now be seeking to close the one line that has seen such a dramatic increase in its passenger flow.

Secondly, I should like to comment upon the nature of the decision that my hon. Friend the Minister will shortly have to take. When the need for such a decision first became apparent about six years ago, it seemed that it would be a local affair. The line was remote, rural, in the north and losing money. Its closure was judged to be a matter of little concern, other than to local Members of Parliament who would be troubled, and it was felt that that would be the end of it. However, by 1984 the scale of things had changed. By then the coming decision was seen as highly symbolic of the Government's attitude to railways in general. Now the climate has moved beyond even that. It is now a decision about what kind of railway system Britain should have. A decision to close the line now would be consistent only with a policy of minimum service, doubtful arithmetic and rural decline. A decision to retain the line would be a true acknowledgement of the environmental, economic and historic value of our complete railway network. I very much hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will take that latter course.

12.3 am

The Minister of State, Department of Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): I should like to thank hon. Members for the debate this evening and for the interesting points which have been raised.

My hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean) has put his views and those of his constituents robustly, as he usually does; I should add that he has frequently done so to me privately. I have noted the views that have been expressed. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I shall take them into consideration.

As my hon. Friend will know, I have already travelled on the line myself and admired the beauty of the countryside through which it passes. It crosses magnificent viaducts and bridges that are a tribute to the skill and sacrifice of the engineers and the work forces who built them more than 100 years ago. I have also had a chance to talk to local people and to hear their views about the line at first hand.

My main function tonight is to listen to the arguments, rather than to discuss their merits. As the House will recognise, I must be careful not to prejudice the final decision on the case before all the evidence has been fully considered. My hon. Friend will recognise that it would be improper for me to express my view.

The TUCCs are independent bodies set up on a regional basis to represent the interests of all rail users. The TUCC or, in the case of the Settle-Carlisle line, the two TUCCs, must consider the objections and report to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on the hardship which would be caused by the proposed closure and on ways in which it might be alleviated. They may hold public hearings to receive oral evidence from objectors and representations from British Rail. As my hon. Friend knows, they have certainly done a thorough job on that.

In reaching a decision on whether to allow the line to be closed, my right hon. Friend must consider the TUCCs' report on hardship together with all other relevant factors, including wider social and economic considerations.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): Inadvertently, I was not allowed my one-minute say on this. Does my hon. Friend accept that the Government's decision will be a litmus test of the Government's commitment to the railway and the heritage? Does he further accept that large numbers of people in this House and beyond regard the closure of the line as unthinkable, unspeakable and unacceptable?

Mr. Mitchell: My hon. Friend has, as always, put his views succinctly and forcefully and I have noted them.

In this case Briitish Rail proposed closure because of the heavy maintenance now required on the viaducts, bridges and tunnels on the line. Each of these has been assessed by the board's civil engineers. They estimate that they need to spend almost £1 million every year for the foreseeable future to maintain them to the required standard for passenger use. The immediate problem is the need for urgent heavy repairs to the Ribblehead viaduct, which has deteriorated recently because of exposure to harsh weather. British Rail estimates that between £2·7 million and £4·3 million needs to be spent on the viaduct now to restore it to a condition which would make it suitable for long-term passenger train use. It also says that modern rolling stock and radio signalling should be introduced to ensure that passenger services can continue at the lowest possible cost to taxpayers.

British Rail did not make its financial case available in time for the TUCC hearings. The statute did not require it to do so. The hearings were concerned with hardship, not finance. But it is my right hon. Friend's responsibility and mine to consider the financial aspects together with the other issues. British Rail submitted its case last December and published a summary. I understand that Sir Robert Reid, chairman of British Rail, has now agreed that the full case should also be made publicly available. I am sure that the House will welcome that.

I am also aware of the calls for independent scrutiny of British Rail's estimates—something for which my hon. Friend expressly called in his speech. I have heard what he said and I think he is right. It would be helpful to consider carefully the best way to ensure some independent

[Mr. Mitchell]

assessment of the costs. I am in no way suggesting that there is any deception by British Rail, but I recognise the widespread unease and the feeling that these estimates should be subject to an independent check. Perhaps the best way I can proceed is to talk to the joint local authorities' steering committee in the area about what independent group it feels would be appropriate.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Does the Minister accept the view expressed by the great majority of people in Cumbria that the matter should not be decided exclusively on financial grounds but should be based primarily on the county's heritage? Everyone wants to retain the line basically for that reason.

Mr. Mitchell: I shall of course take the heritage aspect into account, as will my right hon. Friend, but I believe that there are much wider considerations than simply the heritage in the minds of those in Cumbria who are calling for the line to be retained. My hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and The Border succinctly expressed a number of those considerations.

If my right hon. Friend agrees to closure, British Rail proposes that the present services between Leeds and Carlisle should be replaced by a service with new Sprinter diesel multiple units via Giggleswick and Carnforth. Giggleswick is just over one mile from the centre of the town of Settle.

The line runs through the areas of the north-eastern and north-western England TUCCs. Those bodies have produced a joint report for my right hon. Friend. I should like to pay tribute to the two committees for all their hard work in preparing that document. The report unequivocally recommends that my right hon. Friend should refuse consent to the closure of the line, on the grounds of the hardship that would be caused to the local communities and others, including tourists. My right hon. Friend and I will pay close attention to what the TUCCs have said and balance it against British Rail's case for closure. I think that the whole House would wish me to put on record our appreciation of the work that those committees have done.

As required by the Transport Act 1968, we must also have regard to the wider social and economic considerations. I cannot at this stage give a comprehensive list of what all those considerations will be, but they will certainly include the effect of closure on the local economy and on tourism. There is evidence that over two thirds of passengers travel on the line simply to enjoy the ride and that over 90 per cent. of the journeys are for leisure purposes. We shall take into account the effect of closure on the various historic structures along the line. If the line is to remain open, the funding implications need careful study. Because of my right hon. Friend's role in considering the case, neither he nor I can lead a fund-raising campaign. We are in a quasi-judicial position. Nevertheless, we need to establish whether contributions to the upkeep of the line are likely to be available from sources other than the public service obligation grant.

I agree with my hon. Friend that it is essential that the financial performance of the line should be subject to the most careful scrutiny before any decision on closure is reached. I give my hon. Friend that assurance.

Those are just some of the significant issues that my right hon. Friend and I shall need to consider very carefully before reaching our decision. We appreciate that the line's future needs to be settled as quickly as possible. However, this is a large and complex case, and we must allow ourselves sufficient time to consider properly all the various factors and possibilities. I cannot therefore tell hon. Members when we shall be in a position to issue a decision, but I hope that what I have said tonight will reassure hon. Members that my right hon. Friend and I will take this case most seriously and that there will be no decision until we have given the most careful consideration to all the relevant evidence.

Perhaps I may add, on a personal basis, that I have already visited the line and attended three public meetings in Carlisle, Appleby—at the Moot hall—and Settle, and that I have also visited several halt stations and crawled over the Ribblehead viaduct. My hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and The Border will know that I am keenly aware of the very strong feelings both locally and nationally about this line.

That urges me on to make the most careful assessment of the various points that have been put to us, in terms of hardship and a critical and careful examination of British Rail's financial case, and also in terms of the wider economic considerations that affect towns like Appleby. I have vivid recollections of a meeting in the Moot hall in Appleby that was very——

The Question having been proposed after Ten o'clock on Wednesday evening, and the debate having continued for half an hour MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at fourteen minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 12 February 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

YORK CITY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday 19 February.

BEXLEY LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*
Read a Second time and committed.

CITY OF WESTMINSTER BILL *(By Order)*

TEIGNMOUTH QUAY COMPANY BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON DOCKLANDS RAILWAY (BECKTON) BILL *(By Order)*
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday 19 February.

BRITISH RAILWAYS BILL *(By Order)*
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Monday 16 February at Seven o'clock.

GRAMPIAN REGIONAL COUNCIL (HARBOURS) ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL
Read the Third time and passed.

Oral Answers to Questions

NORTHERN IRELAND

Labour Statistics

1. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people are currently unemployed in Northern Ireland.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Peter Viggers): The latest figures, released today, show that at 8 January 1987 there were 131,205 unemployed claimants in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Nellist: The Minister should have gone on to say that that represents 19·3 per cent. of the working population, but is not the real rate more than 24 per cent. when the black hole of the Department's 19 statistical fiddles adds 16,000 uncounted people in Northern Ireland? How can greater unity among working people be brought about in conditions of mass unemployment and the attendant poverty that it brings, in which sectarianism—whether of the orange or the green variety—finds a ready breeding ground?

Mr. Viggers: I deny what the hon. Gentleman has said. The Government have done a great deal to promote training and employment in Northern Ireland, which the Labour Government's mismanagement prevented that Administration from carrying out. Yesterday, for example, I announced a new package of employment measures. I am extending the restart programme to those who are unemployed for six months. The youth training programme will now guarantee a one-year training place to 17-year-olds as well as to 16-year-olds, so no person under the age of 18 need remain on the unemployment register. Moreover, the enterprise allowance scheme will be increased by 10 per cent. to offer a further 250 places, and a pilot scheme is being introduced to offer unemployed people in the 18 to 25 age range training places with employers' leading to a recognised qualification.

Mr. Harris: I congratulate the Government on what they have achieved and are seeking to achieve, but how can anyone have confidence in the employment or unemployment figures for Northern Ireland in view of yesterday's revelations by Mr. Justice Nicholson about a massive employment swindle in the building industry involving millions of pounds and apparently financing terrorist organisations? Will my hon. Friend ensure that Mr. Justice Nicholson's comments are followed up and the swindle brought to a complete halt?

Mr. Viggers: Although it does not directly follow from the question, I can confirm that yesterday's convictions were the latest in a series of successful investigations into tax exemption frauds by the Royal Ulster Constabulary. The Government are vigorously pursuing a policy of cracking down on such corruption.

Mr. Hume: Is the Minister aware that the unemployment level of 48 per cent. in Strabane in my constituency is the highest not just in Britain and Northern Ireland but in the European Community? Why is there no enterprise zone in that area, given that enterprise zones are supposed to be located in areas of high unemployment to help them tackle those problems?

Mr. Viggers: There is a limit to the number of enterprise zones that can helpfully be created in any one area, but I undertake to look at the specific point raised by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Dickens: As a former commercial director of a company in Northern Ireland, and having been responsible for placing millions of pounds worth of work in Northern Ireland, is my hon. Friend aware that the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) has shown no such initiatives in relation to unemployment in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Viggers: I hear what my hon. Friend says. We are determined to tackle the problem of unemployment in Northern Ireland by promoting prosperity, which will lead to greater employment.

Mr. Bell: Unlike the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens), my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East regularly appears at Question Time and has a productive input into our proceedings in the House—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I had hoped that we might get off to a peaceful start today.

Mr. Bell: I am anxious to lend a hand to any colleague on this side of the House in the face of attacks by Conservative Members. The Minister has given the House good and bad news. The bad news is that unemployment is now 131,205. The good news, which we welcome, is the series of initiatives being introduced in Northern Ireland. Is the Minister aware that the figure of 131,205 people unemployed is greater than the total of 97,000 people employed in the manufacturing sector? More people are on the dole than are working and creating wealth in Northern Ireland. Is that due to Thatcherism, monetarism, plain incompetence, or all three?

Mr. Viggers: Recent comments about the decline of the manufacturing sector in Northern Ireland have an element of truth in them, as they do throughout the industralised world. There is less employment in many areas in the manufacturing sector, but the line between manufacturing and service industries is now less clear than it was. Strong, lively industrial companies are prospering in Northern Ireland and it is a mistake to sell them down the river.

Forestry

2. **Sir John Farr** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his policy on the expansion of forestry in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: Our forestry policy is to promote the establishment of state and privately owned forests on land for which forestry is the most appropriate long-term use.

Sir John Farr: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his reply, but is he aware that a recent survey shows that Ulster is climatically better favoured than any other part of the United Kingdom for the growing of forestry products? As there is a high rate of unemployment in the Province and a surplus of milk and beef products, will my hon. Friend assure the House that he will encourage forestry as much as possible in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Viggers: My hon. Friend makes some helpful points. We do, indeed, encourage forestry. Expansion of forestry within the state sector depends on the availability of suitable land and public finance, while in the private sector grant schemes similar to those in Great Britain encourage the planting of woodlands.

Mr. Hume: I agree with the hon. Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr). Is the Minister aware that many experts believe that the counties of Tyrone and Fermanagh are the most ideal locations in western Europe in terms of climate and soil for the fast-growing willow tree, a source of ethanol, which separates lead from petrol? Does he agree that a major effort towards that alternative use of land by small farmers could transform the economy of the area, and will he support my request to the European Commission for a feasibility study?

Mr. Viggers: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will pursue his campaign in his own constructive way. I repeat that the Government's policy is to encourage forestry. We are considering various areas and other schemes. There has been some success in privatising tree-felling, and we can claim some credit for that.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

3. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what talks he has had with the leaders of the Official Unionist party and the Democratic Unionist party on the status of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

5. **Mr. Latham** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent representations he has received from political parties in Northern Ireland regarding the Anglo-Irish Agreement; and what response he has made.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Tom King): I have not had any talks with the leaders of the Official Unionist party and the Democratic Unionist party on the status of the agreement. However, I am aware of their concerns and remain ready to discuss those with them at any time. I regularly discuss issues related to the agreement at the request of leaders of the Social Democratic and Labour party and the alliance party.

Mr. Dubs: Will the Secretary of State make it clear to the leaders of the Unionist parties that whatever the outcome of the impending Irish elections he will proceed with the repeal of the Flags and Emblems Act? Does he agree that the Unionist leaders are doing a disservice to the Unionist community in the North and that they have nothing to gain by their policy of non-co-operation or by awaiting the outcome of the next election in this country?

Mr. King: I certainly endorse the hon. Gentleman's latter remarks. The recent poll showed that, far from being any advantage to the interests of the Union, the antics of the Unionist parties have damaged the cause that they seek to espouse, for which I have made clear my support. We issued a consultation document on the flags and emblems issue in a draft public order order and we are considering the responses to that. We hope to lay an order before the House shortly, when the House will see the decisions that we have reached.

Mr. Latham: To avoid any misunderstandings, will my right hon. Friend stress to Unionist leaders that any possible renegotiation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement by an incoming Haughey Government will achieve as much as Harold Wilson's renegotiations of the terms of entry into the Common Market—in other words, not a row of beans?

Mr. King: We have made it clear that we stand by the Anglo-Irish Agreement. I shall not go further than that because I am aware that there is an electoral contest elsewhere and anything that I say can be taken down and used in evidence against me.

Mr. Mallon: If and when the Secretary of State meets leaders of Ulster unionism, will he bear in mind that the only real conclusion from the petition that they are today presenting at Buckingham palace is that three quarters of the population of Northern Ireland did not sign it? Will he also bear in mind that when those leaders presume to speak on behalf of the people in the north of Ireland they speak only on behalf of one quarter of the population?

Mr. King: To go for greater statistical accuracy, I think that about one third of the electorate signed the petition.

Mr. McNamara: Two out of three did not.

Mr. King: I am sure that the House will appreciate that revelation. The blinding mathematical insight that if one

third signed the petition, two thirds did not, can be accepted by all without dispute, but I understand the hon. Gentleman's point.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Does my right hon. Friend think that when the Taoiseach said recently that

"the agreement is already making Unionists think in ways in which they had never thought before",

he had in mind such an unprecedented event as the presentation of a mammoth petition to the Queen? When that petition is remitted by Her Majesty to her principal Secretary of State, will he give it due consideration and weigh fairly the arguments for a referendum in the Province?

Mr. King: I understand that the petition has been delivered to Buckingham palace today. It will be for Her Majesty to decide whether, in accordance with normal constitutional practice, it should be referred to me as the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. In the meantime, it would be inappropriate for me to comment.

Mr. Alton: Will the Secretary of State tell the House his view of the importance that Unionist leaders in the north of Ireland attach to the erroneous impression that if there were a balanced Parliament after the general election any of the parties would renegotiate the Anglo-Irish Agreement? How much importance does he attach to Mr. Haughey's recent comment that he would be prepared to renegotiate article 1?

Mr. King: On the latter point, I do not wish to say more than I said in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham). I made it clear that we stand by the Anglo-Irish Agreement and we would look to continue to operate it whoever forms a Government in the Republic. If there were to be any change, that would be for others, not the Government. We have made it clear that we stand absolutely by the agreement.

I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's opening comments. In that respect, I am mindful of the vote of this House and of the overwhelming support of both Houses of Parliament of this United Kingdom in the verdict that they gave. No sane person can draw from that any possible idea that somehow any future balance or situation in the House will improve on the present situation.

Mr. Gow: Does my right hon. Friend recall the words of the 1979 Conservative manifesto, which said that in the absence of devolved government we would seek to set up a regional council or councils with widely devolved powers? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that he has not excluded from his consideration a return to the policy upon which he and I fought the 1979 election?

Mr. King: The world has moved on from that position. What I would make clear—obviously, this was the first ambition of my right hon. Friend, one of my predecessors as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, who did not feel able to proceed further in that direction—is that I welcome from whatever quarter, and certainly and obviously expect from my hon. Friend, constructive suggestions of a way forward that can actually offer some hope, and it is interesting to note that, in contrast with certain of the political leaders, there are others within the the Province who are now turning their minds to what the sensible way forward would be. There have to be sensible discussions. I made absolutely clear on behalf of the Government that the sooner that those can start, the better.

Mr. Duffy: Despite the condition that the Ulster Defence Association appears to have attached to its recent proposals that the agreement be suspended—the right hon. Gentleman has rightly assured the House that that is out of the question — will the Secretary of State nevertheless bear in mind the suggestion of the alliance party leader in Northern Ireland that a round table conference of all parties should be pursued as soon as the present impasse ceases? Will the right hon. Gentleman watch for such an opportunity?

Mr. King: I do not want to get hooked on any particular formula or format, but it is sensible that discussions should take place. There is no point in waiting. The hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) made that clear. It is desirable that we should proceed to discussions. I am conscious that the organisation to which the hon. Gentleman referred, among others, whatever their background, is trying to address, in one respect, the future organisation in the Province.

Mr. Stanbrook: Is not the agreement completely one-sided and biased against the Unionist majority in Northern Ireland? Was not an important quid pro quo for the agreement the undertaking that the Irish Republic would join the convention for the suppression of terrorism? Does my right hon. Friend agree that after 15 months nothing has been done that we have seen the demise of another Government and that the convention still has not been ratified? Why does my right hon. Friend allow the breaking of that promise?

Mr. King: My hon. Friend is entirely incorrect. The convention has not only been ratified but it has been carried through both Houses of the Irish Parliament, so his allegation is unfair. I know that my hon. Friend wants to see improvement, as everyone does, but why does he not come off the debating points and look at the real issue? We are now getting a degree of co-operation on extradition which was entirely missing a while back. I hope that my hon. Friend will look fairly at these issues and not make incorrect claims but recognise that there has been genuine improvement.

Mr. Archer: Will the Secretary of State try to persuade the Unionist leaders that even if a referendum were held it would, at most, only tell us what we already know—that is, which side is in the majority? Democracy is about finding ways in which majorities and minorities can live together, discuss their differences and build on what they have in common. Will the right hon. Gentleman explain to the Unionist leaders that that would be a more attractive approach if they want a better press in England?

Mr. King: I agree with the right hon. and learned Gentleman's comments. Democracy is not about the rule of the majority. It is about the position of and proper respect for the interests of the minority. I shall not comment further, because I do not wish to pre-empt Her Majesty's decision on the treatment of the referendum question, but the Government's general attitude to the principle of referendum is no secret.

ACE Schemes

4. Ms. Clare Short asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what funding has been made available by the Department of Economic Development in relation to ACE schemes.

Mr. Viggers: The ACE scheme has proved very popular since it was introduced by the present Government in 1981 with a budget of £1·67 million providing 430 ACE jobs. Since then, funding has been substantially increased. This year's budget was £24·24 million and I am seeking further funds to bring the estimated average number of ACE jobs provided throughout the year to 6,150.

Ms. Short: May I ask the Under-Secretary of State and the Secretary of State most sincerely to review the decision to sack the six ACE workers at St. Matthews community centre on unspecified security grounds? The workers concerned consider this to be a smear on their character and the work that they have been doing in providing an advice centre and an Irish language nursery. Promotion of the Irish language is supposed to be part of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Those workers have been told that if they move to other premises they may be able to continue their work, but there are no other premises. Will the Minister agree to meet their trade union to reach a reasonable settlement, and will the Government stop smearing those workers and the work that they have been doing for so long?

Mr. Viggers: Government assistance has been withdrawn from the St. Matthews tenants association under the terms of the policy outlined in the parliamentary statement on 25 June 1985 by my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Archer: Does the hon. Gentleman appreciate that when Government funding is withdrawn, funding from other sources also dries up and the future employment of those involved is prejudiced? Does the hon. Gentleman accept that these are draconian consequences for the organisers of the scheme, who have not even been informed of the allegations against them? Is he aware of press comments right across the political spectrum describing it as farcical to suggest that a Gaelic-speaking nursery school could pose a threat to law and order?

Mr. Viggers: The statement to which I referred is a careful and comprehensive one which covers a delicate area. It would not be right for me to add or to detract from it.

Mr. Hume: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the Irish language school in west Belfast has the full recognition of the Department of Education and Science and that the function of the Irish language nursery school in the Short Strand area is to prepare children to attend that school? Does he appreciate that that nursery school education is an essential part of the educational process of children going on to attend the Irish language school in west Belfast? Will the hon. Gentleman therefore reconsider the Government's decision?

Mr. Viggers: I ask the hon. Gentleman to read again and consider the statement to which I have referred.

Prison Population

6. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the prison population of Northern Ireland; if he will express this figure as a percentage of the civilian population; and what information he has about how these figures compare with those for the United Kingdom as a whole.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. Nicholas Scott): The total prison population on 1 February 1987 was 1,893, including 225 young offenders centre inmates. This constitutes 0·12 per cent. of the population of Northern Ireland. I understand that on 31 December 1986 the prison population of the United Kingdom as a whole was 53,603, or 0·1 per cent. of the civilian population.

Mrs. Bottomley: How does my hon. Friend account for those figures? Will he confirm that, although the clear-up rates are very similar, the ordinary crime rate in Northern Ireland is significantly lower than the rate in the United Kingdom as a whole?

Mr. Scott: In Northern Ireland the ordinary crime rate is about 43 crimes per thousand compared with between 65 and 70 per thousand in England and Wales. There is a substantial difference between the two, although, of course, a very substantial percentage of the prison population in Northern Ireland have been convicted of terrorist offences.

Mr. Cox: In view of the Minister's reply during the last Northern Ireland Question Time, will he tell the House whether he has yet met the Northern Ireland Prison Officers Association, or whether he has plans to do so?

Mr. Scott: As I said during the last Northern Ireland Question Time, I expected to have an early opportunity to meet the association, and I have done so.

Mr. Bell: As the serried ranks of the prison population were increased by two sentences at yesterday's Crown Court in Belfast, may I ask what kind of Government incompetence allows millions of pounds of taxpayers' money to pass into the pockets of paramilitary organisations through the building of houses in Northern Ireland? Is this not "On the Waterfront" gangsterism on a grand scale? Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that such racketeering and extortion have nothing to do with a united Ireland and nothing to do with union with Great Britain? What, pray, do the Government intend to do about this?

Mr. Scott: I find it somewhat ironic that such criticism is made at a time when we are beginning to get convictions and I hope that if those accused are found guilty there will soon be more to counter racketeering activities whether in tax exemption certificate fraud, other activities in the construction industry or through drinking clubs, gaming, betting, and so on. We are beginning to choke off the supply of funds from those sources to paramilitary organisations. I am surprised that that is a matter of criticism from the Opposition Front Bench. I believe that all agencies, including the RUC, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the Department of the Environment, deserve credit for what is being achieved.

Public Expenditure

7. **Mr. Fallon** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will estimate the proportion of Northern Ireland gross domestic product that is accounted for by public expenditure.

Mr. Scott: Public expenditure and gross domestic product for Northern Ireland are not available on comparable bases, but using the information that is available, it is estimated that public expenditure amounted to some 73 per cent. of gross domestic product for Northern Ireland in 1985.

Mr. Fallon: Can my hon. Friend confirm that, in this state economy that he is running, public spending per head is some 52 per cent. higher in Northern Ireland than it is in England, housing spending some 357 per cent. higher, and industrial spending some 340 per cent. higher? For how much longer will the taxpayers of Great Britain continue to subsidise this singularly ungrateful Province?

Mr. Scott: Public expenditure per capita in Northern Ireland is higher than in the rest of the United Kingdom, but that does nothing more than reflect the needs of Northern Ireland. Certainly, it it true that my right hon. Friend has the capacity to choose different priorities. Some areas of expenditure in Northern Ireland are lower per capita than in the rest of the United Kingdom. My right hon. Friend retains the ability to allocate and decide his priorities.

Mr. McNamara: Will the Minister tell the House what proportion of that 73 per cent. is accounted for by the present security position?

Mr. Scott: I cannot give the figure in percentage terms, but about £400 million is accounted for by the security position. Of course, we are anxious about that position and are pursuing policies which, in due course, will diminish that figure.

Mr. Bellingham: In the context of public expenditure, can my hon. Friend say when the decision is due on the construction of a lignite-fired power station? Is he aware that such a power station recently caused a most horrific smog in Berlin? Therefore, will the pollution aspects be take into account?

Mr. Scott: That whole question is under consideration and, obviously, there will be inquiries into the environmental impact. We shall also be taking professional advice on the economic aspects.

Mr. Foot: Is the Minister aware that institutions in the North, such as the Ulster museum and the universities, are providing an excellent service? Is he further aware that they are having to suffer even more severe cuts than the universities and museums in this country? Will he rectify that position as soon as he can, whatever complaints he may hear from behind him?

Mr. Scott: The funding of universities in Northern Ireland is carried out on the advice of the University Grants Committee, and there is parity with equivalent institutions on this side of the water. The same is broadly true of the museums in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson: How much public money is involved in the housing racket? Will a commission of inquiry be set up to investigate that racket to discover exactly where the roots lie, especially as it appears that they may lie on this side of the Irish channel? May we have a full statement from the Government?

Mr. Scott: More than four years ago the Royal Ulster Constabulary established a special unit to investigate these matters. It has persistently continued that inquiry in co-operation with parties in Northern Ireland and on this side of the water. It is true that there is a cross-channel element. In addition to the convictions yesterday, about 140 prosecutions are pending in this broad area. The RUC has done a first-class job in getting to grips with that racket.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Given the high incidence of claims for personal accidents on public property in Ulster——

Ms. Clare Short: Not Ulster, Northern Ireland.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Yes, Northern Ireland.

Is the Minister aware that last year there were more than 5,000 claims — each with a settlement of £1,500, with £1,000 legal costs — from people who simply tripped over pavements or fell down mythical pot-holes? Are not some people creating an income to which they are not entitled? Is it not time that the Government reconsidered the law?

Mr. Scott: If the hon. Gentleman is urging me to do that, I shall. However, I believe that our system of compensation in Northern Ireland operates on the same basis as it does on this side of the water. We are trying to be fair both to the public purse and to those who suffer injury.

Mr. Holt: Is my hon. Friend able to say whether the international fund that figured in his calculations of gross domestic product and public expenditure — recognising that in his recent answer to me he said that the money has not yet been spent — has yet been handed over by the Americans and whether it is on deposit, or was it used to buy shares in British Airways or to prop up the punt?

Mr. Scott: I am tempted to say that those are not matters for me. The International Fund for Ireland has now been established as an independent body. The members of the board have been appointed and the money will become available to the fund in the very near future. It will be up to the members of the board to decide how it is spent.

Education Expenditure

9. **Mr. Mallon** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the projected capital expenditure programme for schools and colleges of further education in the constituency of Newry and Armagh for the financial year 1987-88.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): Provision is being made for five major new schemes which will cost an estimated £1·37 millfon in 1987-88.

Mr. Mallon: I thank the Minister for that elaboration, and I commend him for the very personal and courteous way in which he announced it in the different constituencies. Will he confirm that when those building expansions are completed, in relation to the constituency of Newry and Mourne the capital expenditure grant will be in the region of £13·5 million?

Dr. Mawhinney: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his personal comments and I pay tribute to him for the diligent way in which he has sought to keep the needs of the schools in his constituency before me. I confirm that the overall estimate of the total cost for the constituency of the new works that I have just announced amounts to £12·962 million, and there are some ongoing capital works that have been carried over from previous years.

Local Government

10. **Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent discussions he has

had about measures he is taking to introduce a devolved local administration for Northern Ireland to supplement the existing district council and area boards.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Richard Needham): My right hon. Friend maintains contact with the leaders of the alliance and SDLP parties. But real progress towards devolution is not possible until the constitutional parties are prepared to hold discussions on these matters. We are ready to facilitate informal preliminary talks among the parties.

Mr. McNair-Wilson: Does my hon. Friend agree that article 4 of the Anglo-Irish Agreement makes it clear that both Governments recognise that without the co-operation of the representatives of the whole population in Northern Ireland devolution is a dead letter? If the price of the co-operation of the Unionist majority is to have a referendum — which is to ask only that the people of Northern Ireland should themselves give their support to the agreement—why should that referendum not be held and thus this road block be put out of the way?

Mr. Needham: Devolution is the preferred option of the British Government, as my hon. Friend is well aware, and that has long been the case. The British Government believe that that is the route down which to go, and it involves all the political parties in Northern Ireland coming together to discuss it. The fact that they are not doing so at the moment is regrettable, but we believe that it is the only sensible way forward.

Ms. Clare Short: When the Government consider future constitutional options for Northern Ireland, including devolution, will they take account of British public opinion and the recent poll in the *Daily Express* — of all newspapers — that 61 per cent. of the British people want the troops to be withdrawn from Northern Ireland, and that despite the support of all the major parties in Britain only 29 per cent. of the British people want Northern Ireland to remain part of the United Kingdom? When will the British people have some say in how we resolve the problem of Northern Ireland?

Mr. Needham: The future of Northern Ireland is discussed by the political parties in Northern Ireland with the British Government. That is the route down which we intend to proceed, as our predecessors did before us. We do not deny the difficulties of that, nor do we deny the probably bemused feelings of many members of the British public when they look at some of the constitutional and non-constitutional activities of the political parties in Northern Ireland. However, the way forward is to get the constitutional parties together to discuss, on the grounds of power-sharing and partnership, how to run their own affairs. We are determined to continue down that route.

Mr. John Mark Taylor: As we are talking about a single province of a United Kingdom, if there were to be a referendum, should not all the citizens of this United Kingdom participate in it?

Mr. Needham: That is not an issue of such a constitutional nature as to require a referendum to be held, and I am sure that there would be arguments on both sides as to who should be included in it.

The main line of our policy is to find a way of getting the constitutional parties to come together to discuss how they can govern the Province together on a devolutionary basis.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

11. **Mr. Tom Cox** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last met the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary; and what issues were discussed.

Mr. Tom King: I meet the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary regularly. Our meetings are confidential and it would not be right to disclose their content.

Mr. Cox: I note that reply, but is the Secretary of State aware of the increasing evidence now coming to light, concerning the matters which Mr. Stalker was investigating, about the activities of the Royal Ulster Constabulary? If, against the background of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, we really are seeking to build confidence in Northern Ireland, surely it is the duty of the Secretary of State, whatever degree of confidentiality he may have with the chief officer, to see that these matters, unpleasant as they are, are discussed. The people in both Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom have a right to know what the findings about them are.

Mr. King: The hon. Member will be aware of the inquiry being conducted, first, by Mr. Stalker and now by Mr. Sampson. I made it clear to the House on a previous occasion exactly what our position is on that and I have nothing to add to the statement that I made then.

Mr. Latham: When my right hon. Friend meets the Chief Constable, will he congratulate him on the police work done under the 714 cases? Will he also stress to him that the one thing which the British taxpayer will in no circumstances put up with is the idea that his or her money will be used to fund paramilitary organisations?

Mr. King: I entirely accept what my hon. Friend says. We take an extremely serious view of this matter. Yesterday's convictions were the latest in a series of successful investigations, and against the impression that this has suddenly come to light I would point out that there were 25 convictions in 1985 and 54 in 1986 and that there are further prosecutions pending. We are determined to see that these matters are pursued extremely vigorously.

Mr. Flannery: Does the Secretary of State not realise that each time he tells the House that he has nothing more to say about the Stalker report, especially after all that has gone on in the past long months and in view of Mr. Stalker's present position, and the more he goes on doing nothing the more everybody thinks that something nasty and dirty is being concealed?

Mr. King: The hon. Member would be the first to complain if he thought that I was interfering in an independent investigation of extremely serious allegations. The hon. Member is aware that the first report of Mr. Sampson is at this moment with the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland—it would, therefore, be quite improper for me to comment on the possible outcome of it — and that the second report on the further allegations, which may lead to possible charges, is at this moment in the final stages of preparation by Mr. Sampson and will, I expect, be forwarded shortly to the Director of Public Prosecutions as well.

Mr. Alton: Has the Secretary of State had the chance to consider the recommendations of the Standing and

Advisory Commission on Human Rights in Northern Ireland, reiterated yesterday by Mr. Peter Barry, that non-jury courts should be replaced by courts of three judges?

Mr. King: That is a matter on which I have made our views clear, and I think that they are well known. In our response to the Standing Advisory Commission we have made it clear that we are anxious to see, as far as possible, an extension of jury trials, which would be the preferred option.

Education Expenditure

12. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the future funding of education in the Province.

Dr. Mawhinney: Expenditure in 1987-88 will be £729 million, an increase of £54 million on previous plans. The provisional figures included in Cmnd. 56 plan for a further £60 million increase over the following two years to £790 million in 1989-90. This is a clear indication of the Government's commitment to providing the highest standards of educational opportunity for the young people of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Bruinvels: Recognising my hon. Friend's strong commitment to continuing educational support in Northern Ireland, may I tell him that it is a matter of great pleasure that so much money is to be put into Northern Ireland? It will be money well spent, because in Northern Ireland we have the highest number of school leavers—22·5 per cent.—with one or more A-levels, whereas in the rest of the United Kingdom the figure is only 17·2 per cent.

Dr. Mawhinney: I thank my hon. Friend and commend him for his interest in this matter. I am sure the teachers of Northern Ireland will appreciate his comments. I pay tribute to the standards of education in the Province. I know that my hon. Friend will also welcome the new vocational education programme which I have just announced, which will particularly help in science and technology in the secondary intermediate school area.

Mr. Archer: Is the Minister aware of the strong resentment among the university staff affected by the Butler report, in that the working party gave them no opportunity to discuss their concerns? Will they be given that opportunity before the recommendations are implemented? Can the Minister confirm that none of the options will be foreclosed by the initial conclusions of the working party or group?

Dr. Mawhinney: On the contrary, Mr. Speaker. The interim report of the Butler committee was discussed and endorsed by the academic bodies responsible in both universities, and they are now considering how much of a financial consideration is attached to their acceptance of that report. I have made clear to both vice-chancellors and to Sir Clifford Butler that I am willing seriously to consider the representations that they make to me based on that report.

PRIME MINISTER

Government Contracts

Q1. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards awarding contracts to firms which have broken the law or in respect of which inquiries about possible criminal offences are in train; and how this policy has been applied in the case of Electronic Data Systems Ltd.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): The Government seek to deal with contractors of integrity who can be expected to fulfil their commitments. Although information on contracts with particular firms is not all held centrally, I am not aware of any current contracts with Electronic Data Systems Ltd.

Mr. Dalyell: Does the Prime Minister's answer mean that Electronic Data Systems Ltd. is excluded from potential defence contracts?

The Prime Minister: No, the answer means what it says, that I am not aware of any current contract with Electronic Data Systems Ltd. With regard to whether it will be considered for any future contracts, it is for the Department awarding a contract to consider the eligibility of EDS for future contracts in the light of the evidence which has emerged and taking into account the nature of the contracts.

Dr. Bray: Is the Prime Minister aware that this firm is imposing a fine of some £4,000 on employees who leave within a year of completing their training? Does she agree that this is a pernicious form of wage slavery and that it reflects the failure of the Government to provide adequate training in their important industry?

The Prime Minister: The question I am asked is whether there are any contracts with this firm. The answer is as I have given, that I know of no current contracts with that firm, but in so far as any—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] — future contracts are concerned, they will be considered in the light of all the facts, taking into account the nature of the contract. The Government's interest, as I must make quite clear to the hon. Gentleman, is to get value for money and to help improve the competitiveness of suppliers.

Engagements

Q2. **Mr. Allen Adams** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 February.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Adams: Does the Prime Minister concur with the view that low wages are conducive to increased job opportunities? If she takes that view, could she possibly explain to the House why, in areas with comparatively low wage rates such as the west midlands, the north-east of England, and Scotland——

An Hon. Member: And Wales.

Mr. Adams: —and Wales, unemployment is considerably higher than it is in the south-east where wage rates are higher?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is aware that, although, alas, it does not apply to Scotland, unemployment is coming down — [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] I indicated that a moment ago. Although this month it has not—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: This is partly because Scotland has quite a number of Christmas school leavers. Unemployment is coming down in Wales, the north-west and the west midlands more rapidly than elsewhere. The hon. Gentleman is well aware that there are occasions when jobs are available at lower wages, and if higher wages are asked that leads to the extinction of those jobs and people becoming unemployed. So the price of jobs does matter.

Mr. Dykes: Will my right hon. Friend take time today to consider the fatuous remarks of Mr. Adelman, the head of the US Arms Control Agency and remind——

Mr. Speaker: Please relate it to the Prime Minister's responsibilities.

Mr. Dykes: I am relating my question to the direction of Government policy and No. 10's attitude to these matters. If my right hon. Friend has had time to see these remarks, will she remind the Americans that the Europeans know as much if not more about disarmament and arms control?

The Prime Minister: I am not certain that I am familiar with the remarks. I shall read them with interest and with a view to maintaining a firm alliance between this side and the other side of the Atlantic on arms control matters.

Mr. Kinnock: Will the Prime Minister take the opportunity of Question Time to announce that the tax change policies ascribed to her in this morning's newspapers are a falsehood? Because such changes would mean at the very least the doubling of VAT, with devastating consequences on price levels, pensioners, families on low income, employment and industrial costs, will she say that she does not want them?

The Prime Minister: I read this morning's papers with surprise and with absolutely no knowledge of what would be in them. I point out to the right hon. Gentleman that this Government have brought down income tax from the rates beloved of Labour of 98 per cent. on savings and 83 per cent. on earnings, and at the same time have increased the amount spent on the social services.

Mr. Kinnock: Given her astonishment at this morning's news, will the Prime Minister give us an assurance that such ideas will not be visited on us, certainly this side of the general election? We clearly remember, in common with the rest of the country, the undertaking before the last election not to increase VAT by 100 per cent. yet within six weeks of the election she increased VAT by 80 per cent. Despite the fact that she was elected as a tax-cutting Prime Minister she has since increased the tax burden on families by 10 per cent.

The Prime Minister: I give the right hon. Gentleman the assurance that the Government will continue into the next Parliament with their prudent and cautious financial policy, which has resulted in six years of growth, lower income tax rates, a higher standard of living than we ever had before and a higher standard of social services. I hope to be at this Dispatch Box in four or five years' time making the same point.

Mr. Kinnock: The Prime Minister will not be doing any of that, not least because she is "high-taxer Thatcher."

The Prime Minister: That is an absurd comment coming from a supporter of a Government who loved having a tax of 98 per cent. on savings, who loved to decimate the savings of pensioners by high inflation and who loved having tax on earnings of 83 per cent. and put income tax rates up to 35p in the pound. In fact, since 1979, income tax has been cut by £8 billion, the equivalent of £7 per week for the average family.

Q3. **Mr. Adley** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Adley: Referring to the pledges at the last election, does my right hon. Friend recall that our party gave a pledge to pensioners to keep the pension ahead of inflation, which pledge has been kept? Is the House aware that there are now more than 1 million additional state pensioners? Does my right hon. Friend agree that inflated promises will be no guarantee to future pensioners? Does she further agree with me that pensioners would be absolutely right to fear the possibility of a Government coming in who could not control inflation and could not keep pensions ahead of inflation?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. This Government's policies have led to six years' growth, to cutting taxes and to paying pensions, as my hon. Friend said, to 1 million more pensioners than there were when we came in. Our policies have all along protected savings and the value of pensions. It is an excellent record and the Labour party hates it.

Dr. Owen: In view of the fact that, since 1980, this country has lost in scientists, engineers and technologists on average 1,000 people a year to the United States of America, how does the Prime Minister justify the UGC cuts in the universities, and especially the cuts at the London Business School and the Manchester Business School at a time when practically everyone thinks there should be increased investment in management education?

The Prime Minister: In view of the first part of the right hon. Gentleman's question to the effect that there have been some losses of scientists, engineers and technologists, it seems to me that he is asking for lower taxation of the top income groups to prevent that drain. We are absolutely delighted to have that endorsement from him. There is something in what he says. With regard to university funding, the recurrent grant to the universities has increased overall by 7 per cent. between 1986-87 and 1987-88. That is a very generous increase. Further, £150 million will be allocated to universities later in the year. The University Grants Committee decides the allocations on the basis of student load and selective judgment of research quality at universities. Because of that, some universities inevitably did better than others.

Mr. Whitfield: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the revelations recently made by Mr. Ian Curteis on the reason why the BBC banned the production of his Falklands play are yet another example of the treasonable inclinations of those who——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Relate it to the Prime Minister's responsibilities.

Mr. Whitfield: —manage the security aspects of the BBC? Does she further agree, therefore, that it is essential that the BBC board of governors, which is meeting today to draw up a shortlist of candidates for the director

generalship, should choose as candidates only those who have the independence and the Herculean qualities to enable the Augean stables at the BBC to be cleaned up, and finally——

Mr. Speaker: Order. No, not finally.

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend is aware, the choice of a director general is a matter for the chairman and governors of the BBC. I am sure that his remarks will have been noted in the appropriate quarters.

Q4. **Mr. Norman Atkinson** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Atkinson: Will the Prime Minister reconsider the answers that she gives in the House and outside about the increase in real jobs since the slump bottomed in June 1983? In view of the statistical evidence now available, does she recognise that since June 1983 there has been a reduction of 350,000 jobs in manufacturing and that in terms of real jobs, which means full-time employment, the numbers on a comparable basis with June 1983 are exactly the same now as they were then, at just over 21 million?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman concentrates his remarks upon manufacturing industry. Jobs in manufacturing industry have been down since the 1960s for reasons that he well knows — because of the technological revolution, and because of the investment which he always urges us to undertake. Since 1983, taking supluses into account as well, 1 million new jobs have been created. That is very good news. Jobs in the service sector are equally important as those in the manufacturing sector. Indeed, they depend upon one another.

Mr. Alexander: Will my right hon. Friend take time during the course of the day to note the formation in Nottinghamshire of the new moderate Labour party with its motto——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Relate it to the Prime Minister's responsibilities, please.

Mr. Alexander: Will my right hon. Friend commend that organisation, bearing in mind that its motto is——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot see how this has anything to do with the Prime Minister's responsibilities. I gave the hon. Gentleman a good chance.

Q5. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hamilton: Is the Prime Minister aware that there appears to be no relationship between low wages and employment, as epitomised in the south-west of England? *[Interruption.]* Is she further aware that unemployment in Devon and Cornwall is higher than the national average, while wages and earnings are far below the national average, and that a solution to that problem would be the acceptance by the Government tomorrow of my Bill to establish a south-west development agency? Despite the opposition to that Bill of her hon. Friends who represent that area, the Liberals and the SDP, will the Government give the Bill a fair wind?

The Prime Minister: I thought for one moment that the hon. Gentleman was actually going to represent his constituents. I was disappointed. I ask the hon. Gentleman to look back at what a Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer said. He will find that his Chancellor pointed out that there was a relationship between wages and jobs and sometimes, when wages were too high, it meant that jobs were stillborn.

Points of Order (Mr. Speaker's Ruling)

3.31 pm

Mr. Speaker: I wish to make a statement about the raising of points of order which will, I believe, overcome a problem to which the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) drew my attention on Thursday of last week. He asked me to consider the practice whereby I, like my immediate predecessor, have heard points of order arising out of questions immediately after questions and other points of order in their normal place after private notice questions, statements and Standing Order No. 20 applications.

The hon. Member expressed the view that what he described as the "change in the rule" had been tried for long enough and that it was clear that it was giving rise to abuse. He suggested that I should do one of two things: either resort to the normal rule, the doctrine of the first occasion, under which a point of order allegedly to do with an answer at Question Time would be raised immediately after the event to which it refers, or postpone all such points of order until after any private notice questions, statements or Standing Order No. 20 applications, when they would take their normal turn after any points of order of which notice had been given.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Tiverton for his suggestion. He asked me to reflect and I have done so.

Taking points of order immediately after questions has had the effect in practice of creating two slots for points of order—and indeed it could be said that it almost invites an extension of Question Time. It is an abuse to use the Chair—by means of a point of order—to extend questions to Ministers or to anyone else. One such point of order can easily lead to another and if they are wrongly directed they are a waste of the time of the whole House.

After due consideration, therefore, I propose to revert to the well-tried practice of earlier times and to take points of order, except on any matters needing my immediate intervention, such as breaches of the sub judice rule, or for short notifications by a dissatisfied Member that he intends to raise a certain matter on the Adjournment, in their proper place, which is after all proceedings on private notice questions, statements and Standing Order No. 20 applications.

I believe that this reversion to a former and well-tried practice will be in the best interests of the House.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): Naturally, the House was interested in the Statement that you have just made, Mr. Speaker. Everybody, I am sure, will see the great— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Leader of the Opposition may be supporting what I have just said.

Mr. Kinnock: I am certainly illustrating it, Mr. Speaker. Everyone will see the force of your argument. I ask you to reflect on one further aspect — the circumstances in which an entirely appropriate point of order is made, referring to an hon. Member who might reasonably be expected to depart from the Chamber and, therefore, is not able to hear that point of order which may have a direct bearing on that hon. Member's honour, conduct or otherwise. If you would reflect on that matter, Mr. Speaker, I am sure that the House will be grateful for your further view at an appropriate time.

Mr. Speaker: Of course I shall reflect upon that point. Indeed, I must tell the Leader of the Opposition that I have reflected on the whole range of possibilities. I believe that the ruling that I have just stated will have the support of the whole House.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall take it after business questions.

Business of the House

3.36 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): May I ask the Leader of the House to tell us the business for next week?

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): Yes, Sir. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 16 FEBRUARY — Second Reading of the Broadcasting Bill *[Lords]*.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

TUESDAY 17 FEBRUARY—Opposition Day (8th Allotted Day). Until about seven o'clock there will be a debate entitled "The Problems and Needs of Disabled People". Afterwards there will be a debate entitled "Women in the Community". Both debates will arise on Opposition motions.

Motion on the Social Security (Payments on Account, Overpayment and Recovery) Regulations.

WEDNESDAY 18 FEBRUARY—There will be a debate on a motion to take note of the Government's expenditure plans 1987-88 to 1989-90, Cmnd. Paper No. 56.

Motions on the Rate Support Grant (Scotland) Order and the Revaluation Rate Rebates (Scotland) Order.

THURSDAY 19 FEBRUARY — Remaining stages of the Banking Bill.

FRIDAY 20 FEBRUARY—Private Members' Bills.

MONDAY 23 FEBRUARY—There will be a debate on the report of the Sizewell B public inquiry on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

Mr. Kinnock: On Monday week's business, will the Government put down a motion for debate on the Sizewell public inquiry rather than take it on the Adjournment of the House? As the Government's decision on Sizewell is to be announced after the debate, will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that the House is given a further opportunity to debate that decision when it is made?

In his statement on Monday, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food promised that next month he will publish a White Paper on his proposals on the rural economy. Will the Leader of the House assure us that there will be a debate on that White Paper and that the Minister of Agriculture will not respond in his preferred fashion —in the form of a written answer?

St. David's day is approaching. Will the Leader of the House undertake to provide Government time in the near future for a whole day's debate on Welsh affairs?

The privatisation of British Airways has involved the sale of a profitable national asset at a loss to the taxpayer of £300 million because the share issue was under-priced, and led to a first-day profit for speculators of £50 million. That is obviously scandalous by anybody's standards. Will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that we have a debate soon on the profligacy of the Government's privatisation policies and how, once again, this sell-off was so under-priced?

Has the right hon. Gentleman noticed that, yesterday, while the Prime Minister was saying in London that she would value it enormously if the United States would consult with its allies on the ABM treaty, in Washington, Mr. Kenneth Adelman, head of the United States Arms Control Agency, was saying that the Western allies have no business telling Washington how to interpret the treaty, because they have "no qualifications"?

Will the Leader of the House ensure that early next week we will have a statement from the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs telling us, first, whether consultations with the USA are taking place; secondly, what advice is being tendered by Her Majesty's Government on the interpretation of the ABM treaty; and, thirdly, whether Mr. Adelman speaks for Mr. Weinberger, for Mr. Shultz, for the Administration or just for himself?

Mr. Biffen: The right hon. Gentleman's first point was about Sizewell and the debate that is promised for Monday week. I am sure it is right that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy should hear the views of the House before he takes a decision. It would be wholly inappropriate to have a debate on this matter on a substantive motion. Therefore, I cannot accede to the right hon. Gentleman's request in advance of that decision. That said, I acknowledge immediately that a different situation will arise after the decision has been announced, and that a debate in that context would be a subject for discussion through the usual channels.

The right hon. Gentleman asked about a debate on the White Paper on the rural economy. That is a lively topic and I take note of what the right hon. Gentleman suggests. It is customary to have the debate on Welsh affairs around St. David's day. Again, perhaps that matter could be considered through the usual channels.

I dissent from the right hon. Gentleman's description of the public launch of British Airways. I thought it was a highly sucessful flotation. One knows with what glee there would have been a chorus of denunciation if it had been a failure. I am sure that many hon. Members would take a keen interest in a debate about privatisation and what it is doing to expand the opportunity for share ownership. Perhaps we could pursue that through the usual channels.

Finally, I note the request for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to make a statement about the ABM treaty and the position of the Government. I thought that the matter was made quite clear by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister during her exchanges with my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes). Of course, the matter can be looked at through the usual channels.

Mr. John Mark Taylor (Solihull): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the harrowing events in the Lebanon compel many people to the conclusion that there is no point in parleying with fanatics? Will he permit a short debate on this subject?

Mr. Biffen: I take account of what my hon. Friend says. I am sure that he speaks for a large number of hon. Members and for many people. He might consider raising the matter by way of an Adjournment debate rather than taking Government time to raise it.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): In a debate on the Lebanon, could we have a Government statement saying whether the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs is prepared to pursue at the Security Council the appalling situation in Bourj al Barajneh Palestinian refugee camp where starvation has reached the point at which people are eating cats and dogs, and where one woman killed herself and her children

[Mr. A. J. Beith]

rather than face starvation? May we have a statement to the effect that there might be a concerted European initiative to seek an opening up of the route which is now closed to the food convoys?

Mr. Biffen: I shall refer to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs the hon. Gentleman's point. The hon. Gentleman will recognise that Foreign Office questions come top for Wednesday.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that some of us who represent cereal farming areas would welcome as soon as possible a debate in which we could discuss agricultural policy, and especially the implications of rating agricultural land and the suggestion by the leader of the Social Democratic party that there should be a two-tier system of commodities?

Such a debate would enable the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) to reply to the president of the National Farmers Union who said that the SDP policy would annihilate farming and that the right hon. Gentleman did not know what he was talking about.

Mr. Biffen: I thank my hon. Friend for the trailer that he has given the House of his intended speech. It was all the more persuasive in trying to secure a commitment to such a debate. I have already told the Leader of the Opposition about the problems of a debate about the rural economy. I shall see what we can do.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Is the Leader of the House aware that last Saturday Crown immunity ended in National Health Service hospitals and that those negligent health authorities which have allowed dirty and dangerous conditions for patients and staff will now have to put them right at an estimated cost of £50 million? However, the Government have just announced that they do not propose to allow any money for that. May we have a debate next week on that flouting of the will of Parliament?

Mr. Biffen: I cannot accept the situation outlined by right hon. Gentleman and I certainly cannot accept his accusation that the will of Parliament has been flouted by the Government. However, I accept that he has raised an important subject and suggest that he might try his chance with an Adjournment debate.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): The great scourge of AIDS means that the Government ought to be introducing legislation immediately on tattooing, electrolysis and ear-piercing to ensure that no other avenue is available by which AIDS can be transmitted accidentally to innocent people.

Mr. Biffen: I take account of what my hon. Friend says and I shall certainly refer his point to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): The European Community is taking legal action against the British Government because bathing beaches are polluted and drinking water is unsatisfactory because of nitrite concentration and it is considering taking us to court because of an over-concentration of nitrates. Is it not a deplorable scandal that the Government are risking the health of the people of Britain, or is it just another example of the fact that they do not care?

Mr. Biffen: I do not accept that, because a Community institution takes action against the British Government, the British Government are necessarily at fault.

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): Has my right hon. Friend considered the reasonable, if controversial, suggestion of the Paymaster General that people in Britain should now be paid on the basis of productivity, efficiency and so on? Would it be a good idea if my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House looked at that in relation to the House of Commons? For example, Ministers who spend wisely should be paid more, those who vote most in the House should receive a bonus and those who sit on Committees for long hours should get extra, except for those Committees that travel abroad too much and they should have a reduction. Perhaps those who raise spurious points of order should also receive less. The possibilities for my right hon. Friend are infinite. Will he consider that and make an announcement on it?

Mr. Biffen: The longer my hon. Friend proceeded the more I began to realise that job evaluation in this place would become a highly controversial topic. I have long thought that there was a great role for the constructive non-production of legislation and that that would much enhance what benefit Parliament could confer upon people. However, I know that all those are matters not of scientific evaluation but of deep instinctive prejudice.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Leader of the House arrange for the appropriate Minister to make a statement about the links between South Africa and the City? Will that Minister be able to tell us the number and amount of donations given to the Liberal party and the Social Democratic party from the City in the past two or three years, especially with regard to those which have subsidiaries in South Africa? I have drawn the attention of the Leader of the House to that previously. Will he arrange for the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to make an additional statement with a proper report in the Library on all those firms and individuals connected with the Guinness fiasco that have given money to the Tory party?

Mr. Biffen: I was interested in the earlier manifestation of the hon. Gentleman's question about whether that would be the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry or the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith). I noticed that the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed showed an increasing distaste for the whole nature of the question.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): He was fidgeting.

Mr. Biffen: Yes, I accept that he was fidgeting. However, I should like to consider the matter carefully before coming to what might be a snap and ill-matched judgment.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): As my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will know, in the past I have drawn his attention to early day motion 310 on small dairy farms.

[That this House believes that should a reduction in milk quotas be necessary, the first 200,000 litres of a United Kingdom holding should not be included in any calculations, thus helping to ensure the future of the small family farms which have done so much for the British countryside.]

Although we await with interest a debate on the documents that have been published by my right hon.

Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, we look to him to provide the House with the earliest opportunity to discuss the proposed dairy charges.

Mr. Biffen: I note what my hon. Friend says. He has made that point powerfully to me on previous occasions. I will bear in mind what he says, along with all the other considerations, not least those of the Leader of the Opposition, about a debate on the rural economy.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): Did the Leader of the House get any joy last week when he drew to the attention of the Prime Minister, as promised, the proposal that she should make a statement to the House before she goes on her visit to the Soviet Union at the end of March so that she can be informed of all the issues that interest hon. Members, including the tremendous opportunity to expand our trade with the Soviet Union?

The British Chamber of Commerce is opening an office in Moscow, which, I believe, the Prime Minister may open. May we have an opportunity to tell her what we think she should try to achieve on her important visit?

Mr. Biffen: I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is deeply touched by the interest and concern that the hon. Gentleman shows in her proposed trip, and that she will bear in mind what he has suggested when we come a little nearer to the point of decision.

Mr. John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): Can my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House advise me whether we shall have an early opportunity to debate the Home Affairs Committee report on the redistribution of seats so that the blatant discrimination against England in the matter of parliamentary seats can soon be put right?

Mr. Biffen: There are certain stages in life when one has enough troubles without looking for more. However, my hon. Friend knows perfectly well that, in the first instance, there must be a Government response to the Select Committee's report, and we shall perhaps take the matter further once that has been undertaken.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): Will the Leader of the House ask the Prime Minister whether she will now make a statement about the proposals to amend section 2 of the Official Secrets Act in view of the fact that she wrote to me saying that there was no intention to amend or repeal the Act? However, the leading article on the front page of *The Sunday Times* last week stated, "Tories pledge new secrets act", and purports to say that several Ministers have given clear indications that the present Act is a disaster which should be dealt with. Can the Leader of the House ensure that that matter is referred to the House as soon as possible?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. and learned Gentleman knows that earlier in the lifetime of this Administration an attempt was made to secure the reform of that legislation. However, I shall certainly draw his remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, who, essentially, has the responsibility for that legislation.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): As the Court of Auditors in Brussels has just confirmed that a mafia organisation received a Common Market grant of 19 million lire in respect of an alleged delivery of non-existent fruit juice to the NATO headquarters in Sicily, will the Leader of the House arrange for a debate on that matter so that the Government can express their view on that novel use of public funds?

Mr. Biffen: That is an interesting suggestion and a rather novel diversion. However, I shall consider the matter and see what can be done.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): Is the Leader of the House aware that there are many pensioners in the country and that if in fact they got their act together and voted in the right way he would be looking for another job? Is he also aware that the Government have not given this country's pensioners a fair deal? They come to my surgery on Saturday mornings to complain about what they should be getting, but are not getting, from the Government. Bearing that in mind, will the Leader of the House find time for a long-overdue debate on the problems of the elderly so that we can put them right?

Mr. Biffen: I cannot offer precisely and exactly what the hon. Gentleman seeks, but in this Chamber one rarely receives that. I can offer him a wide-ranging debate on public expenditure on Wednesday when certainly the financing of retirement pensions will be central.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Will my right hon. Friend find time for an urgent debate next week on the conduct of public opinion polls? Does he agree that that would provide an excellent opportunity for the public to understand how they are conducted and to consider, for example, the "Newsnight" poll conducted earlier this week which showed a resurgence in support for the alliance, but was based on the movement of 14 people and was conducted by David Woodhead who, by coincidence, happens to be a Liberal councillor?

Mr. Biffen: I take note of what my hon. Friend says. There may well come a day when one will be concerned to establish minimum standards for the conduct of such polling, but meanwhile there is no possibility of legislation to change those matters. My hon. Friend may like to take the opportunity of seeking an Adjournment debate, because his point has genuine topicality.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Bearing in mind the changes in forestry policy which began this week with the Government announcement and the little difficulty that we had at Question Time yesterday, will the Leader of the House reconsider carefully—this will appeal to many hon. Members on both sides—the question of who has responsibility for forestry in the House?

Mr. Biffen: I take account of what the hon. Gentleman says. He has taken a long and determined interest in this topic. It links with many other aspects of the countryside, about which there is a general desire for a debate.

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): My right hon. Friend will be aware that the Licensing (Restaurant Meals) Bill is on the Order Paper for Second Reading tomorrow following objections raised to it last Friday. In view of the fact that it is a perfectly sensible, reasonable measure for the reform of our archaic licensing laws, will he consider giving Government time to assist its passage through this House if further objections are raised?

Mr. Biffen: Being a coward, of course I shall consider granting Government time, but I should not like my hon. Friend to be optimistic about the outcome of that consideration.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is the Leader of the House aware of the widespread anxiety in Britain about the appalling circumstances facing Palestinians in a refugee camp in the Lebanon? Did he read about the Palestinian woman who yesterday committed suicide with her children rather than face starvation? Does he recognise the need for an early statement on the steps that the British Government can take to ease the situation?

Secondly, has the right hon. Gentleman any latest information about the British correspondent who was beaten up by KGB agents this morning in Moscow?

Mr. Biffen: I should like to append the hon. Gentleman's first comments to those of the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) in making representations to my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary. I have nothing to say about his second point, because I am in no position to speak.

Sir John Farr (Harborough): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Local Government Act 1986 (Amendment) Bill is about to complete its passage in the other place today? Will he consider whether the objectives of the Bill should command the support of the whole House as it seeks to outlaw excessive expenditure on homosexual and lesbian groups by Left-wing councils? When he has looked at it, I am sure that he will seek to give it a fair wind through this House. What will he do about it?

Mr. Biffen: I have an instinctive sympathy with the point that my hon. Friend is putting, but I am not sure that it has total, unanimous support in the House, notwithstanding the phraseology that he used. I will certainly bear his point in mind.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Will the Leader of the House ask the Minister who is to wind up the broadcasting debate on Monday, to explain the chemistry by which the noble Lord, Lord Cameron of Lochbroom, sitting alone in the Crown Office, without talking to any ministerial colleagues, apparently reached crucial decisions about an interpretation of the public interest and official security in Britain? Will the Minister explain why Scottish law was flouted in not taking into account the feelings of the victim, in this case the Foreign Office, which had ministerial responsibility and was up to its neck in it, with the Foreign Secretary cancelling engagements with Philip Habib, cancelling visits to the Middle East Association, and being involved in the very issue upon which Lord Cameron made decisions? Will the right hon. Gentleman look at the precedent of Lord Elwyn-Jones, who consulted the then Mr. Michael Stewart in relation to the prosecution of the hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) in relation to the *Daily Telegraph* case over Nigeria?

Mr. Biffen: I shall ensure that the hon. Gentleman's remarks are brought to the attention of my hon. Friend who will be replying to Monday's debate.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): May we have a debate on the lobbying tactics of outside organisations such as the East Midlands Association of District Councils, which came to the House of Commons yesterday? If my right hon. Friend could have spared the time, he would have been horrified at the lobbying and misrepresentations that were put forward by the chairman of Leicester city council's housing committee, Councillor David Middleton, who cast the most amazing slurs on and said amazing untruths about the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction and the Housing and Planning Act, which caused great concern to my constituents. Those lies were totally without foundation and have caused unnecessary concern to anyone who lives in a council house. They were given over to the lie that council tenants may be removed at a moment's notice, and that they will not have a say in how their property will be managed. Is this not shocking? Should we not have an opportunity to curtail lobbying, particularly when it is misleading?

Mr. Biffen: At least my hon. Friend did not have dinner with him. There are many ways of offensive lobbying, but the gastronomic way is the one that I have always found most tedious. My hon. Friend has made his point effectively, but I hope that, on reflection, he will not feel it necessary to have a debate.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): Is the Leader of the House aware that in 1986, with the approval of the Government, British Aerospace issued a brochure at the 1986 Farnborough air show which gave details of the spy satellite that it was building? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the Soviet attaché was present at that air show and that he can read English? Therefore, will he ask the Prime Minister to condemn the disclosures of British Aerospace as being irresponsible and damaging to national security?

Mr. Biffen: I take note of what the hon. Lady says. I shall refer her remarks to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Does my right hon. Friend recall the triumph of the Fontainebleu agreement, in which it was stated quite categorically that we have finally achieved total financial discipline within the EEC? Is my right hon. Friend confident enough to have a debate on the matter to elicit from the Government and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister the undertaking that no further moneys will be given to the EEC during this year or next under any guise, that the VAT ceiling will not be increased and that anything masquerading as an inter-governmental agreement will not be undertaken to circumvent the excellent outcome of the Fontainebleu agreement which was so lobbied by the right hon. Gentleman and his colleagues at the time?

Mr. Biffen: I think that I can best help my hon. Friend —"hope deferred"—by saying that there will be plenty of opportunities to discuss relationships with the European Community in specific terms in the weeks and months ahead. On Wednesday of this coming week there will be a debate on the Government's expenditure plans, which relate to our contributions to the European Community. I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to make his arguments then.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): I refer the Leader of the House to the human tragedy being worked out in the Palestinian camps. Is he aware specifically that the President of France has called for international action by the western European powers and that the leader of the Palestinians has called for United Nations action? Given that background, will the right hon. Gentleman reconsider the need for a statement by the Foreign Secretary? Will he also make sure that the Foreign Secretary understands that the House will be grateful if the British Government took part in the maximum possible diplomatic efforts?

Mr. Biffen: I take note of what the hon. Gentleman says. I responded in a forthcoming manner to the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith). I shall ensure that the hon. Gentleman's name is included when that point is passed to my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. Friend agree to an early debate on the environment, particularly the need to keep open spaces in built-up areas, so that Ealing Labour council's uncaring proposals to build on the Ealing Green high school playing field in a built-up area, which will take away amenities from children and other people, can be discussed properly and condemned, just as the council was at a public meeting of nearly 500 people in my constituency on Monday?

Mr. Biffen: I take account of what my hon. Friend says. I am sure that the debate on the rural economy will not be particularly directed to the green spaces, such as there are, in Ealing. I shall refer the matter to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Is the Leader of the House aware that, although the House may accept that the arrangements for notifying the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee of major defence projects of a national security nature may have not been breached in the case of Zircon, I believe that the Ministry of Defence deliberately misled the Comptroller and Auditor General? Is the Leader of the House aware of the view that is expressed by a few people who seem to know about these matters that part of the Zircon expenditure was attributed to the Trident programme? That is the way that expenditure has been hidden in the public expenditure White Paper. Will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that a full statement is made and that written questions that I have tabled, which forensically examine the matter to establish the truth, are answered fully and honestly?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman makes a serious challenge that deliberate and misleading answers have been given to him by a Government Department. That is a direct accusation either against the Minister involved or against civil servants. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will reflect on that.

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): Will my right hon. Friend provide time next week to the Leader of the Opposition so that the Labour party can make a statement to clear up a matter that is causing a good deal of confusion and uncertainty in the House — who is the Opposition spokesman on employment matters? Is it the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) or the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould)?

Mr. Biffen: Perhaps we should wait to see what the performance this afternoon is like before coming to any premature conclusions.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): May I take it that the right hon. Gentleman is fully apprised of the need for urgent consideration of the appalling sufferings of the Palestinians and that he will urge on his right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary the need for some immediate help to be provided to them, either some sort of defence of their position or some sort of international intervention in terms of food and economic help?

Mr. Biffen: I shall make sure that my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary is made aware of the deep feelings that have been expressed on the subject this afternoon.

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): My right hon. Friend will be aware of remaining order No. 3 relating to short speeches. When may we expect a debate and decision on this matter?

Mr. Biffen: There are a few procedural matters to be cleared up to ensure that graveyard unanimity, which is so beloved of the usual channels. Once that has been done, I hope that we can proceed.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the discourtesy that is being shown to some of our naval ships visiting United Kingdom ports? I am particularly thinking of a visit of HMS Conqueror, the nuclear-powered submarine, which was so famous in the Falklands conflict, which is visiting Southampton. Unfortunately, it is being shown a great deal of discourtesy by the Labour-controlled council and has been given no civil reception. Should not this matter be debated in the House so that we can have an overall policy for warships, which may or may not have nuclear weapons on board, visiting United Kingdom ports?

Mr. Biffen: That is a matter which some may consider modest but which I think is important in showing the broad attitudes of those who are seeking public affection in the coming general election. I shall ensure that my hon. Friend's point is given as much publicity as possible.

Points of Order (Mr. Speaker's Ruling)

4.10 pm

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Further to a point of order which was raised a long time ago, Mr. Speaker. You are well aware of my warm predisposition towards you. You made a statement about the point of order procedures. You claimed to be reverting to an older practice. I have grown grey, if not white in parts, in the service and I remember 21 years ago, when I first graced the Back Benches, to be permanently on the Back Benches, that you were still a gallant soldier.

Mr. Speaker: Former soldier.

Mr. Faulds: You had been a gallant soldier, and still are.

You have suggested, Sir, that all these points of order should be postponed until there is lump treatment of them after questions and statements. This means only one thing: if you postpone points of order, you break the continuity of argument to which the points of order referred. I doubt if that is advisable, because it might be interpreted that your intention is to dispossess hon. Members of a long-established tradition of arguing points of order relevant to the matter then under discussion. Were you to maintain this argument, it would mean — *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members need education. If it comes to a clash of voices, I might win.

If points of order are not acceded to when they are first raised, it seems to me that this lessens the rights of hon. Members to intervene there and then when points on which they wish to comment arise. You have had no trouble on this aspect, Sir, only because the Labour party is a very responsible party and because you have a compliant crowd of drips on the Conservative Benches.

Is it not true that you have become a somewhat radical Speaker, Sir? You have changed the practice on questions in two ways. You have allowed a situation to develop which you are now trying to rectify. Instead of Prime Minister's Question Time being relevant to the Prime Minister's activities of the day — you are trying to restore that — you have allowed that to lapse. Perhaps more important than that, you have allowed the practice to develop whereby hon. Members are allowed to quote in supplementary questions. When I was young, that was not allowed. I ask you carefully to reconsider your application of the rules of procedure on these matters, especially with relevance to the appositeness of points of order being raised the moment the discussion under way needs that intervention.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the hon. Member for the first and final parts of his comments. I hope that I am sticking to the rules as operated by my predecessors. I did not go into this matter lightly. It was raised by the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) last Thursday. I have taken a whole week to reflect on it and have consulted widely. I have looked at the *Hansards* going back to the beginning of my Speakership. I have noted that consistently there have been attempts to continue Question Time through the Chair and I have found myself constantly saying, "This is not a matter for me. This is a continuation of Question Time." By definition, a point of order must be a matter on which the Speaker can rule. The whole House knows that it is an abuse to seek, through the Chair, to continue Question Time.

Hon. Member for Leicester, East

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You know how carefully we avoid allowing an hon. Member to refer to another hon. Member in the House as a liar. That is correct, of course. You may have noticed, Sir, that the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels), who unfortunately has left the Chamber—this may illustrate one of the points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds); the hon. Gentleman is not here to listen to what I have to say — mentioned the chairman of the Leicester housing committee and referred to him not once, but twice, as a liar. If we are so eager to protect ourselves, perhaps we should extend that protection to people who are not here to speak for themselves.

Mr. Speaker: I have frequently——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. I was present——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Allow me to deal with one point of order at a time.

I have frequently drawn the attention of the House to that practice. It is a very serious matter in the House to blacken the names of those outside this place who have no means of recourse and to do so under the cloak of parliamentary privilege. Every hon. Member should take the greatest care when referring to people outside this place. Or course, the whole House knows that it would be unparliamentary to use that term in relation to any hon. Member.

Mr. Skinner: Further to the earlier point of order, Mr. Speaker. I raise this point in view of the matter raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond) and the fact that I was present throughout the lobby which took place in Committee Room 18, which had been organised on behalf of local authorities, many of which were hung councils, some of which were represented by the Conservative party——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member must bear in mind that this must be a point of order to me. I was not present and I am not responsible for what is said in Committee Rooms.

Mr. Skinner: This took place in the House, and I should have thought that the Speaker of the House of Commons would be a little concerned at what happened. Tory Members came into the Committee Room and abused local authority representives of all shades and descriptions. Many of the representives then left, only to be followed by another Tory Member, who did the same thing. The net result was that the people at the meeting decided that, because I had stayed throughout, I should receive the accolade of statesman of the meeting.

I am not asking for that accolade from you, Mr. Speaker, but I say seriously in respect of the statement you read out earlier, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) properly referred, and in respect of points of order being raised immediately arising out of matters that have been aired, I believe that you will not in all circumstances hold the line against Front Benchers. You may do so against my hon. Friends on the Back Benches, but I am prepared to bet that that line will never be held when Front Benchers decide to challenge your ruling.

Mr. Speaker: These are hypothetical matters.

Mr. Skinner: I just wanted to put them on the record.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I very much hope that both Front Benches will always give a lead in terms of support for the Chair. I note that the Opposition Front Benchers are nodding.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I say immediately that of course we respect your ruling and your position. We certainly agree that it is wrong for hon. Members on either side of the House to try to prolong Question Time via points of order. But I ask you to consider and give your advice on a genuine problem that arises from your ruling. Although many of the interventions made at 3.30 pm by hon. Members on both sides of the House may have been abuses of the intention of points of order—I readily accept that—we now have the difficult situation that arises because Ministers are busy and the Prime Minister is particularly busy. If a statement, several statements or a private notice question follow Question Time, it will be at least an hour before a question can be raised relating to what happened and Ministers, and the Prime Minister almost certainly and understandably, will not be in the Chamber.

To ensure that the new system works properly, what arrangements do you propose, Sir, to ensure that at the appropriate time the Ministers who answered questions and the Prime Minister are available in case points of order are raised?

Mr. Speaker: It is not a new arrangement. I am reverting to an old and tried practice, as I said in my considered statement on this matter. I did not take this course lightly, but carefully considered it and consulted widely about it throughout the week. Therefore, it should be of no surprise to the House to learn what was in my mind on those matters.

What I have done is in the best interests of good order in this House. It is reverting to former practice. What the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) said about having a Minister present to answer cannot, by definition, be a point of order for me. That is the crux of the matter.

Hon. Members have only to look at *Hansard* to realise that there are constant attempts to use points of order as a vehicle to extend Question Time through the Chair. That is not a function of the Chair, and I do not believe that it is good practice for the House.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): As someone who invariably takes the second slot on points of order—not the first—I, too, accept that there is abuse. Indeed, that matter has been referred to and is being considered by the Select Committee on Procedure. It hopes to study that precise matter next Monday.

I put it to you, Mr. Speaker, that there are ways to resolve the matter other than by the course that you have decided to take. Would it not be to the benefit of the House if you put this reversion on a limited basis pending the recommendations of the Select Committee? I believe that within that Committee—where the best form of debate takes place — lies a possible solution to avoid the difficulties that arise at 3.30 pm.

The reason why we have the difficulty with points of order at 3.30 pm is that there is no slot within our proceedings for hon. Members to raise issues that they believe to be important, over and above the Standing Order No. 20 procedure. It is important that Parliament finds some way of giving vent to its feelings. By removing the opportunity to put points of order at 3.30 pm, you are simply putting the lid on a kettle of seething disquiet.

Mr. Speaker: I was interested to hear what the hon. Gentleman said about the Select Committee on Procedure considering this matter. That is news to me. Certainly I have received no request from the Chairman of that Committee even to consider the matter. Mr. Speaker is the servant of the House, and if the Select Committee on Procedure makes recommendations and the House accepts them Mr. Speaker will be bound by them.

I am the servant of the House. I was chosen to be Mr. Speaker by the whole House to keep order and to ensure observance of our rules. If those rules are changed by the will of the House, I will certainly abide by that. I welcome the Select Committee considering the matter, if that is its intention.

BILL PRESENTED

REGISTERED ESTABLISHMENTS (SCOTLAND)

Mr. Albert McQuarrie, supported by Mr. Alexander Pollock, Sir Hector Monro, Mr. Bill Walker, Mr. Allan Stewart, Mrs. Anna McCurley, Mr. Charles Kennedy, Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn and Mr. David Lambie, presented a Bill to make further provision as to the registration of establishments under the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968; to provide for the dual registration of certain establishments under both the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 and the Nursing Homes Registration (Scotland) Act 1938; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 20 February and to be printed. [Bill 74.]

Employment and Training

4.23 pm

Mr. Speaker: We come now to the debate on employment——

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I understand that there is a custom and practice whereby Opposition and Government spokesmen deposit any important documents that have been published in the Library of the House of Commons, so that hon. Members can be aware of the documents that will be used in a debate.

For the past two days I have been to the Library trying to obtain a copy of the published Labour party document, which has been trailed in the newspapers and which will be used by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) today, called—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I can help the hon. Gentleman and the whole House. There is no requirement for Opposition Front Bench spokesmen to lay documents, and the hon. Gentleman is surely aware of that rule. The custom relates to Government papers—not Opposition papers—that are relevant to the debate. Indeed, many hon. Members write pamphlets and often refer to them.

Mr. Hayes: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is much more serious than that. I went to the Library and asked that someone ring Walworth road to request a copy of the document. The Library is full of Labour party pamphlets and other party political literature. The spokesman at Walworth road said that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am afraid that I must stop the hon. Gentleman. That is patently not a matter for me.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Further to that point of order Mr. Speaker. In this imminent debate, would it be in order for the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) to make his contribution from a sedentary position in view of the report in yesterday's——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us get off to a good start.

4.25 pm

The Paymaster General and Minister for Employment (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I beg to move,

That this House commends the Government on the wide range of practical help it provides through its training and employment measures and the Restart programme; welcomes the national launch of the new Job Training Scheme, endorses the policies of promoting enterprise and small business, more flexible labour markets, better training for young people and adults, and more help for the long-term unemployed; and takes note of European Community Document No. 10119/86 and congratulates the Government on achieving the adoption by the European Community during the British presidency of an Action Programme on Employment Growth in line with the Government's policies.

Mr. Speaker: I wish to inform the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Clarke: We are about to start a serious debate on a serious subject during which, no doubt, we may discover what strings the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) holds in his hierarchy on this subject.

The background to our debate on this important and serious matter was given a few moments ago by my right

hon. Friend the Prime Minister, when she reminded us that for the past six months the trend in unemployment has been steadily downwards. Each month there have been good and improved employment and unemployment figures, and each month they have been a bitter blow to the Labour party. It is especially gratifying—I hope to the whole House—that the level of unemployment has been falling fastest in the north, the north-west, Wales and the west midlands—again, a setback for the Opposition.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): What about this month?

Mr. Clarke: I accept that this month has not been as good as the past five months, but the hon. Gentleman will be aware that January is always the worst month of the year. Unemployment figures always go up in January because it is the worst month of the winter. Even so, it is the smallest rise in any January for eight years. It means that the trend over the past six months is the best since 1973 — *[Interruption.]* The Government's training measures must be looked at against that extremely encouraging background——

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): The position in Scotland is very different from the gloss that the right hon. and learned Gentleman has tried to put on the figures for England and Wales. The underlying trend in Scotland shows unemployment to be worsening and there has been a collapse in employment in the manufacturing sector. From figures given by the Minister responsible for Scottish industry yesterday, it is obvious that manufacturing jobs in the new towns are down—by 3,500 in East Kilbride and 2,200 in Cumbernauld—since this Government came to office. How can the right hon. and learned Gentleman present such glossy figures in view of the position in Scotland?

Mr. Clarke: Scotland is not doing as well as the other regions that I have mentioned because of the difficulties of the offshore oil industry. That industry gave rise to great prosperity in Scotland until the last change in oil prices, with the resulting change in the outlook for oil companies. There are some job losses in Scotland, but many more new jobs are being created.

The picture over the past six months has been best in the regions that I have mentioned — the north, the north-west, Wales and the west midlands. The picture is not so good in Scotland, for obvious reasons — which the hon. Gentleman, who holds a Scottish seat, knows even better than I. He also knows that the best hope for Scotland and elsewhere is for the good overall national news of the past six months to be maintained, as it is likely to be.

We must best judge those measures against a favourable economic climate and an economy that is performing well. Unemployment and employment figures look much more encouraging when we consider the broad difference of approach that we take, deciding where we are going and comparing what the rival political parties are using to guide their own employment policies.

We know that apart from the argument—sometimes noisy — that takes place between myself, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East and his colleagues, and apart from the difference about the detail of measures, there is a broad difference of approach both towards the kind of economy that we see emerging and the labour market in which we believe we have to create jobs. That broad division is best described in shorthand as the difference between those in this party and this Government, who are seeking to develop an enterprise economy, and those in the Labour party who still — *[Interruption.]* It is noticeable that the new guide and mentor of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East, the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), is not yet in the Chamber. If the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East, went to the other place occasionally and heard debates there, by listening to debates in both Houses of Parliament he might be better informed on all the matters upon which he tries to address this House.

To return to the sharp division between policies that are based upon the development of an enterprise economy and policies that are still based on an inclination towards a public sector-led economy and a publicly planned labour market, that division is traditional between the two great parties. However, it has been made quite clear in recent debates on unemployment that it has never been more sharp than it is now. That is the choice that faces our country when it judges our economic measures.

Quite apart from our macro-economic policies that are designed to produce sustained growth in the economy, we have based all the employment and training policies that we have produced to reinforce our economic policies on the need to change and modernise our labour market so that it comes nearer to the kind of labour market that provides good employment prospects in all the most advanced capitalist countries that have succeeded in overcoming this problem. For instance—this theme runs through all our policies—we encourage and welcome a wider spread of employment in the service industries as well as in manufacturing industries, although I believe that the broad brush division that is made between the two is often artificial. We need jobs in both sectors.

In particular, we have encouraged new business start-ups; we have supported the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises, because that sector of the economy produces the fastest growth in new jobs; we have introduced the business expansion scheme and the loan guarantee scheme and we have developed the local enterprise agency network. In particular, we have encouraged self-employment, which was in the most unfortunate decline in the 1970s. It is now growing again strongly. We have also introduced such measures as the enterprise allowance scheme to support unemployed people who enter into self-employment and we have reduced the national insurance charges that the self-employed pay. We have tried to achieve what could broadly be described as a more flexible labour market. The Wages Bill contained many measures of that kind.

Our economy is becoming much more like those of other developed countries, in which a higher proportion of people are in part-time work, while more people are engaged on short-term contracts. There is a greater development of job sharing, with more people having more than one job. Sometimes that involves more realistic pay for inexperienced school leavers who are going into their first job. However, it also involves more pay that is based on merit and performance for those who have the skills and whose performance is the best.

We have also improved the preparation of our children for today's world of work. During the last seven years we have developed much better links between schools and industry, and we must continue to do so. We are

[Mr. Clarke]

developing a more relevant curriculum for pupils through the technical and vocational education initiative. Our proposed city technological colleges will reinforce that development. We are beginning to sort out the system of vocational qualifications so that pupils can seek to attain a set pattern of qualifications of which employers will be able to make the best use. We are seeking to improve training levels and to raise the skills of our work force. Probably our biggest single success has been the development of the two-year youth training scheme. However, the new job training scheme is the latest and the most exciting example of what we have in mind.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): Has my right hon. and learned Friend yet received a letter from the TUC in response to the letter from the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman)—some kind of unemployment spokesman on the Opposition Front Bench—who wrote to the TUC complaining bitterly that it had approved the £206 million job training scheme and asking it to complain to the Government about the fact that it was illegal? Has he yet received that letter, or does he think that it is a figment of the Opposition's imagination?

Mr. Clarke: I have seen the letter relating to the alleged illegality point that was raised by the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) who, astonishingly, is not here, although—but we are never quite sure—he is also a Front Bench Opposition spokesman. The hon. Member for Huddersfield will be receiving a letter from the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission this afternoon, refuting his rather silly legal point and explaining that he is making a complaint about perfectly reasonable preparations, on a contingency basis, for the scheme.

Mr. Prescott: Does the Paymaster General acknowledge that he has received a letter from the TUC dated 10 February making clear its position about the job training scheme and pointing out that most of it is not in line with the guidelines set out by the Manpower Services Commission and that therefore it cannot support the scheme?

Mr. Clarke: Far be it from me to intrude into any of the discussions that are taking place between the Labour party and the TUC. My right hon. and noble Friend and I have responded to the work and the proposals of the Manpower Services Commission, based on the unanimous report of its sub-committee. We have an agreement with the MSC, upon which there are TUC commissioners, about how to proceed with the new scheme, on the basis of expanding it as rapidly as we can, consistent with quality. I do not believe that it is misleading. As for the Government and the Manpower Services Commission, there has been an exchange of letters between Ministers and the MSC that makes it clear that we are proceeding on the basis of the last MSC discussions.

Mr. Prescott: What about the job training scheme?

Mr. Clarke: I shall return to the job training scheme in a moment.

I am describing the way in which the totality of our employment and training measures is changing the patterns of work. We need a work force and a labour market that will serve a modern enterprise economy. The theme that runs through the complex package that we have put together is modernisation and an enterprise economy in which the private sector will produce the majority of the jobs and a more skilled, versatile and more appropriately rewarded labour force will be provided to serve it.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover) *rose*——

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Mr. Martin Flannery.

Mr. Dennis Skinner *rose*——

Mr. Flannery: You called me, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I misunderstood. Mr. Dennis Skinner.

Mr. Skinner: On the question of letters and training, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman refer to the letter that he has received from Mr. Sutton of Pinxton in my constituency who is complaining about the training scheme? He is 58-years-old and is just recovering from several operations for cancer. Having worked for 41 years underground and having been made redundant under the Government's miners' redundancy scheme, he was told to report to the local jobcentre with a view to taking part in the restart programme. Is it not a scandal? Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman not acknowledge that my constituent, Mr. Sutton, has told me to tell Parliament that

"To receive a letter like this is I believe an absolute insult, there can be no depths this Government of lies, deceit and hypocrisy will sink. This letter ought to be read out in Parliament to those Tory cretins, even then I don't think it would shame them."

That is the way in which this Government are reducing joblessness. They are doing it by sending insulting letters to 58-year-old redundant miners, this one having had several cancer operations during the last few years.

Mr. Clarke: I notice from the tone of his letter that Mr. Sutton of Pinxton is, like his Member of Parliament, a shy and sensitive chap who is upset by the letters that he receives. I shall of course consider the letter of Mr. Sutton of Pinxton. However, if he studied carefully the invitation that he received under the restart programme, he would find that he was being approached as a person who had been unemployed for more than 12 months to participate in an individual interview about circumstances that might enable him to return to work. If he is unable to take a job, that will be thrown up during the interview. The idea that, when we write to people like Mr. Sutton who have been unemployed for more than 12 months, it is justifiable for them to take offence is ridiculous. If he came to an interview and it was found that he had particular difficulties, he would be treated with sensitivity; and if it were found that, because of his cancer, he was entitled to other benefits that he is not at the moment receiving, no doubt he would be given advice as to how to claim them.

Mr. Flannery: Earlier in his speech, the Paymaster General referred to modernisation, modern industry and so on. Last week at this time I was waiting to speak under Standing Order No. 20 because I had just learnt that the Stocksbridge steel works in Sheffield had just been notified that 600 of the 2,400 jobs in the factory were to go. It had slimmed down, cut down, done everything that the Government wanted it to do, and now another 600 jobs

are to go, 25 per cent. of the labour force. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman kindly explain to me how that can possibly help us in a very modern factory?

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Member will be aware that over the years there have always been jobs going in some places and jobs being gained elsewhere, lost in one industry and created in another. Of course, I shall look at the case of the Stocksbridge steel works but I also look at the way in which people in Yorkshire and Humberside, for example, are taking advantage of all the employment and training measures that I have been describing and I see how that part of the country has the fastest growth in the number of self-employed of any region. When we are talking about the number of jobs in the country, we are all the time comparing the jobs lost as a result of competition or technological change, on the one hand, with jobs gained elsewhere in a growing and more dynamic economy. The balance at the moment is favourable and what I have described is a package of measures to train our work force into the new jobs that are emerging at an ever-accelerating rate.

Perhaps I may be allowed not to give way for a few moments because, having described the package of measures and the philosophy underlying our approach to this problem, I was going to move on to the approach of the alliance parties. [HON. MEMBERS: "Where are they?"] What has happened is that while I have been giving way to these interventions the alliance representation in the House has actually halved. While I has having this interesting exchange about Mr. Sutton of Pinxton, we have been reduced to one solitary hon. Member from the alliance parties.

Trying to draw out some broad themes before I get involved any more in these individual arguments about constituents, factories and measures, I have tried to study the alliance parties' proposals which were brought up to date only this morning in *The Guardian* by the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) who tried to describe the distinctive contribution of the alliance parties to the whole question of employment.

At the moment the hon. Member for Stockton, South is somewhat stuck in a groove, trying out everything that he suggests with various computer models — he has a slight obsession with computer models — and the particular proposals that he puts through computer models have a familiar air about them. Sometimes there is a touch of infrastructure spending about them — that seems to be out of favour at the moment, compared with the Select Committee's interest in job guarantees. But the distinctive feature of alliance policies, so far as I can tell from *The Guardian* today, and the only distinctive feature, is that they are the only people still urging a statutory incomes policy as the key part of their measures. What they urge is the failed method of getting more market-based pay, which was the policy of the 1970s. If one reads the article in *The Guardian*, one sees that the approach of the alliance parties is to be a new payroll tax exacted on those firms which exceed a pay norm. Quite apart from the practicality of that, it is plain that the alliance parties are going back to the policing of individual pay settlements, company by company, across the country, with the only flexibility being those schemes given favourable financial treatment by the Treasury — an approach to pay and employment which failed quite sadly in the 1970s and which it seems to me quite ludicrous to bring back——

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles) *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: —at a time when our unit labour costs in this country are rising more slowly than those of our competitors. So, again, in the improving climate, the alliance contribution to equality is becoming particularly irrelevent.

What I will leave to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East to deal with in due course are those parts of the alliance policy which are plainly lifted from a somewhat watered-down version of Labour party policy. I see that the hon. Member for Stockton, South has revised the alliance commitment yet again on the figures. What he has now come up with is that the alliance parties will aim to cut unemployment by one million in three years at a cost of £4 billion. That is plainly cribbed from the Labour party's plan to cut one million in two years at a cost of £6 billion. It is a curious measure of moderation by those who recently left the Labour party that, when asked to make a contribution, they look at what the Labour party is saying, tone it down a bit and present it with slightly modified figures.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon) *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I will give way in a moment. There still seems to be a little doubt in the alliance parties about who their employment spokesman is. They have only one in the Chamber at the moment so I will give way to him.

Mr. Bruce: I should inform the House that I am the alliance spokesman.

What is the Government's alternative in circumstances where average earnings are rising at double the rate of inflation and unemployment has stuck at 3 million? It is all very well to attack the Opposition parties. What will the Government do to ensure that the unemployed get jobs, if it is not by having an incomes policy to ensure that money is shared round fairly and evenly?

Mr. Clarke: What is happening at the moment is that pay is rising faster than inflation and we are also getting rapidly improving productivity and better performance, compared with the 1970s, for example, when these alliance policies were born. At the moment — and we must maintain this — unit labour costs in this country are rising more slowly than those of our major competitors. So at this stage still to be advocating what the hon. Member for Stockton, South was advocating, the use of a new tax

> "as a means of influencing the climate of pay bargaining . . . which would not be the short-term centralised draconian policy of the past but a tax levied on firms with over 100 employees who reached pay settlement above the agreed norm",

would involve bringing back the whole machinery of vetting each and every pay increase at a time when it not only was unnecessary, but would be an inhibition of more flexible patterns of pay bargaining.

Mr. Donald Stewart *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I will give way for the last time as we have yet another party seeking to intervene, but I must be allowed then to continue my speech.

Mr. Donald Stewart: I am grateful to the Paymaster General, because he has given way a good deal.

Since he has been reading *The Guardian* so assiduously, would he answer the poser set in one of its editorials a week or two back, dealing with wage levels? Why is it necessary

[Mr. Donald Stewart]

for the Government to contend, in an effort to increase production, that the people at the top must get exorbitant salaries and the people at the other end must have their wages cut?

Mr. Clarke: I have no recollection of ever advocating what the right hon. Gentleman has said, nor can I recollect any of my right hon. and hon. Friends doing so. If any did, I will agree that it was a rather simplistic and undesirable approach to pay.

Let us look at what the Labour party is proposing. When we look at the direction in which the Labour party is going, we can see the very stark choice that faces this country and the very clear difference in the vision that we both have of the kind of economy that we are trying to create and the kind of labour market that we want. If the alliance parties have little if anything new to offer, the Labour party always seems to me to be looking very firmly backwards to the economy and the labour market of former times. In everything that it has said, even when it does not put its documents in the Library, it emphasises the need above all for more public sector jobs, particularly in local government and sometimes in nationalised industries as well. It wants state-directed investment in industry and it continually hankers after various forms of planning agreements which it disguises in various ways. It wants a much more regulated labour market and much more legal control of everything, from minimum pay to statutory arrangements for leave of absence for family reasons. It wants to make it easier to strike again without legal requirements for pre-strike ballots and it wants all the old, legal immunities given back to the trade union movement. In short, what it wants and what it is planning for is an economy in which the state and the biggest trade unions are dominant again, with growing numbers on the public payroll being supported by the taxes of private citizens and private industry.

That same range of political views which is to be found now in the three different political groupings in the country found an echo in the European Community during our presidency, as we developed, as a British initiative, the Anglo-Irish-Italian proposal for an action programme for employment.

This debate is intended to take note of that action programme at the request of the Select Committee on European Legislation. The debate that we had in Europe between Governments, employers and trade unions was about more restricted areas of policy where European-wide action might be relevant in individual countries. The choice offered by this British initiative to Governments, employers and trade unions for discussion was about where Europe sees itself going as a society in work and whether our labour market is to be nearer to the pattern of the United States and Japan or to that of eastern Europe.

In the European Community, with all 12 Governments of the EEC, the decisions and the choice went in our favour. Last June we launched this action programme on our own but with the collaboration of the Italian and Irish Governments. As I pointed out at the time, the Italian and Irish Ministers with whom I found myself arguing were both on the Left of the coalition Governments in those countries—a member of the Irish Labour party and an Italian Socialist. By the time we reached the informal meeting in Edinburgh, we had agreed on the principles of where we were going. Those Edinburgh principles were all agreed and incorporated in the action programme by the time we reached the end of the British presidency.

First, we agreed on the need to develop a more flexible labour market. Our aim was to increase the efficiency of the labour market so that it could respond more dynamically to the needs of employers and the market. We also agreed that there was less need for regulation of such matters as worker directors or leave entitlements of the kind that the Labour party continually advocates. We also agreed on more help for small and medium-sized enterprises and the promotion of the self-employed. We agreed on more training for young people and adults. The main benefit we get out of the European social fund at the moment is with our two-year YTS and we are now looking to help with JTS as well. Finally, we agreed on more help for the unemployed.

If the hon. Gentleman took a less parochial view of these matters he would find that there is great international interest especially in what we are doing in this country for the long-term unemployed—our restart programme, action for jobs, job clubs, and the help and advice that we are giving to every person who is out of work for over six months. Had the Opposition parties played any part in those European Council discussions and the agreement on that action programme, they would have been astonished at the irrelevance of their contributions. There was some participation by the British labour and trades union movement. I had to listen to shell-backed and old-fashioned contributions of some British trade unionists lecturing their European colleagues about this programme and trying to get it rejected. The programme was not rejected; it was agreed. The points that I have just mentioned, all of which were adopted, were suitably adapted to meet the needs of the other 11 countries. The policy of the British Government on employment is now the policy of Europe. That is hardly surprising when we look at the role we were able to play. A higher proportion of our adult population is in work than in any other member country of the European Economic Community or any major industrialised country in Western Europe except Denmark.

Since March 1983 more than a million additional jobs have been created by the British economy, which is more than in the rest of the EEC countries together. The Conservative Government in Britain have new ideas on employment. Our policies, which we agreed in this action programme with our European colleagues, will dominate the work of the European Council of Social Affairs Ministers from now on.

Mr. Prescott: I am grateful to the Paymaster General for giving way. Has he received the press statement that was sent to all hon. Members in the past few days from the European trade unions, which made it clear that they totally reject the flexibility arguments in this programme, which mean the deregulation of employment rights and services that they have seen in this country?

Mr. Clarke: No doubt some TUC representatives went out and got the ETUC to write that. I met the ETUC, the European trade unionists. They were parties to all those discussions. They were not parties to the final decision, which was a decision of the Council of Ministers.

The 12 Governments agreed on this programme. An intrusion of the British Labour movement would have

been an irrelevance to our discussions. We took that role because of our new ideas and the package of programme schemes in this country, which is now outrunning in new ideas those of any other European country, and we moved on recently with the package that we announced only a fortnight ago.

The two-year YTS is now to be guaranteed to all 17-year-olds in this country. For the first time no person under the age of 18 in this country need be unemployed after March of this year, unless they have chosen to be so. The restart programme, which gives individual help and assistance as I have described, is now available to everybody after they have been unemployed for six months, which is the time when they are in danger of becoming most disillusioned. We have moved on the new job training scheme, targeting on the under 25-year-olds but making available free training of value to everybody who has been unemployed for more than six months.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): My right hon. and learned Friend has been speaking of European initiatives and discussions on restart and job clubs. Is he aware that since April of this year, when the new job club was started in Norwich, it has been so successful that there is now a second job club and the prospect of two more to follow? Is he also aware that, of the 113 people who have been through these job clubs, 93 have got jobs and that this 90 per cent. success rate must be attributable to this strategy and these plans?

Mr. Clarke: I am glad to say that we will soon have more than 400 job clubs and we are well on course to having 1,000 in a few months' time. We shall probably go beyond that.

Mr. Prescott: What about jobs?

Mr. Clarke: As my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) has just pointed out to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East, the whole purpose of the job clubs is to give people who have been unemployed for a very long time assistance in the form of free postage and telephone and also the guidance and motivation which gets them back into jobs. The majority do get jobs—about two thirds get jobs. These are people who have been unemployed. Over 60 per cent of them get jobs.

I am pleased to have caught the attention of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East, who sits there looking incredulous. More than 60 per cent. of those who go to job clubs, who are long-term unemployed, actually get themselves into jobs. If that fact bears in on the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East, he might stop his automatic knee-jerk opposition to each and every proposition we put forward, a reaction that has been causing so much trouble. The third measure of the recent package we announced was the job training scheme, which will provide free training for people under 25. This measure will fill a real need, which was first thrown up when we went through our restart programme and began to offer a variety of options to those who came to see us.

Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock (Batley and Spen): Would the Minister, when making points about training, say something to the House about the TVEI scheme, which is excellent? Unfortunately, my local authority continues to turn down the offer of some £7 million which will benefit many young people in my constituency. However, I understand that a meeting is to be arranged which, I hope, will persuade this local authority to change its mind and accept this sum of money.

Mr. Clarke: The behaviour of some Labour local authorities in relation to the offer of schemes, work experience and training for their residents at times has been remarkable but I am glad to say that the number still holding out against TVEI is tiny. My hon. Friend's local authority must be one of the last handful still refusing to participate and I am glad to hear that it is changing its mind. Large numbers of local education authorities are coming forward and seeking to take part as managing agents in the job training scheme, which I have just described as filling a gap in the range of services that we are able to offer through the restart programme.

We are expanding that programme as rapidly as possible in line with quality and in agreement with the Manpower Services Commission. We are finding the managing agents, we will find the work experience, and we will also find the trainees who are eager to take advantage of the scheme. Why is it—when we have discussed and described this package of measures and the results—that we get automatic opposition every time from those who seem to be speaking for the Opposition? It is quite obvious that they do not want to see unemployment continuing to go down in 1987, but they do not address themselves to what they would do in the unlikely and undesirable event of them ever taking power. Would they withdraw all these schemes? Would they withdraw the advice? I very much doubt it. So far the Labour party has consistently opposed everything that we have introduced. YTS and the community programme are described as skivvy schemes. Even the enterprise allowance scheme is described as a skivvy scheme. The hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans), who will be replying to the debate, has even promised to abolish the new workers scheme.

The reason we have continual opposition to training schemes is that the Labour party has a lack of new ideas of its own. Occasionally the ideas that come from the Opposition seem to reflect some of our measures. After Christmas the Leader of the Opposition tried to describe how the Labour party would get 1 million off the unemployment figures. He could get up to only 600,000. Of those, 300,000 were to be in training programmes; that sounded remarkably like the JTS which we were on the point of announcing.

This morning in *The Guardian* the hon. Member for Stockton, South, speaking on behalf of the alliance, said that its strategy would be

"to offer a job guarantee, including a crash programme of training and reskilling for those who have been out of work for a year or longer and are threatened with the scrap-heap."

That sounds like JTS but we have to wait longer for it.

I give a message to the Opposition parties that they should stop making these attacks on training schemes. Their obvious purpose is to obscure the fact that they do not have credible policies of their own. Whatever time scale of expenditure the various Opposition parties choose, they have no way in which to describe credibly how they will take 1 million off the unemployment register. If I believed that any of them could come up with a programme which would take 1 million off the unemployed figure, it would be my intention and that of my right hon. Friend to take advantage of it immediately and to begin to put it into practice. Such a reduction in unemployment is our aim as well, but the Opposition

[Mr. Clarke]

parties are unable to describe a policy. That has given rise to their recent problems in coming forward with a credible policy to take 1 million off the unemployed figure.

I am sure it also lies behind the change in responsibility on the Labour side for presenting employment policy. I am surprised not to see the hon. Member for Dagenham in his place, given the new role he has to play. In *The Times* of 11 February we read:

"Mr. Neil Kinnock has given the key task of drawing up Labour's programme to cut unemployment to Mr. Bryan Gould, elected to the Shadow Cabinet for the first time in the autumn, and not to Mr. John Prescott, his shadow Employment Secretary. The appointment, decided by the Shadow Cabinet at its Bishop's Stortford summit in January, has not been officially announced for fear that it would be seen as a demotion or a snub for Mr. Prescott. . . . Mr. Prescott, although regarded as an assiduous and hard-working member of the team, has nevertheless worried some of his colleagues by making policy on his feet."

That seems to be a description of, for example, the 1 per cent. training tax which the hon. Gentleman announced in a casual speech at Knowsley only a short time ago.

Mr. Prescott: This issue has been raised several times. Perhaps I may be given a second to explain, because it is a fair point. First, hon. Members should not believe all that they read in the press. Secondly, the corresponding position in the Government of my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) is as Chief Secretary to the Treasury. As I understand it, every Department goes to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury to discuss the financing of its proposals. I do not see the Chief Secretary on the Government Front Bench. The proposal that my hon. Friend should be responsible for the overall financial package for all jobs was made by me at the Bishop's Stortford shadow Cabinet meeting six weeks ago.

I had spent most of my energies on that, but the report referred to stressed the local government contribution. Details have to be worked out for all sectors of the economy and it is normal for the Chief Secretary to the Treasury to be involved. The corresponding position in the shadow Cabinet is held by my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham.

Mr. Clarke: If I may clarify the division of responsibility in our Government—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Hon. Members must neither point to nor refer to persons in the Strangers' Gallery.

Mr. Clarke: The idea that the Chief Secretary's shadow is responsible for drawing up the Labour party's programme to cut unemployment is a curious definition of roles. It is obvious to those who have been observing the Labour party that the Gould committee, as it keeps being called by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East, is being called in to arbitrate between the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) and the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East about the package that they are unable to put together.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I seek your advice because I am not informed about what can happen in the Chamber. I listened to your ruling about not referring to or pointing to people who are not actually in the Chamber. I am wondering about the position when someone listening to the debate can be seen by those who are sitting in the Chamber, especially when we know that that person has responsibility in another place. I wonder whether——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I shall bring the hon. Gentleman's wondering to an immediate halt. The hon. Gentleman has been here for a long time and he knows that my earlier ruling was based on the long-standing practice and convention of the House that we do not refer to persons in the Strangers' Gallery.

May I also remind the House that a large number of right hon. and hon. Members wish to take part in the debate. Interruptions and interventions are made only at the expense of other hon. Members. I have been reluctant to intervene for the same reason. But while I am on my feet I think that I should remind the House of the fact that the debate has to finish at 10 o'clock and that many people want to speak before it ends.

Mr. Clarke *rose—[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If hon. Members persist in ignoring my ruling, I shall have no option but to resort to the disciplinary powers that are available to the Chair.

Mr. Clarke: Opposition Members are making a concerted attempt to stop my speech lest I get to the question of responsibility for policy on their side and exactly what their policy is. Given that we have had that tortuous explanation of how the hon. Member for Dagenham came into the act, let us see whether the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East can shed light on what his policy will be, if, indeed, he remains the spokesman. He committed himself a long time ago to a programme to reduce unemployment by 1 million. As he knows—he acknowledged this in the interview he gave in "Weekend World" last Sunday—that policy must be based on an assumption that they will create 1·5 million jobs to hit that target.

We have already increased jobs by over 1 million in the last three years. The hon. Gentleman intends to create an additional 1·5 million jobs in two years. As he knows, every time he addresses himself to the subject, he has no idea in detail of how the policies of a Labour Government could achieve that. He has told us repeatedly over the last year or so that we will get more details. We were promised details for the Labour local government conference, but that came and went last weekend and we are still waiting. We were brought up to date last Sunday when the hon. Gentleman, in the interview in "Weekend World" with Matthew Parris, said that he would have everything sewn up within six weeks, and so we have six weeks to go. I found that reassuring. Describing the state of affairs in the Labour party, he said:

"The debate's well on. I've produced a pamphlet now . . . we've already got the semblance of a package."

The pamphlet is not available. It was two years ago that the Leader of the Opposition first geared up his friends in the local authorities to get their spending plans ready. One might have thought that, after two years in the job, Labour's employment spokesman would have come up with more than the semblance of a package. Here, to be fair, is an explanation of that. Last Sunday, Matthew Parris said that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East had been thinking about that programme for two years as the Opposition employment spokesman. The hon. Gentleman replied:

"The first year was industrial relations, I'm bound to say that was one formidable problem."

I dare say that the hon. Gentleman is right. Clearly, he is not the sort of man who can cross the road and chew gum at the same time, but he still had a year on the policy that he intended to put together.

We now know the broad outline of Labour's employment policy. We know that it will cost at least £6 billion because the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook has already conceded that. We know that it will mean increased borrowing and taxation, and we know that it will mean many more jobs in the town halls in particular, but we do not know precisely how many.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East has accepted that local authority jobs could account for about one third of Labour's target, about 500,000 jobs. To be fair to the hon. Gentleman, I should quote verbatim the exchange between——

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The motion is to do with Government policies and its backlog of——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): The hon. Gentleman is on to a fair point. I am beginning to wonder myself what relevance the Minister's remarks have to the motion. I hope that the Minister will address himself to the motion.

Mr. Clarke: First, Mr. Deputy Speaker, more than the first half of my remarks were entirely taken up with the European action programme and our measures. I was subjected to a constant stream of interruptions. We are also debating an amendment on the Order Paper tabled in the name of the Opposition.

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, clarify the ruling that you have just given, because many of us take the view that because the Opposition have tabled an amendment it is quite right and proper——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The amendment has not yet been moved.

Mr. Clarke: With the greatest respect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the amendment has been selected for debate and that is what we are debating. It is most noticeable that, whenever we stray on to the question of responsibility for Opposition policy, the Opposition make a concerted attempt to stop all discussion going further. However, we are talking about how we can tackle the problems of employment, training and unemployment. I am about to quote——

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington) *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I shall not give way. Labour Members cannot complain in one breath about the length of time that this is taking and then continue to intervene during my speech every two minutes.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The Paymaster General is scared.

Mr. Clarke: The people who are scared, if I may say so to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), are most of the members of the Labour party, who do not wish to discuss the role of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East. Nor do Labour Members wish to discuss their policies or their alternatives to what we are putting forward.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: Mr. Deputy Speaker has just ruled that interventions must cease. I shall continue as concisely as I can by quoting the words of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East when he was describing where he stood on the issue of local authority jobs. Last Sunday Mr. Matthew Parris asked what the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East thought was a real job. Mr. Parris said:

"Mr. Prescott, we mustn't let this remain obscure. You said that you thought about a third of the total jobs created needed to come from the area of local government. A third of those jobs is 500,000. You seem to be implying that that is the sort of ball park that you're in."

I shall read carefully the reply from the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East. I have no doubt that this will not be interrupted by the hon. Member for Workington. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East said——

Mr. Rogers: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You recently ruled, on my initial point of order, that the Paymaster General was not addressing himself to the motion. He is still not doing that and he is still not talking about Government policies, as outlined on the Order Paper. Will you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, bring the Paymaster General to order again?

Mr. Clarke: I do not think for one moment that the hon. Gentleman has read either the motion or the amendment.

Mr. Thurnham: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will you confirm that it is in order for my right hon. and learned Friend to speak to the amendment which has been tabled?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is the motion that has been moved.

Mr. Clarke: Interruptions are being made to try to obscure the perfectly fair quotation I was going to make from the comments of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East. I am surprised at the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) leaping in to prevent me giving the words of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East. I have a transcript of what the hon. Gentleman said and I shall read it verbatim.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) has heard the Minister refuse several times to give way.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Member for Workington keeps interrupting because he knows that I am going to quote from the "Weekend World" programme. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East said:

"I'm saying that the third, I mean one and a half million, its estimated by the models to get a million off the register, if you fashion your package that more jobs are so designed that they come off the register, one figure of one and half to get a million off the register is an assumption that if you throw money at the problem it cascades down and the effect is a million come off the register if you create a million and a half."

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Just answer the question about the community programme.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman should listen to the words of the Opposition spokesman because he continued:

"We're going the other way about. We're actually knowing what kind of jobs we actually want to create. We know what

[Mr. Clarke]

the effect is likely to be on that register. It may not necessarily mean that you need one and half to get a million, but that's the kind of detailed work we're doing at the moment, but clearly if you're talking about a quarter of a million jobs in that area, that's a substantial part of any programme and if we can get more, then we will be delighted, but we're not going to create them just for jobs' sake, we are going to create meeting real needs. And that's the kind of work we're doing and that's why I can't be pushed into a position as to whether it's three hundred thousand or five hundred thousand—when we've completed the work we'll let you have the details in time for the election."

That is gibberish. We should send for the hon. Member for Dagenham to come immediately and explain it, because that is the job that he has between now and the Budget.

Mr. Prescott: It is clear that the Paymaster General does not understand what happened in that programme. The models referred to of 1·5 million to get 1 million off the exchanges assume that one simply puts money into the demand equation and one must create 1·5 million to get 1 million off the exchanges. I hope that that is simple enough for the Paymaster General to understand. Some jobs in construction, for example, are more directly concerned with the exchange and one can take them off the exchange, putting a lot of money into the economy, and hope that one gets 1 million off the exchange. One can plan that. It is called planning. That is what Labour is doing and that is how we will get them back.

Mr. Clarke: We should get the pamphlet that the hon. Member for Dagenham was going to produce. We should get something soon that enables us at least to have that policy spelt out with sub-titles so that we can understand what language it is in and what it is aimed at.

Following my description of how the unemployment figures are improving, how we are creating real jobs, how we are creating an enterprise economy and how everything we have done is being criticised by the Opposition, my point is that they, in return, are wedded to a pledge to reduce unemployment by 1 million. That is incredible. It has not been worked out. It has not been agreed between them and they have not yet sorted out a spokesman who will try to present it.

We are certainly content to have the debate on real jobs. We see jobs of all sorts now coming along in industries and commerce. They are real jobs and we are performing better than other countries in the EEC.

Since March 1983, total employment in the United Kingdom has risen every quarter and in every region in England, and it has now increased by well over 1 million. That is the longest period of continuous growth in the number of people working since 1959, when the figures were first published. We must speed it up, and we shall do so by continuing the policies that created the climate to produce that level of employment growth, based on continuous economic growth. The motion commends our employment and training measures, which are part of this progress, and I commend it to the House.

5.20 pm

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'condemns the Government's policies which have increased unemployment by over two million to the highest recorded level in this country's history; further condemns the Government for drastically reducing people's rights at work and pressurising the unemployed into part-time, low paid, low skilled, special employment schemes; deplores the dismantling of the country's training infrastructure with the abolition of 16 of the 23 statutory Industrial Training Boards and the closure of thirty skillcentres, contributing to the de-skilling of what is already the worst trained labour force of any developed economy; and calls for a reversal of these policies to produce a positive programme of high quality training and the creation of real jobs to meet the ever growing needs of an increasingly divided nation.'.

In their motion, the Government congratulate themselves on selling to Europe an

"Action Programme on Employment Growth",

in line with their policies. In other words, they are selling Europe to adopt the British model because it has won them, they believe, some success and will be good for Europe. Not much has been said about that success.

I welcome the fact that the debate is on our ground because it is about creating real jobs. We will not be pushed into the Government's timeframe for the agenda. We have said that those jobs will be spelt out in the most detailed work ever done by an Opposition party, which will be produced on 12 March. The debate today is not about Opposition policies but about the programme described by the Government in their motion as an

"Action Programme on Employment Growth",

about which the papers have been deposited in the Vote Office for hon. Members to see.

The Paymaster General assumes that the Government's policies of monetarism, the market enterprise, deregulation, privatisation and a reduction in taxes are the ones that have produced the successful model that they are trying to get our European partners to adopt. Presumably that is the Government's claim to success, although, as the Minister knows, the programme does not recommend any action that is binding on us or the European Community.

Socialist Ministers in the European Community tried to get the British Government to agree to financial measures that would have allowed money to go into investment and use public money to get people back to work. However, that proposal was not accepted by the British Government, although it is what we would have advised Socialist Governments to do. It has been done in Europe by both Socialist and Christian Democrat Governments, which is why their levels of unemployment are lower than they are in Great Britain.

There have been seven years of waste under the Government. Some £20 billion has been spent keeping our people idle on the dole, and £50 billion of oil money has been wasted rather than being put into investment and training or into industry and our manufacturing base. It has flooded abroad so that the City can make millions. They know how to make money, but they do not know how to earn it.

Mr. Hayes: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Prescott: No; I want to make my initial points.

The indictment of this Government—seven years of waste—reminds me of the 13 years of waste when the Conservative party was last in government for a long time.

Mr. Roger King: "You've never had it so good."

Mr. Prescott: That may be, but the country paid the price for those 13 years, in balance of payments, reduction in skills and investment, and in our industrial base. It is history, but the Labour party has always had to pick up the mess.

The Government inherited surpluses on the balance of trade and the balance of payments, and a manufacturing industry considerably stronger than it is now. After seven years, what is the result of the Government's policies? We have the highest recorded level of unemployment in the history of the country. It is among the highest in Europe. We have the highest rate of bankruptcies—up 170 per cent. since 1979. We have the largest number of people living beneath the poverty line in the European Community. We have a low level of investment in our economy and in manufacturing—17 per cent. below what it was in 1979. We have the lowest proportion of resources invested in training of any developed economy. We have a massive deficit in manufacturing. The Government inherited a £4 billion surplus in manufacturing, but we are now heading for a £7½ billion deficit, much of it being with European countries. We are heading towards a growing deficit in the balance of payments, which the Chancellor has told us he believes will be £1·5 billion in 1987. However, the OECD figure, which I am much more likely to trust, is that it will be a £3·2 billion deficit, despite the help of all the oil money. We still have a crisis in the balance of payments, the balance of manufacturing and the balance of trade.

Let us put all this on the record because our candidates will be reading this sort of stuff to make use of it in the election. *[Interruption.]* I notice that the Members who are not laughing are those in the marginal seats.

We also have the lowest level of average growth of the developed economies since 1979. Even the record on inflation, the success symbol of the Government, is dubious when compared to what it was in 1979. The argument about inflation is not an absolute one. In 1979 inflation in Britain was at 8 per cent. while in Europe it was 7·1 per cent. In 1986, our inflation was 3 per cent. and that in the seven OECD countries was 1·8 per cent. The Government's inflation record is even worse on a comparative analysis, although they fail to make that comparison.

I hope that the Paymaster General can understand the simplicity of the arithmetic, because that is the reality of the problem.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Prescott: I am not prepared to give way because recently the hon. Gentleman intervened in the speech of my right hon. Friend the Shadow Chancellor and suggested such a preposterous level of employment that he clearly does not understand the facts in his constituency.

The Government's policies have provided a greatly divided nation and the divide is not between north and south—that is far too simple. There is the divide caused by the inner cities, with some London areas with unemployment levels of 50 per cent. The west midlands has been reduced to the begging bowl of the regional economies, with low income areas. Increasingly, the country is becoming bitterly divided. Our labour force is the worst paid, the worst trained and enjoys the worst employment rights of any in the developed economies.

The Government want to impose this "successful" United Kingdom model on the rest of Europe. It is like a car salesman selling a Sinclair C5 to someone who has a Rolls-Royce. They are offering a lousy bankrupt model.

What has been produced after seven years of this economy? It is no coincidence that the other European countries agree with the rhetoric of the European programme and say "Yes, let's have it, but do not impose the same model on our economy." They are happy for Britain to do that because they have more investment, more training, and more research and development, with the result that all their manufactured products are coming here and taking our markets, while we believe in this silly nonsense.

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): I represent an inner city marginal seat. The hon. Gentleman has said that we have the worst trained labour force in Europe, and he has proposed a 1 per cent. training levy on gross turnover, which I understand would amount to £6 billion, the equivalent of raising corporation tax from 35 to 50 per cent. Has he made an exact calculation of the consequence of such taxes on manufacturing industry costs and competitiveness?

Mr. Prescott: The hon. Gentleman has raised a valid point. It is absolutely critical, and I shall certainly address it, but I should like to deploy my speech first.

We readily accept that the improvement of our economy, compared with other European economies, certainly leaves a great deal to be desired. It is amazing how the Government—with a history of fiddling more statistics than any other Government—make claims as the Paymaster General claimed, about activity rates, comparing Britain with Europe as part of the evidence of success. I am reminded that this is the first time that I have been in the same room with the Secretary of State since we appeared on a television programme. I wish I could face him at another time. It is amazing how statistics are used by the Government. They are beginning to believe their own propaganda.

The motion specifically relates to employment and training. I shall quote figures produced by the Library of the House of Commons. On the last occasion, the Paymaster General rejected the work of the Library. I have had the matter updated and I shall give him the figures. Most people accept that the Library is a good research facility. Hon. Members generally accept the information that it provides. The figures that I shall use have come not out of the fiddle department of Labour's statistics but out of the House of Commons Library.

I presume that most of the figures that the Paymaster General referred to relate largely to 1983. I do not know who was in power between 1979 and 1983 because all the references relate to improvements in 1983. The unemployment figures, even on the Government's fiddle figures—I shall stick with them for the moment—are 1·9 million more than in 1979, despite whatever improvements the right hon. and learned Gentleman talked about. That is a 164 per cent. increase. The Minister talked about an improvement in the unemployment figures in the past six months. During the other 90-odd months that the Government have been in power, the figures went up every month. They have found a few months in which the figure is going down—a lot to do with employment schemes.

Even the Department's employment figures have been changed to make them more favourable. I shall keep with the figures as they are. The number of employees in employment has fallen by 1·5 million. That is 7 per cent. If we take into account the great increase in part-time labour and measure that as full-time equivalents, the Library informed me that the fall is equivalent to 8 per

[Mr. Prescott]

cent., or 1·7 million. That is 1·7 million fewer full-time jobs than in 1979, whatever we do with the figures. In reality, we are clearly talking, even on the fiddle figures, of 1·8 million fewer in work than in 1979. Even on the full-time equivalents, 250,000 more people were in work in 1979, when Labour left office, than there were when we came to power in 1974. That is the reality of the record.

Even the vacancy figures produced by the Department show that a considerable number are dependent upon the community programme schemes. The reduction in unemployment is largely due to the schemes. Even the vacancy figures are brought about by including the CP schemes because nobody wants them. They are advertised in shops, and are regularly put together for the vacancy schemes.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: If the hon. Gentleman gets a brief from the Library, he must use it properly. He continues to assert the figures that he has described—the reduction in the number of those in work—when he uses figures for those in employment. He leaves out the self-employed and the growth in self-employment. It is no good the Labour party continuing to assert that self-employment does not count when more than one in 10 working people are in self-employment. The hon. Gentleman said that vacancies are accounted for by schemes. They are not advertised in that way. The community programme has been expanded. The hon. Gentleman said that nobody wants community programme jobs, but 250,000 people are in those jobs. It is not true to say that those jobs are untaken. The programme is being expanded. The hon. Gentleman gets hold of a perfectly good brief and, as usual, totally misuses it to try to denigrate the improving position.

Mr. Prescott: The Paymaster General again shows his ignorance of the facts. I repeat for him—because he has difficulty in understanding — that I talked about employees in employment. I carefully used the figures from the Library. Of course, the self-employed figures were vamped up and were not included in this form in 1979. Who put them in? The Government put them in. The revamping of the self-employed figure, as the right hon. and learned Gentleman knows, was considerably increased because the Government came to the view that, on an estimate of the market, more people were to be considered self-employed, so they further inflated the figures of the employed labour force. [HON. MEMBERS: "Rubbish".] It is not rubbish. The Minister made statements in the House to that effect. The Library makes those figures clear. I have the data. I shall pass it to the Minister if he wishes to see it. I suggest that the Paymaster General should visit the Library. It might be useful for him. He will get more honesty there than he gets out of his Department's figures.

A point is often made when comparing the levels of unemployment in Europe. If we look at the unemployment level in Europe and the OECD developed countries and the average for the 1970s and the average under both Tory and Labour Governments, we see that the average rose from 3 per cent. to 5 per cent., and Britain had the average level.

From 1979, something happened to make the British figures depart from the average. The average was 8 per cent. for the countries that I have mentioned. We went to 11·6 per cent. I asked the Library what the level of unemployment would have been if we had kept the OECD level. The answer was that there would have been more than 1 million fewer unemployed than there are now. The OECD has worked it out for us. Let us look at what happened to the British economy. There has been less investment in transport, schools, health—all the public services. None of the other European countries took that point of view. They did not adopt cuts in public expenditure. That is why unemployment in this country rose considerably. Perhaps if we adopt the European model instead of trying to sell the British model, based on that information alone 1 million more of our people would be in work.

We often hear from the Paymaster General and his boss about European activity rates. It is said that work activity rates in Britain are far higher. That is true—under past Labour and Tory Governments. Between 1964 and 1969 our activity rate average was 5 per cent. higher, but it collapsed at a faster rate than it did in Europe. Of course, higher unemployment in Europe reduced work activity rates, but the reality was always a 5 per cent. difference. Between 1979 and 1986, it was only a 2 per cent difference. There was a reduction in the activity rate from 65 per cent. to 63 per cent. Even that shows that the collapse in the activity rate has been greater because something significant happened in the British economy, and that was the election of the Tory Government.

Mr. Thurnham: The hon. Gentleman continues to speak about Europe, but he goes back only as far as 1979. Will he tell the House why, in 1978, a Labour Government submitted a paper to the European Community saying that the situation in the north of England was disastrous because of the general state of the British economy?

Mr. Prescott: The figures that I gave related to the periods from 1964 to 1979 and from 1979 to 1986. History teaches me that there were both Tory and Labour Governments during those periods.

For one reason or another, something significant happened in the British economy. One difference for which the Government make a great claim was the expansion in special employment measures. They rose from 250,000 to 750,000. That increase had a considerable effect in holding down the registered employed figures. The measures are primarily designed to do that.

Indeed, today's figures reveal the Government's panic about unemployment. They claim that, over the past five or six months, unemployment has been reducing. Much of the figures is due to employment schemes and, indeed, the restart programme. I have good evidence for that. A statement dated 18 December was released by the Employment Secretary, Lord Young. Referring to the last figures, he said:

> "Restart is undoubtedly one of the major reasons for today's improvement in figures."

I do not suppose that any hon. Member would doubt that evidence, even if he had quibbles about the Library. The Paymaster General had better not quibble because he is under observation.

The figures show that unemployment has increased month after month, but now the Government claim that changes over two or three months are largely due to their policy of special employment measures. Panic has set in in the Government. They have set a target for getting unemployment below 3 million. They have carried out a

lot of fiddles and now they are creating a job training scheme which they claim will create 250,000 jobs in 12 months. That will have a clear effect in the jobcentres, but it has nothing to do with training or with providing jobs. However, it is to do with rpducing the unemployment figures.

We heard from the Paymaster General about flexibility in business. The European unions have totally rejected that principle. They have seen what flexibility means in Britain where it has reduced health and safety standards. It has removed rights about unfair dismissal and legislation about wages and hours of work, and denies pregnant women the right to go back to employment. None of those things was asked for by business because the surveys carried out and published in "Barriers to Business" show that the main concerns of business men were the rate of interest and value added tax. The Government have done precisely nothing about those things that have contributed to the massive number of bankruptcies in the economy.

Government policy has nothing to do with improving conditions because deregulation is about increasing a part-time, low-paid market. That is what the abolition of the wages councils and the truck Acts was about. Britain is the only country in the world, never mind Europe, which has begun to abolish ILO obligations contained in the wages Acts and the truck Acts. No other European country has done that. The Government have done it because they want to reduce the wages levels that they are becoming increasingly worried about. They are concerned about people in low-paid poverty work. The CP schemes are designed towards that end.

We have heard about the number of people who have got jobs. I shall be in Norwich on Friday and I shall be interested to see the jobs that the Government claim for the people there. The figures for the restart scheme have been given in various parliamentary answers. People have gone through the restart scheme with about 336 interviews, and about 3 per cent. of them went into CP schemes, 10 per cent. went to restart courses, 1·6 per cent. went into training and less than 1 per cent. went to real jobs. The real jobs figure is 2,547. Time and again we have attacked the Government about that and they are conscious of how many people get real jobs.

I have just been given a letter sent by the Manpower Services Commission to employees. It tells them that when they fill out the new form about whether they have gone to a new job they have to say not only whether they got a job when they left the scheme, but guess about a job by putting a positive reply on the assumption that they might have got a job. The letter says:

"I should point out that the information given in the final column should relate to what will happen to the participant where a 'positive' outcome is known. Even if this is not likely to take place for some time this is the information which should be recorded, rather than the immediate destination which may be to return to unemployment."

The person who fills out the form might not have a job to go to, but in 12 months he might have one, and he will record that as if he were going into a job immediately. That is the kind of fiddle perpetrated by the Government to try to show that people are getting jobs. I shall hand the letter to the Paymaster General so that he can read it. On the CP scheme and the job training schemes, that is precisely the kind of fiddle that is going on.

The Government have made great claims about local authorities using taxpayers' money for propaganda. Is the Paymaster General aware of how much taxpayers' money is being used to pay for propaganda for these schemes? In 1983 some £5 million was paid for advertising, so called, and public relations. The figure has now gone up because between 1986 and 1987 some £30 million of taxpayers' money was used in this way.

I am reminded of one of the adverts on television which said, "Come with me for the job, Joe, we get the going rate." The going rate? He said in a speech yesterday that people should not expect the going rate for the job. However, we have heard on television and everywhere else about the going rate. At least the community programme paid a going rate related to some kind of wage. It averaged £55, but the job training scheme is tied to benefits. People on YTS schemes could be paid less if they went on a job training scheme. That is the first step towards the workfare that the Government have always wanted. It is the first step to a sort of poor law where people will be told to work for their benefits and that they will lose benefit if they do not take a job.

As the Paymaster General's gaffer has left the Gallery, I shall ask the right hon. and learned Gentleman about an article in the press. I do not believe everything I read in the press, but I should like to ask the right hon. and learned Gentleman where he stands. *The Independent* on Monday said:

"Lord Young faces battle over plans to cut dole."

Having cut people to working for their benefit, the Government now propose further cuts. *The Independent* says:

"Further cuts in unemployment benefit are being sought by Lord Young, the Secretary of State for Employment, despite strong resistance from senior ministers and backbench Tory MPs.

But Kenneth Clarke, his deputy, is less enthusiastic".

Where does the Paymaster General stand? Is he in favour of giving people less than the benefit that they would receive under the job training scheme? I should be delighted to hear what he has to say.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: That report is total nonsense. I am happy to assert that. *The Times* produced a long and tortuous explanation from the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) which makes me think that we shall hear more in due course from the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould). The hon. Gentleman has just finished an extremely long harangue which, as far as I can tell, attacked every measure by the Manpower Services Commission and the Department of Employment for assisting the long-term unemployed and for promoting training. Which scheme will the hon. Gentleman abolish? Will he abolish the youth training scheme?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure that the Minister will seek to catch my eye when he wants to reply to the debate. The points that he is raising now could well be dealt with then. A large number of hon. Members want to take part in the debate.

Mr. Prescott: I shall come shortly to the right hon. and learned Gentleman's point about training. He had a great deal to say about the rates for the job. I have here a copy of a speech that he made yesterday and I shall read from it. It says:

"It has always seemed strange to me that everyone doing apparently the same job should receive the same level of pay."

Is the Paymaster General listening to the point that he made to the nation yesterday? He said:

[Mr. Prescott]

"It has always seemed strange to me that everyone doing apparently the same job should receive the same level of pay." Does that mean the system will change for solicitors and barristers in relation to the automatic fees that are charged in their closed shop? The right hon. and learned Gentleman's suggestion raises a number of interesting points. Should the Paymaster General be paid the same rate as the Secretary of State for Employment who is in another place, is not elected and presumably does not have the same obligations as an elected Member? One also thinks of the Secretary of State for the Environment because we all know that he is fairly casual and comes in later than most hon. Members. Should he be paid as a hard-working member of the Cabinet?

The most offensive point in the Paymaster General's speech was that because the cost of living in the north is lower than in the south people there should be paid less than people in the south. A family in the north earns about £70 a week less than a family in the south. That feeds the arrogance of some people in the south who say that people in the north should live on less. It fits in with many of the lectures given to us about activity rates, that people should begin to earn less and should learn to live on less, live on benefits and the pay in job training schemes.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Prescott: No. I have given way once. The right hon. and learned Gentleman can sit down.

Government policy reminds me of Victorian values. It takes us back to the board of guardians, workfare, making do without training, low pay and exploited labour. That is what it is all about. It is sheer arrogance for Conservative Members to believe, having let the City free so that the wealthy will work harder to get wealthier, that low-paid people should be paid less because that will make them work harder. That is the Government's ethic and thinking.

The problem in this country is not high wages; it is low investment. There is low investment in machinery and in training. When the Tory party came to power the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) made it clear that the Government would dismantle the training structure. In November 1981, he said that the training requirement of the sectors concerned could be met effectively on a voluntary basis at less cost and with less bureaucracy. We have seen the evidence. Sixteen of the 23 industrial training boards were abolished. Thirty skillcentres were abolished. It is fair to ask, after six years of this Government, what has happened to training?

I shall not quote the tremendous amount of information that is available on the collapse of training of all kinds. I shall quote the one body from which the Government get their evidence, the NEDC. Two weeks ago the NEDC paper made it absolutely clear that the training skills of our people and the shortages of all kinds of skills have increased quite considerably. The NEDC mentions every kind of technology through the traditional industries. I shall not quote the paper as there is insufficient time. [HON. MEMBERS: "Read it."] I will read it if that is what hon. Members wish. It states:

"Current shortages include some which industry should have predicted and some which were identified and unsuccessfully addressed. The shortages, for example, of professional engineers, computer and IT skills, multiskilled craftsmen, and people with managerial and accountancy skills all fall into these categories. Beyond that there are also surprising and recurrent shortages in the traditional skills eg construction where industry is not bringing on enough skilled apprentices, nor allowing access and progression to operatives or adult entrants . . . there is a low level of awareness and urgency in many firms and organisations of the need to develop these massive resources . . . A low skills base affects the quality of the UK's goods and services and of our ability to compete in technically demanding markets."

The decline in apprenticeships and in all forms of training has been pointed out by the NEDC.

Perhaps we should consider the resources expended on training. A report produced by the Manpower Services Commission led the chairman of the MSC to suggest that the British labour force was a load of thickies. That is not the word that I would choose, but I agree that it is the worst trained labour force of any developed economy.

It has been like that for decades. It did not start in 1979, but it was the Tory Government in the 1960s who introduced training boards to improve training skills. The belief that if we removed the bureaucracy, the levies, and the delivery mechanisms it would lead to more training has not come true. Those training boards have now been supplanted with YTS.

Even the much reduced apprenticeship programmes run by employers are financed by YTS money. They are no longer additional to it. Industry is spending one-fifteenth of 1 per cent. of turnover on training—about £500 million. Most of our competitors spend about 1 per cent. of their turnover, which is the equivalent of £3·5 billion. Some spend as much as 2 or 3 per cent. of their turnover, according to the NEDC report.

In reality, we do not spend anywhere near enough on training. Since controls have been removed, we do not even spend as much as we did in 1979, when we spent about 50 per cent. more. Even though there are training boards and levies, 95 per cent. of companies are exempt from paying the levy. As a result, training has collapsed. In the construction industry about 50 per cent. of companies are exempt from paying the levy. If our companies spent as much time and energy training our people as they do in finding ways to get round the levy and invested in training our people properly, we would be able to do something more about growth in our economy to deal with those problems. It is a searing indictment of British industry that it does not invest in our people. The evidence is clear to all. The NEDC, the Manpower Services Commission and other bodies make it clear that we do not invest enough money in training our people.

All companies have the responsibility to contribute towards training because training is an investment, not a cost. The problem is that British industry treats training as a cost. Companies, big and small, have been avoiding their obligations. One company that the Government claim is a success is Jaguar. But how much does the Jaguar company spend on training? It spends only 1 per cent. of its turnover. The same is true of Rolls-Royce. That is the reason for their success, of course.

I warn industry that it cannot afford to allow the Government to do that, because they have washed their hands of the skills of the people in this country. The Government have a responsibility to find a financial framework to deal with the problem. The Government should ensure that people have enough skills. The Government have relied upon the Manpower Services Commission and the job training scheme.

The Paymaster General was quite wrong to inform the House that the TUC fully endorsed the new job training scheme. Most of the commission members made it clear that they thought that the upper limit would be 55,000, but the Government suggested that there would be 110,000 places. I quote from a letter that I received from the TUC yesterday in which it says:

"TUC commissioners should make it clear at the next Commission meeting the TUC's absolute insistence that the training offered must be of good quality and a target/upper limit of 100,000 places is entirely unrealistic."

The TUC believed that the limit should be 58,000. That was generally agreed by the commission. The TUC suggests a lower number because it believes that otherwise there is an insufficient quality of training. The TUC believes that we will be pushing too much under the system in that way.

We have evidence of that. The report by the Comptroller and Auditor General published yesterday made it absolutely clear that money is being wasted in our training programmes because we are trying to force to many places through the system in the manpower training. The MSC has not got enough money to do the planning. *[Interruption.]* The Government had an awful lot to say about the Audit Commission's report on local authorities, but they have not yet said a word on the report by the Comptroller and Auditor General which deals with the Manpower Services Commission and training.

The Government made statements before the Audit Commission's report was published. We have already heard Lord Young in the other place say that we must wait to study the report. But that did not stop Ministers commenting about the London authorities before the Audit Commission report was ever published.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: If the hon. Gentleman reads the report — he has not as yet read from any of these documents in a reasonable way when he cites the figures — he will discover that the report concedes that the adult training strategy introduced by the MSC is an improvement on the old TOPS scheme. It suggests ways in which better value for money might be obtained. It also refers to dates two years ago, and a great deal has been done since then. The chairman of the Manpower Services Commission will be giving evidence to the Public Accounts Committee about his reaction to the criticism. The report is, on the whole, favourable and in line with what we are doing. It is quite wrong of the hon. Gentleman to make such remarks.

Mr. Prescott: I ask the Paymaster General to read the report again. However, I shall give him one point that is relevant to the TUC's opposition to the programmes under the job training scheme. The qualifications that it gave for new resources was that they should be limited to about 58,000 and that there should be a topping up amount to the allowance. These were not met by the statement. The right hon. and learned Gentleman must not persist in saying that the TUC totally endorses his programme. It does not, and the TUC made that clear in writing to me.

The Comptroller and Auditor General made it clear that most employers did not know how many skills there were or even what they wanted. That is deplorable. It is said that nobody knows what is needed in the market. The Manpower Services Commission wanted to bring in a computer to deal with that problem. However, the Comptroller and Auditor General pointed out that there was not enough money available, and the programme was cancelled. Yet the Paymaster General says that all his programmes can be financed with the same amount of money. But no new resources are available. That is one of the complaints made by the TUC and other bodies. It is nothing to do with quality training; it is skivvy training. It has more to do with reducing unemployment and the figures involved. It has nothing to do with training adult people.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *rose*——

Mr. Prescott: I am not giving way.

Let us face it: the Government through their programme are asking Europe to adopt the British model. Why should Europe adopt our collapsing economy, which has the lowest investment, the poorest trained labour force and a manufacturing industry that is declining faster than that of any other European country? We have a skill shortage. That is the state of the British economy after seven years of this Government.

But there is an alternative, and the Paymaster General is getting very worried about it. We know that we can return people to work. The Europeans have done it with more success than we have, and we may have a lot more to learn from them than they have from us. In order to reduce unemployment, we need to invest in our economy and to train our people. That will mean Government intervention. The market will not do that. We will put the alternative to the electorate.

It is hypocrisy to assume that the Government's model is the one that Europe should adopt. If anything, the European strategy is more in line with the Labour party's proposal. The electorate will soon know that and will make the obvious choice.

6.1 pm

Mr. Robert Rhodes James (Cambridge): No doubt the House will be grateful for that thoughtful and sensitive intervention by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott). I have been trying to think of something on which I can congratulate the hon. Gentleman. All that I can think of is that my wife was born in his constituency, and until an hour ago she was rather proud of it.

One of the first rules of this House is that no hon. Member should be involved or interested in another constituency. The second is that a repetition of an old speech is tedious. After all, who reads old speeches? I intend partially to disregard those perfectly reasonable and valid rules.

On 5 March 1980, when you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, occupied a different position, I made a speech on employment and training opportunities in which I strongly supported the record of the Conservative Governments of 1951 to 1964, and the life, aspirations and work of Harold Macmillan. That speech greatly upset my Front Bench. It included remarks such as this:

"there is a level of unemployment in this nation which is absolutely unacceptable in a decent society". — [*Official Report*, 5 March 1980; Vol. 980, c. 548.]

I concluded with other words critical of my Government and tried to make the point that, while my constituency may prosper, I represent my country.

That speech immediately followed a speech by the then Member for Truro, David Penhaligon. Others have paid

[Mr. Robert Rhodes James]

their tributes to him. I shall simply say in public that he was the kind of colleague who makes one feel honoured to be a Member of Parliament. I feel the same about Guy Barnett.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): Did the hon. Gentleman ever say that to him when he was alive?

Mr. Rhodes James: Yes, he was my friend, and Guy was joint chairman with me of the United Nations parliamentary group.

In 1980 the problem was grave enough, with 1·25 million unemployed, and it became more grave. I continued—I am afraid without much success in my own party—to try to explain and explore what was happening. I tried to draw the attention of my right hon. and hon. Friends to the problem.

There has now been a substantial change in attitude, but we still face the difficulty of trying to interest politicians in the long term. They are fascinated by tactics and immediacy, but they are uninterested in strategies. To look a week ahead is a quantum leap for many of them, although my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Employment and for Education and Science are different from the common run. We must stop thinking solely in terms of tactics and immediacy.

We are suffering from unnecessary unemployment and from the depression of our education standards. The words "standard" and "quality" have become like the word "elite". People criticise and deride them. Our children have the longest period of schooling in western Europe, yet we have produced too many people who are illiterate, innumerate and massively ill equipped for the real world. The amount of money we spend on remedial teaching and training is an area where we have failed—*[Interruption.]* All of us are involved in state education. I send my children to state schools and I had no formal education before the age of 12. Some would say that it shows.

We are dealing with the most appalling scandal and paying a high price for the years of the permissive society—the years that the locust hath eaten. We had another lost generation then because we forgot our standards and our quality.

The link between education and employment is close and strong. I have been banging this drum for many years and have usually been met by a sceptical silence from Opposition Members. The strategic part of employment policy is not to do with YTS, job clubs or restart. Important and admirable though such schemes are, they are temporary. The strategic part of employment policy lies in massive investment in schools and in teachers' career and salary structures. In higher education, it lies in student support, civil research and academics' salaries. We must look to the future.

I strongly support the recent proposals of the Government. My only criticism is that these welcome and important resources should be available within a shorter time scale—perhaps two years rather than three. The foundation for our long-term prosperity and success must be laid now.

Finally, I must apologise to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East. I had no wish to offend him in my rather quick response to his speech. I am in no position to criticise or sneer at any hon. Member. It is just that I feel very strongly about this subject. I obviously got it wrong.

Mr. Prescott: I accept the hon. Gentleman's generous apology.

Mr. Rhodes James: I am most grateful.

I conclude by appealing to my right hon. and learned Friend to look hard again at resources for education at all levels, because education is the foundation of the future of our children and of our nation.

6.9 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): I shall first respond to the tribute paid to my colleague, Mr. Penhaligon, by the hon. Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James). In a sense, I stand in his shoes and feel very much overshadowed by that fact. I know that the House misses him, but it will understand that my party misses him much more and we appreciate the tributes from both sides of the House.

I looked at the document twice and I found that it rather resembled the Soviet constitution. It was a model of what appeared to be the right thing to do. However, I feel that it should be judged ultimately by its execution. My remarks will really be directed towards the areas in which I feel that the Government have fallen short or are likely to fall short in terms of their current initiatives. The document also falls short in a couple of areas.

What it says about the long-term unemployed is inadequate. The alliance parties have said that our objective is to give a guarantee to the long-term unemployed. We make it clear that that is an objective and we appreciate that converting it into reality cannot be achieved in 24 hours. Nevertheless, we have to make a special effort to give the long-term unemployed a real prospect of getting back to work. I do not intend to snipe at restart, but the proportion of people who have gone through the restart programme and then obtained a permanent job still seems very small. Job clubs have also been mentioned, but although they are good for individuals they do not create any new jobs.

The document signed by the Paymaster General talks of the need for employment protection. I wonder how that squares with the sweeping away of wages councils and the removal of protection from an area of the economy where it is absolutely essential—protection not just for the low paid but for employers who want to offer decent wages and do not want standards depressed to what can only be called sweatshop conditions.

We were all a little taken aback by the comments of the Paymaster General yesterday following his Peat Marwick lecture. The press release that I read sounded reasonable in the sense of advocating greater flexibility, but the specific things that it was hoped to sweep away were radical in the extreme and I do not believe that the Paymaster General seriously thought that his stance was likely to provoke a widespread positive response from those who represent people in a negotiating situation. I do not have the exact words, but the Paymaster General should consider what he said in subsequent television interviews. He gave the impression—if he did not say it in so many words, the words that he used amounted to the same thing—that people in the regions of England and

in Scotland were paying themselves too much and should pay themselves less so as to attract investment and thus create jobs.

I am surprised at the Paymaster General using such language because it is not in character. He knows that wages and employment do not correlate as simply as that. Investment decisions, why companies locate in certain areas and why some expand and some contract, are all affected by many circumstances of which pay is only one. The counter-argument is that costs in London are now so high that firms should be moving out and individuals seeking to leave London to go elsewhere where the cost of living is lower, but in fact people and firms are moving into London despite the substantial premiums and people are not moving out of London because there are no jobs to move to. Indeed, increasingly the best jobs are concentrated in London, thus draining talent and enterprise away from other regions of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Did the hon. Gentleman see that arch-priest of the London weighting allowance, Mr. Clive Jenkins, castigating my right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General this morning for suggesting that it might be worth having differential wages in different parts of the country? Yet has not Clive Jenkins spent most of his trade union career negotiating substantial London weighting for his members?

Mr. Bruce: I shall not respond directly to that, but I will make an important point relating to my own constituency. The most recent surveys available show the cost of living in Aberdeen to be the same as the cost of living in London and the south-east of England. Yet our pressure to secure some sort of weighting allowance for Aberdeen has been thoroughly and firmly resisted by the Government in every area. There is a relevant and pertinent point behind the hon. Gentleman's intervention, but I suggest that it shows simply the complexity of the system and, in my view, the over-simplistic solution that the Paymaster General sought to offer yesterday.

Another area in which I support the remarks of the Paymaster General, as far as they go, and feel that the Labour party is boxing itself into a serious blind alley relates to the exchange that took place over the number of people in work and the relevance or irrelevance of the self-employed and small businesses. People in the Labour party have to face up to a certain reality—that the only job growth taking place in the United Kingdom economy, or for that matter in the economies of most of the developed countries, is among the self-employed and small businesses employing fewer than 20 people. If the Labour party does not recognise that fact and work to realise the potential of that enterprise, it will never achieve any of the targets that it claims for its programmes. In fact, the Labour party is interested in creating jobs only in areas under the control and manipulation of the public sector. Although some of those jobs are relevant, the Labour party must recognise that in a mixed economy it has to be flexible and recognise that free enterprise and small businesses are a crucial sector which must be backed.

Mr. Rogers: How does the hon. Gentleman reconcile his remarks about growth occurring only in the small business sector with the Government's constant claim that they are creating jobs in all sectors of the economy? I noticed the Ministers nodding when the hon. Gentleman said that because they were hoping to make a cheap point against us.

Mr. Bruce: I am not sure that it is my job to answer for Ministers. I am sure that the Minister who is to reply can answer for himself in due course. All I am saying is that we have to create new jobs in the manufacturing sector and that new jobs are indeed being created.

Mrs. Peacock *rose*——

Mr. Bruce: I am sorry, but I cannot give way too many times.

The net growth is coming from the small business sector, so I and my party are concerned to support measures that will expand that sector. We are not critical of what the Government are doing, as far as it goes, but we should be going much further down that road. The evidence that can be seen—which, as I have said, is a criticism of the shortfall — shows that one of the problems is that the take-up of the small business schemes being supported by the Government varies regionally.

With regard to the problems affecting Scotland, I believe that if the Government have any pretensions about holding seats in Scotland they must start talking about unemployment in a way that shows that they understand the seriousness of the problem north of the border. The underlying unemployment trend in Scotland has been steadily upwards and my constituency has the highest increase in the rate of unemployment in the United Kingdom. I am not a pessimist about that in the long run, but it is a real problem.

One of the problems in Scotland is that we have the smallest percentage of small businesses and self-employed of any sector of the United Kingdom economy. If we can turn that round, we shall mave made a significant contribution to dealing with unemployment.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. David Trippier): The hon. Gentleman is right to say that there is a regional variation in the Government schemes available for small businesses. In fact, there is discrimination in favour of Scotland, the north-east, the north-west and a small part of the east midlands because of the business improvement services. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman welcomes that, as I do. There is no way in which we would be anxious to introduce such a scheme, with EEC support, in the south-east. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman agrees on that.

Mr. Bruce: My point is not that I disagree with what is being done, but that a great deal more needs to be done. I suspect that more could be done to help existing businesses to develop and expand rather than simply creating new businesses, many of which fail within the first year. I am sure that the Minister has had representations from many small businesses. He will therefore know, as I do, that people resent the fact that there is help available to get into business but it is not always available to help people stay in business and to grow and expand in employment. That is an area in which a great deal more could be done, and my party is addressing itself to finding new ways to stimulate employment.

The problem that should and could be addressed by the Conservative party is its attitude towards small businesses. I exempt the Minister from that as I believe he is committed to them. I refer to the Prime Minister's

[Mr. Bruce]

comment that Westland helicopters is just another small business. Her definition of a small business as one which employs 200 people shows a lack of understanding of what is really meant by the term "small business", which is one that would employ between one and 20 people. We need to do a great deal more to encourage further development in that area. I am not saying that the Government's schemes are not welcome, but simply that there are not enough of them and that they are not adventurous enough.

The main problem which we face right now and which the Government face, if they are at all honest with themselves, is that after seven and a half years of Conservative Government the unemployment figure is stuck at 3 million and when one allows for the 1 million people on schemes it is really a great deal higher than that. The Government have announced the expansion of the JTS scheme, which is clearly designed to take the unemployment figure to below 3 million, but the underlying trend is not downwards and there is no evidence that the Government have any solution that will lead to the creation of a sufficient number of long-term jobs.

The Paymaster General sneered at the Labour and alliance parties for putting forward a programme that would reduce unemployment, on a costed basis, by about 1 million. He can afford to do that because he is in government, but the British people will judge the Conservatives not on what they say they will do in the future, but on their record over the past eight years. That record shows not only a massive increase in unemployment, but that unemployment is stuck at a level significantly higher than it has ever been and higher than virtually all our competitors. For the most part, unemployment has been kept at its current level by the expansion of schemes, some of which are useful to individuals and contain valuable training elements, but most of which do not lead to the creation of sufficient long-term jobs in any sector of the economy. The Government's failure to address that problem has lost them the confidence of people in many parts of the United Kingdom.

The Paymaster General criticised the alliance parties for putting forward an incomes strategy for controlling earnings, but it is folly for the Government to pretend that they do not have an incomes strategy when the Paymaster General advocated his own incomes strategy only yesterday when he suggested that people in the poorer areas should accept lower pay. If that is not a reference to an incomes strategy, I do not know what is.

The Secretary of State is trying to duck the fact that average earnings are rising by 7·5 per cent., which is twice the rate of inflation. Unit costs may be falling, but the basis for any future expansion is not encouraging because a significant increase in the number of jobs in this country cannot be achieved without an incomes policy or refuelling inflation. We are honest enough to identify that as a real problem that any responsible Government should take on board. We know the risk of expanding the economy by generating inflation. We believe that the Government know those risks and therefore will not expand the economy and create jobs. Worse than that, they are going for the obscenity in the current climate of considering a massive reduction in taxation rather than stimulating the creation of new jobs. My party accepts that to do both would be ideal, especially for a Government about to call an election, but a Government who chose between one or the other without having stimulated the economy would rightly be indicted if they made the wrong choice.

The Government are in severe danger of making the wrong choice, not just for themselves but for the country. If they wanted to carry the British people with them, they would recognise the need for positive and constructive measures to deal with unemployment and to improve services. That should be coupled with a policy designed to keep inflation under control so that we do not throw away the stability that we may have in other sectors. That is what the British people are looking for, but there is not the slightest sign that the Government have any such policy.

As I said at the beginning of my speech, the document reads well, although it contains one or two Thatcherite themes, which the Minister doubtless insisted on as his contribution to securing unanimity. But it is a long way short of what is actually happening and if its aims are not achieved there will be no significant reduction in unemployment and there will not be the return to work and prosperity for which people are looking. Training schemes are fine—in this country we are unskilled and inadequately trained — and I welcome those training elements that work within the Government's schemes, but it is pointless to throw money at training schemes unless we get beneficial results from them and proper jobs at the end of the day—and the Government have no strategy for achieving that.

6.25 pm

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): Unlike the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) is a competent partisan politician. I am not entirely surprised that during his long speech he made no reference to the billions of pounds that the Paymaster General and the Secretary of State have obtained from the Treasury for our training programmes. I am not at all surprised that he could not find it within him to say a single good word about any of the training programmes that have been introduced by the Government.

However, I was slightly surprised that during the hon. Gentleman's long speech, most of which was devoted to training problems, he made no reference to the fact that the technological revolution, which we are in the middle of, is immensely destructive of skills. Any sensible training policy must recognise that we are in the middle of a period when the need for many traditional skills is fast disappearing. After all, the strikers who have just left the picket lines at Wapping thought that they were striking against Mr. Murdoch. However, we all know that they have been striking against the technological changes which have made their long-acquired skills totally redundant. That has happened elsewhere.

Twenty years ago it would have seemed unimaginable that a television repair man would ever be short of work. However, now, because of the increased reliability and complexity of television sets, there is no need for the television repair man in the way in which we imagined that there would be 20 years ago. In the aftermath of the great freeze, it might seem foolish to predict that there may soon be a surplus of plumbers. However, because of technological changes in the building industry, I suspect that that may well happen by the beginning of the 21st century.

When Opposition Members talk about long apprenticeships, they have got it wrong, and when the Government emphasise the importance of short, modular training schemes, they have got it exactly right. About 18 months ago my hon. Friends the Members for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) — I am delighted to see him in the Chamber — and for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) and I put forward a proposal in a pamphlet suggesting that one way in which the flexibility of training might be improved would be to introduce training vouchers. I am glad that the Government are moving some way in that direction.

We argued that an essential element in that was that no unemployed person who was willing to undertake training should lose benefit. I am glad that the Paymaster General has accepted that principle in the admirable new job training scheme. It is entirely right that no one should lose benefit when he is willing to undertake training. The Government's new scheme received scant thanks from the Opposition, but I welcome it.

However, the Government have not yet made sufficient use of our universities or polytechnics for training programmes. In the past few months the Secretary of State for Education and Science has eased the squeeze on our universities and polytechnics, but the extramural departments of our universities may well have to cut their work. Several of my constituents have written to me drawing attention to the financial problems faced by the extramural department of London university. We should not cut those departments; we should seek ways to harness their skill and capacity to assist our national training programmes.

We are supposed to consider European Community document No. 10119/86 in this debate. The Wellcome laboratory in my constituency has recently made great strides in anaesthetics. When I read many EC documents, I find them as mind-numbing as some of the products from the Wellcome laboratory. Part of this document, too, was mind-numbing, but one paragraph riveted my attention. It advocates

"the provision of improved information and advice about employment opportunities throughout the Community, so as to remove obstacles to movement between Member States, using as appropriate the SEDOC system."

I note that one of the principal authors of the document is the Irish Minister for labour and that one problem at present is the rapid movement of the Irish unemployed to the United Kingdom.

For the past few years, Dublin has had a Lib-Lab Government who follow a policy of high Government spending buttressed by high taxation and a public sector borrowing requirement of 15 per cent. of gross national product—the shape of things to come if we have a Lib-Lab Government. The result of those policies has been a national unemployment rate of 19·6 per cent., soaring inflation and the emigration of 100,000 young Irish people to the United Kingdom, many of whom have gone straight on to our unemployment rolls. If they had not been forced out by the Lib-Lab Government in Dublin, the fall in our own unemployment figures would have been sharper and we would be substantially better off. When the Minister deals with the continued implementation of the European employment initiative, I hope that he will ignore the instruction to him in the document because we do not wish to see a greater flow of unskilled, potentially unemployed workers coming to the United Kingdom.

It would be churlish of me to end on a note of discord. We should congratulate the Government on their record on training and job creation over the past year.

6.35 pm

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): It is a great pleaure to follow the hon. Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart). His knowledge and interest in these matters are well recognised in the House and he makes a valuable contribution to the Select Committee. He also regularly writes pamphlets which we all read with great interest.

Today, we are debating unemployment and training — an area where the Government have failed. In my constituency, unemployment has risen by 300 per cent. since 1979, so the Government's failure is obvious and glaring. If Labour "was not working" when unemployment was 1·3 million and falling, what have we to say about this Government with unemployment at 3·3 million a year or, on other reckoning, about 5 million? It is an appalling waste of people's lives and economic resources. The dole queue costs about £20 billion a year and lost production costs about £30 billion. Such economics is crazy.

The tragedy is worse, deeper and longer lasting than in the 1930s, yet the Treasury Bench does not recognise that. The Government show no remorse and certainly no self-criticism. The Paymaster General is not good at self-criticism. He has not apologised to the millions of people whose lives have been blighted; instead, he portrays a dream world, a fantasy land, where everything is for the best in the best of all possible worlds. He even suggested that our policies were the envy of the world and that he is leading the rest of Europe.

We are told that an EC document is relevant and I, too, have looked at it. It appears that in November the Paymaster General wrote to his right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary. I am sure that the House is well able to contain its excitement at that news. We need not waste any time on the letter because it was just a series of clichés and platitudes. For the British Conservative Government to have the effrontery to talk about giving leadership on employment to other countries is mind boggling. Their only expertise is in the production of the biggest dole queue in Western Europe.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No.

Mr. Leighton: I repeat, the Government have produced the biggest dole queue in Western Europe. If the Paymaster General can tell me of a country in Western Europe which has a smaller dole queue than we have, I shall readily give way. He does not appear to wish to leap to his feet.

Mr. Clarke: I imagine that the hon. Gentleman is thinking in terms of absolute figures. In percentage terms, our unemployment is about average for the European Community and well below that of several other countries.

Mr. Leighton: I beg to differ. The Paymaster General is wrong on that, and I am frightened that he should be so misinformed. I shall write to him on this and also give him some figures later in my speech. Perhaps it is his attendance at those awful EEC meetings that causes him problems. I commiserate that he has to put up with those meetings; perhaps they have affected his judgment.

If we are to find a solution to our maladies, it will be by our own efforts and not through the Common Market.

[Mr. Leighton]

The Common Market is a major cause of our employment problems. Cmnd. 9911, the White Paper issued in October 1986 entitled "Developments in the European Community January-June 1986", shows that in 1970 we had a healthy surplus on our balance of trade with Common Market countries — the equivalent in today's prices of £3·2 billion. At that time, for every £100 that we imported from the Common Market we exported £143. Currently, for every £100 that we import we export only £68. Instead of having a healthy surplus with the Common Market of £3·2 billion we now have, from January to June 1986, a deficit of £5·2 billion — an annual rate of £10·4 billion. That trade deficit, which has been inflicted on us, has cost us at least 1 million jobs.

Mrs. Peacock: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Leighton: I prefer to finish my argument, if I may.

From 1979 to 1985, the number of employees in manufacturing in the rest of the EEC fell by 11·4 per cent. In the United Kingdom it fell by 24 per cent. In other words, the number fell by twice as much in Britain. For the biggest economy in the EEC, West Germany, employment in manufacturing industry during that period fell by 763,000 jobs.

Mrs. Peacock: Currently, a massive investment in manufacturing is occurring in the north of England. I am pleased that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) is present, because I understand he recently visited my area. Over £20 million is being invested in new factories in manufacturing in west Yorkshire. That should be put on the record, because that is good investment.

Mr. Leighton: I understand that the hon. Lady has a marginal seat in the north of England, and that she would have liked to intervene during the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East. If I will do as a surrogate, I am happy that she was able to get that point on the record.

I should like to get back to the main point of how employment has fallen in the EEC compared with Britain. In West Germany 763,000 jobs have been lost, in France 687,000 jobs and in Italy 614,000 jobs. In the United Kingdom the number has fallen by 1,741,000. In other words, over a million more manufacturing jobs have been lost in Britain than in any of those countries. The trade deficit that the Common Market is inflicting on us costs at least 1 million jobs, and all the figures prove it. The Paymaster General's going to Brussels or Strasbourg and taking part in these meetings will not solve the problem. The Common Market is not the solution; it is the problem.

The Government's monetarist policy — in particular, the high exchange rate which we suffered from for a number of years — is now changing. The Paymaster General mentioned in his speech that our labour costs are falling compared with those of Germany and Japan. That is quite right. That is the function of the movement of the exchange rate in Japan, Germany and Britain. It was the high exchange rate that the monetarists inflicted on us, plus membership of the Common Market, which wiped out a quarter of British manufacturing industry.

We still consume manufactured goods — financed, increasingly, by credit — but we import them. Those goods are produced in foreign factories, which provide employment abroad, while our industrial areas are turned into deserts. We shall never successfully tackle our unemployment problem until the EEC trade deficit is rectified. Until the tide of manufactured imports is stemmed and some balance is restored, we shall never satisfactorily tackle unemployment. We cannot stand back; we cannot leave it to the market. We must have a proper industrial policy in Britain.

The second way that the Government has caused unemployment is this. As industrial societies mature and manufacturing processes become more sophisticated and mechanised, the numbers employed in manufacturing gently decline as a percentage of the total. For example, in Denmark between 1979 and 1985 the number declined by 3·4 per cent. Simultaneously, the numbers in services — health, education and personal social services — float up. That is the accepted process in mature industrial countries. One process compliments and compensates for the other, maintaining an equilibrium of full employment. That is what happened in Britain before 1979. From 1966 to 1974 employment in manufacturing fell by 8 per cent. Employment in personal services rose by 25 per cent. Between 1974 and 1979 employment in manufacturing fell by 8 per cent. and in personal services it rose by 8 per cent. One floats down gently, the other floats up gently, leaving an equilibrium.

Between 1979 and 1985 the number employed in manufacturing declined by 25 per cent. The increase in services was only 1 per cent. That was not a gentle float down in manufacturing but a violent collapse. It was not the natural decline that we would normally expect; it was butchering. It was engineered by the monetarist policies of the Conservative Government.

During that period, there was no adequate compensatory increase in personal services. The United Kingdom is now the smallest spender on health, in percentage terms and in absolute terms, of the advanced industrial countries. The Conservative party has reined back expenditure on education, as was mentioned by Conservative Back Benchers, and cut expenditure on personal social services. That is a major cause of unemployment being higher in Britain than in other countries.

Reviving manufacturing industry takes time. It will take time before that revival will turn into jobs, although it must be done. Expanding our services can be done fairly quickly. That is a major way that a new Government can fairly quickly reduce unemployment. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East — he has come in for a bit of criticism today — who wants to make good the ravages on our services in health, education and personal social services. He can do it quickly, and those jobs can be provided quickly. Those jobs are financed through the public sector, which is one of the reasons why they are being cut back. I applaud my hon. Friend's initiative.

Another area is construction. There is a backlog of maintenance on council housing of some £20 billion. The Audit Commission, to which my hon. Friend referred, in its report on local government, explained that in 1979 central Government expenditure in London on housing was £1·5 billion. It is now only £500 million, one third of what it was. That is why we have homelessness, why housing is in such a terrible state and why 500,000 fewer construction workers are at work than a decade ago. That

has to be rectified and reversed. I should like my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East to make provision for the employment of a further 500,000 people in the building industry. Of course that can be done. Indeed, it must be done if we want to live in a civilised country with proper housing. When he does that, he will save a lot of money which we are wasting on bed and breakfast accommodation. Nor will he suck in imports in so doing. Britain has the raw materials. Bricks are made out of mud. We do not have to import mud from Japan; we have plenty of British mud to make bricks.

Why do we not pay the private employer for the additional workers he takes on a subsidy which is roughly equal to unemployment benefit? That would make a lot of sense. People are demanding action. They are not complacent like the Paymaster General. He always looks cheerful, no matter how high the unemployment figures. Whatever disaster happens, the right hon. and learned Gentleman comes along, puts his hands in his pockets, pulls up his trousers, smiles at us and tells us that everything is all right.

On 3 May, there will be a human chain from Liverpool to London of ordinary people demonstrating and demanding that action should be taken.

Mr. Greg Knight: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Leighton: I am not anxious to give way because I have taken too long already. If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me——

Mr. Knight: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Leighton: If the hon. Gentleman insists.

Mr. Knight: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. He has told us some of his ideas for creating 500,000 jobs. What effect would the Labour party's policy of introducing a national minimum wage have on employment? Would not the introduction of such a policy destroy 500,000 jobs?

Mr. Leighton: There is absolutely no evidence for that. With great respect to the hon. Gentleman, that is pure claptrap. That is untrue. If he would like to present me with any credible argument to support that idea, I should look at it.

Employment is not achieved by forcing down wages. If forcing down wages were the way to get employment, Britain would be the country with the highest employment because our wages are the lowest in Europe. Obviously, we cannot take that idea seriously.

The Select Committee on Employment spent a lot of time undertaking careful research and it produced a job guarantee programme. The Paymaster General made light of other calculations by people who are working on plans. But we worked on our plans and did the research and had it double checked with the London Business School. Professor Alan Budd worked through all the figures. We offered the Paymaster General a way of giving a job guarantee to the long-term unemployed, but we did not hear a positive response. Instead, we got the restart programme.

It is right that we should keep in contact with the long-term unemployed. My criticism is that it was wrong to stop having contact with the long-term unemployed in 1982. There used to be regular contact with the long-term unemployed, but in 1982 the Government stopped that because the numbers being thrown on the dole queues were so high in one year—almost 1 million—that they could do nothing with them. The Government therefore stopped talking to those people. In 1983, the Government tried to slash the jobcentre service. They wanted 10 per cent. fewer people to be employed in it. At that time, the jobcentre in my constituency in Heigham road, East Ham was to be shut down and the Government were talking about putting counters in Woolworth, building societies and banks.

It is right that there should be contact with the long-term unemployed, even if it is a deathbed repentance. We should have elections more often because we would see more reversals of Government policies. The Government have started to consider the problems of the long-term unemployed. They must forgive us if we suspect their motives and think that this is not an onslaught on unemployment but merely an onslaught on the statistics. Having brought the statistics down, perhaps the Government will think about getting unemployment down as the next step.

I criticise the restart programme because of Ministers' ludicrous presentation of it. They do the programme a disservice in the way that they try to explain it. Their wildly exaggerated, inaccurate and partisan claims, which border on the mendacious, cannot be remotely justified. We need a factual and dispassionate assessment so that we can have a rational debate, not the lurid propaganda of the Government's claims.

Ministers present the restart scheme in three ways. They talk about a "positive offer" being made to roughly 90 per cent. of people. If one says that quickly, it sounds as though 90 per cent. of the unemployed get jobs. The Government use a new language or jargon. Normally, we talk about people "placed" in jobs but the Government talk here about people "submitted" to jobs. That is meaningless because we do not know whether the offer has led to anything.

Secondly, Ministers talk about people "placed". They do this only rarely and get very bad tempered when they talk about it. I can understand why, because few people are actually placed. Thirdly, to add to the confusion, the Government talk about the number ceasing to claim benefit — 18 per cent. But there is always a flow of names off the register. During the previous five quarters, before the restart scheme 18 per cent. of people came off the register.

The Paymaster General said that the restart interview would last one hour, but it is now on average 25 minutes. Applicants receive a letter, and I hope that I am not trespassing on the time of the House—[HON. MEMBERS: "The hon. Gentleman is."] In that case, I shall not continue. I shall seek a later occasion to talk about this.

6.57 pm

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle (Lincoln): I am glad to take part in this debate because unemployment, rightly, is the issue of profound concern in the United Kingdom. The concern of Conservative Members is shared equally with the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton), the Chairman of the Select Committee on Employment. The fact that virtually all Western countries are suffering from unemployment in no way reduces the agony of the problem in Britain. There are no starry or magical solutions, but if we are to have hope we must meet two vital conditions. First, we must nurture a society which encourages enterprise and the creation of wealth.

[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle]

Secondly, through education and training, we must force feed at every age and level the necessary skills and a sense of excellence.

One of the finest achievements of the Government has been to rekindle a spirit of enterprise. At last we have that essential background of economic stability, steady growth and an economic outlook which looks good. Here I part company with the hon. Member for Newham, North-East who had nothing but unbridled gloom to offer on the subject of the economy. Like so many of his colleagues, he is determined to see no hope.

With inflation low, demand buoyant and output and productivity significantly better, the climate is right for businesses to invest and risk new ventures. We can all welcome the fact that there are almost a million more self-employed people than in 1980—a sharp contrast with the decline in numbers during the depressing decade of the 1970s. That reversal of the depressing trend under the Labour Government is the result not of luck but of a specific and co-ordinated policy to promote enterprise. For instance, we have removed the excessive taxation which is toxic to energy and smothers enterprise and we have eased the worst restrictions in planning and employment law.

We have pursued a steadfast and continuing programme to lift the burden from small businesses. What will the imposition of a £6 billion training levy, as promised by the Opposition, do for enterprise in small businesses? We have launched the successful enterprise allowance scheme to give positive help to small businesses and enterprises, and it has won valid praise from all sides. It is responsible for launching 2,000 new enterprises a week and they are supported by a network of enterprise agencies which provide help and advice. We all know of people in our constituencies who have faced redundancy after years with a major employer, but who have found new purpose in the excitement of establishing their own businesses. As the election approaches, those people should rightly question how Labour policy will help them and encourage the spirit of enterprise. How would high inflation, which will result from the promised vast expenditure of a Labour Government, leave us with anyone with the confidence to invest in business? How would higher taxation fire people with a desire to work harder and take on risks? How would the inevitable burden of costs and the deluge of restrictions spawn any enterprises? Clearly they would not. Those policies failed in the 1970s and they will fail again.

Our policies are the policies for enterprise, but there are four specific problems in relation to that programme for enterprise. First, it is almost impossible for someone out of work in the north to move to a job in the south. The housing market simply does not allow that because the cost of housing is so much greater in the south. To assist the unemployed we must seek policies that will loosen the housing market.

Secondly, it is difficult for new businesses to raise venture capital. My right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General mentioned the loan guarantee scheme, but that scheme has done little to encourage extra venture capital because the banks use the same criteria to lend under that scheme as they do for a normal loan.

The goal that we are successfully pursuing is to create a country of enterprise, but that is only one arm of our policy. We must also have a fully-trained work force in the necessary skills. If that training is to be effective it must start at an early age in our schools and must continue for a lifetime. The Government are the first to admit that what we have already achieved is not enough. No one can be complacent, but the Government's training initiatives are on the right road. At last, we have a structure to sustain training throughout life. We have a programme to introduce technical education that is relevant to work and that training is carried out in our secondary schools. YTS has been extended so that no school leaver under 18 need be unemployed. The new JTS, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart) referred, will give six months training to anyone under 25 who has been out of work for six months. Our adult training programme has been expanded and training is a central part of the community programme.

Nevertheless, we must do even better in both quality and quantity. In my constituency matters could be improved, and I am aware that my practical examples may be mirrored elsewhere. My hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James) said that we must improve general standards and I agree that the basic disciplines are of central importance, but in an engineering city such as Lincoln we also need more technical education at secondary school level. I want a city technology college established in Lincoln so that young people have a choice of high quality technical education. Such a school would also benefit from the involvement of local business enterprise and investment. The college of technology in Lincoln has a major and growing role to play in the training of school leavers and older people. That college needs better buildings and a greater range of facilities. I support our policy for local training because skillcentres are often too far away and remote. I also wish for greater funding of our local college.

That college is just one centre in Lincoln for the training of those on the community programme, which raises a third problem. Building work is often the best work for a community programme but few worthwhile building projects are being approved for the community programme. I appreciate that a scheme must not compete with commercial builders, but the work that is currently being turned down for the programme would not otherwise go ahead at all. We face a shortage of building workers and it must be right to increase that training wherever possible.

The fourth problem concerns the unemployed who join courses at colleges. If a course is termed "full time" people lose benefit even if they are available for work. I know that the new JTS will address that problem, but my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham was right on the mark when he said that we should adopt the principle that anyone out of work who wishes to seek training should be given that opportunity.

We shall continue to make progress as we have a clear policy for enterprise and training and a commitment to improve our efforts in both those areas, but we do not share the Labour party delusion that central control and central Government can solve all problems. In relation to training, there must be a partnership with industry because industry knows best what skills are necessary for the market place. In Lincoln some progress has been made and many firms have links with the schools. Large businesses such as Marconi and Ruston Gas Turbines have developed courses in partnership with the college of technology. The Government must seek ways to stimulate

greater investment in training by businesses both large and small. Such commitment exists in Germany and we must achieve it here.

The Labour party has never learned that the way for a Government to be charitable is not to turn Government into a charity. To ensure success the Government must establish a structure within which enterprise and training can flourish. The British people want skills, but relevant skills, and in the end it is only a partnership of Government and industry that will deliver those skills.

7.7 pm

Mr. A. E. P. Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): In the terms of the motion we are invited to commend the Government for the employment measures described by the Paymaster General. Those employment measures are scarcely making any impression in the Yorkshire and Humberside region, despite the optimistic intervention by the hon. Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock).

The economy of the Yorkshire and Humberside region has deteriorated alarmingly under this Government and continues to do so. The relief for that position lies not with Department of Employment micro-economic measures but with macro-economic measures. Contrary to my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton), I believe that, at long last, our membership of the European Community offers us the possibility of considerable gain. Before I discuss that, I wish to reveal to the House what has happened in the Yorkshire and Humberside region.

Mr. Leighton: My hon. Friend said "at long last". We have been a member of the Community for 15 years and it has inflicted great damage upon us. Just how long do we have to wait to receive its beneficial effects?

Mr. Duffy: Yorkshire ahd Humberside people do not ask for handouts. That is not their style. They believe that they can give the nation a fair return for the investment that it makes in them. Traditionally they do not believe in "owt for nowt." However, they are very concerned that the long decline in the basic industries upon which the north of England built its prosperity is dividing Britain—the north declining and under-privileged, the south enjoying the lion's share of investment and growth.

The House is familiar with that scenario, but it needs to be reminded that that gap is widening. In 1983, the Yorkshire and Humberside County Councils Association published the "New Deal" regional strategy—the last Yorkshire and Humberside regional strategy that is available to us—and it tried to address this disparity. It concluded that

"the Region must make the most of its potential: action must be taken to help the Region's problem areas and industries; the Region must receive a fairer share of national resources."

Since then, despite the strenuous efforts of the Yorkshire and Humberside Development Association and of all the local authorities in the region to promote it, the necessary change of direction has not been achieved. Indeed, in some ways the region is now worse off. Unemployment has risen higher to above the national average; personal incomes continue to decline relative to the national average; poor housing and infrastructure, especially in the inner cities, have suffered further deterioration, perhaps reflecting the region's continued below average share of public spending.

The Government and the European Commission give some help to deal with these problems and the county and district councils are also working hard on them, notably my own city of Sheffield. However, the abolition of the metropolitan county councils that represented nearly 70 per cent. of the region's population has involved a loss of resources and has weakened the region's voice at a time when major problems must be faced.

Nearly 500,000 jobs have been lost in metal manufacture, textiles and engineering since 1979 and, contrary to the claim of the Paymaster General, more jobs are going every week. Last week, 300 railway jobs were lost in Doncaster. This week, 600 steel jobs in Stocksbridge have been lost. I want the Treasury Bench to know that in south Yorkshire there is widespread fear that during the next two, three or four weeks a further 1,000 steel jobs will be lost. Meanwhile, there are allegations in the current *Metal Bulletin* of continuing state aid to German steel, although such subsidies are banned under EEC rules.

Traumatic job losses and the combined effects of earlier slum clearance and plant closure have resulted in dwindling employment oppôrtunities in south Yorkshire and in vast tracts of redundant land and buildings. Anyone who drives up the M1 and comes abreast of Sheffield has only to look to his left in the direction of the centre of Sheffield to see that, although 20 years ago, it was one of the most industrialised cities in western Europe, it is now devastated and almost wholly derelict.

There is no new industry in Sheffield. I do not expect all the steel works and engineering works that have been lost to be recovered, but I repeat that there is no new growth at all, apart from a few small units, for which we are grateful and which the city council is very anxious to encourage. However, they are making no impression at all upon an unemployment figure in my constituency that is concealed by the travel-to-work scheme, about which I shall say more in a moment.

But it does not end there. Poverty in Britain is more widespread now than it was when the urban programme began in Sheffield 20 years ago. Then unemployment, nationally, was 500,000 — 2·2 per cent. of the economically active population. Now, on a narrower definition, it is over 3 million—six times what it was then. That is now the primary cause of poverty. Sickness, child care, low pay, and particularly retirement, all contribute, but it is unemployment that has pushed up the number of people who are claiming supplementary benefit from 2·6 million in 1968 to nearly 5 million by the mid-1980s. In Sheffield alone, the number of people claiming supplementary benefit increased from 39,000 in November 1979 to 75,000 by the mid-1980s, so the dramatic increase has been among those unemployed people who have been claiming the unemployment allowance. It has increased by nearly five times, more than reflecting the increase in unemployment from 5 per cent. of the working population to more than 16 per cent.

There is little prospect of relief. A detailed breakdown of the unpublished Government report, about which we heard much in the House towards the end of last year, entitled "United Kingdom Regional Development Programme 1986-1990" reveals that south Yorkshire will face further employment cuts and worsening environmental and industrial dereliction, with little likelihood of recovery. The report says:

[Mr. Duffy]

"Dereliction, lack of good services, industrial sites and poor internal communications tend to discourage development, in particular to the north-east of Sheffield in the River Don and River Dearne valleys, and environmental problems will grow as dereliction follows closures in basic industries."

That describes the part of south Yorkshire that lies between my constituency to the east of Sheffield and the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond). I know that my hon. Friend is most anxious to say a word about this, if he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. He represents the Don Valley, and I am thinking of the Don Valley. *[Interruption.]* I do not know whether Conservative Members are laughing at my reference to the condition of the Don Valley. I invite them to go and look at it. Those who represent southern constituencies cannot appreciate just how serious is the neglect of the north and the widening gap between the north and the south, unless they keep in touch with the north of England.

The report also says that future employment prospects within the coal industry remain "bleak". Although productivity has improved, the increased use of new technology will further reduce manpower demands in 1990. The report adds that what is certain is that south Yorkshire needs more financial resources.

Many areas suffering from industrial decline receive aid from the European regional development fund, but these grants are not as effective as they should be, because most national Governments, as we all know, in the Community, including our own, cut other spending by an equivalent amount so that the net benefit to the local area is small. The European regional development fund should be used to provide a truly additional source of funds for the qualifying areas that I am now describing in Yorkshire and Humberside.

As for the United Kingdom regional aid programme, the November 1984 review made substantial economies by cutting grants to those highly capital-intensive developments that provide few additional jobs. However, these savings are being retained by the Exchequer instead of being channelled back to the assisted areas in more effective forms of aid. The steep rises in unemployment in some parts of our economy—notably again in Yorkshire and Humberside—mean that regional aid needs to be maintained at 1984 levels, in real terms.

In the 1984 review some parts of Yorkshire and Humberside had their assisted area status reduced; others had their status taken away and consequently lost both United Kingdom and European Community aid. However, these decisions were made in the light of unemployment levels prevailing at that time, and since then more huge job losses have been announced in the region. In addition, some settlements with increasingly severe problems in the coalfield receive little or no aid because they are grouped in "travel-to-work" areas with more prosperous, larger towns. This also applies to my own east end of Sheffield. It applies to parts of Humberside and to north Yorkshire. The Government should give higher assisted area status where this is justified by changing circumstances, without waiting for a full national review. Yorkshire and Humberside have much to offer and many locational and environmental advantages——

Mr. Rowe: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is a very interesting dissertation on regional aid, but is it in order?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): The House would be well advised to leave these matters to the Chair. I will decide what is in order.

Mr. Duffy: Yorkshire and Humberside have much to offer and many locational and environmental advantages. The problem—and if the hon. Gentleman had just been a little more patient as well as more courteous he would have allowed me to come to this point—is how to unlock the potential. On all sides one encounters the view that it is reasonable to seek more help for the region. It needs extra incentives, for example, to benefit fully from measures such as support for innovation. It makes sense for a whole coalfield, not just part of it, to have assisted area status and to benefit from European Community aid. There is a growing feeling, and it must not be minimised, that it is inequitable for the region to receive only about one twelth of the aid that goes to Scotland when the two are of the same size and experience the same level of social and economic deprivation.

My own city of Sheffield and its council have a plan, the Sheffield employment plan for regeneration, that over the next two years would create 25,000 jobs and training places in the city. Did the hon. Gentleman not want to hear about that? It regards public sector enterprise as essential to meet the city's growing needs and also to improve the quality of life. It would deploy it as a tool of economic regeneration but with the council itself planning and executing the first stage of the job creation plan. Nevertheless, it looks to the Government to open the way through a programme of economic growth, to switch national expenditure away from maintaining unemployment to creating jobs in the public service if they are not available to us in manufacturing. I have argued that there is no evidence at all of recovery in Sheffield's manufacturing district which is largely my constituency. How is the city to avoid being accused of neglect if it does not seek job creation wherever it can? The city believes, however, that that can come only if the Government remove the battery of legal and financial restrictions on local authorities.

The key to a revival of employment in Yorkshire and Humberside, as in some other regions, may lie in a pregnant sentence in that unpublished report:

"South Yorkshire is likely to remain fairly depressed because the area is very much dependent upon a general upturn in the U.K. and overseas".

In short, the European Community, in particular the United Kingdom and West Germany, need to devise and implement more expansionary policies. It is in that direction that relief for Yorkshire and Humberside probably lies for it would reduce unemployment at a time of low inflation. It would offset the depressing effect on America's trading partners of the current cuts in both the budget deficit and the trade deficit of the United States. It would defuse protectionist pressure in the United States, aimed at Europe as well as Japan. The view that the correction of United States deficits will act as a drag on world growth, requiring the adoption of less restrictive policies by Japan and West Germany, has been endorsed by the International Monetary Fund, yet European Governments, especially those of Britain and West Germany, remain unimpressed. They simply do not

believe that it is possible to contrive a sustained, non-inflationary expansion at the rate required to bring down unemployment, yet one country has recently done just that.

The United States spent its way out of unemployment in the traditional way without an increase in inflation because it managed to combine expansionary policies with a strong exchange rate. It did so by keeping interest rates high. It was an act which any European Country expanding alone would find difficult to follow, but it demonstrates that a modern industrial economy can expand out of unemployment without unleashing a wave of inflation, provided the exchange rate does not fall. For the members of the European Community, trading so closely with each other, the most effective way to do this, if the political problems could be overcome, would be to expand together. Then, the additional imports sucked into any one country as growth picked up could be matched by exports to its trading partners, with little change in the pattern of exchange rates.

A British initiative to foster expansion would not only benefit depressed regions such as Yorkshire and Humberside but would respond positively to the appeal by Mr. James Baker, Treasury Secretary, in Washington two days ago when he looked to the Group of Five—but he was obviously looking to the member nations of the European Community principally—for a co-ordinated economic expansion. I hope that the Chancellor will not only listen to him but will initiate a meeting of the Finance Ministers of the Group of Five with a view to such a policy, for not only would that serve to improve economic relations with the United States and head off protectionism, but Britain's image in Europe would be transformed and the European Community itself would be back on the rails at last, addressing a problem that really matters.

7.26 pm

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): I am very grateful for the fact that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) has returned to his seat because he would not give way earlier this afternoon when he made a remark in respect of an intervention which I had made during an earlier debate when his right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) had been courteous enough to write to me and tell me that he was going to mention me during a debate—which was why I intervened. I am grateful, because it now gives me the opportunity to remind the hon. Gentleman of what his right hon. Friend said. He said that the unemployment figures were falling in my constituency probably because of the characteristic excellence and industry of its Member of Parliament. So perhaps the hon. Gentleman would have a further look at that before he seeks to snarl and sneer in future across the Dispatch Box at an hon. Member who wants to make an intervention.

Mr. Prescott: He said that you got the figures wrong.

Mr. Holt: I did not have the figures wrong. The figures were actually correct. The hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) sought to intervene in what the right hon. Gentleman was saying, which he did because the right hon. Gentleman, despite saying twice that he would give way to me and refusing to do so, did give way to the hon. Gentleman, who then misled the House with the figures that he gave. He knows now, because I have told him personally, and they have been corrected in the House; but I am magnanimous enough to accept that it was not his fault. He went for his figures to Cleveland county council. The council has written to me and has admitted that the basis of the figures which it used to give the information to the hon. Member for Stockton, South was incorrect. It made them up.

We have just heard a very good speech which I thought was intended for next week when we will discuss the economy. Today we are supposed to be discussing training. I say that with great respect to the hon. Gentleman. He does make a good contribution but it was totally out of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should not make that kind of allegation. It is a wide debate today.

Mr. Holt: With respect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you were not present earlier when my right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General was stopped by the Chair when he was seeking to make a point. At that stage the range of the debate was very wide.

Mr. Robert Atkins (South Ruislip): The intervention was not allowed.

Mr. Holt: The intervention was not allowed. Unlike most of the hon. Members opposite, I have had some experience in dealing with apprentices and running apprenticeship schemes. I have employed and trained many young people.

Mr. Prescott: In what trade?

Mr. Holt: Furniture. I was chairman of training for London region and a member of the furniture industry training board. The fundamental failures in apprenticeships have their roots in a number of causes, including the raising of the school leaving age without any consultation with industry about its needs at that time. I believe that was done by right my hon. Friend the Prime Minister. Further, the age of majority has been eroded from 21 to 18, and the truncated apprenticeship period has been reduced to 18 months or two years.

I blame all sides of industry and the trade unions—especially the one I had personal dealings with—for not being realistic enough to take the same approach as the EEPTU, which has set a model for how apprenticeships ought to take place. I commend my hon. Friend and all those responsible for the training of young people to look very closely at the whole question of apprenticeships and to forget the old time-honoured schemes whereby if one lived long enough one was given signed indentures. I was guilty of signing many indentures without any verification of job capability, which was alleged to be part of the training. That is one of the reasons why we continue to have skills shortages in many areas.

We want a flexible training scheme for young people which has standards. I welcome the Government's initiative to offer YTS to all people up to 18 years of age, but the Government must have closer links and integration with the education world. In my part of the north-east of England—and I believe I speak as the most northerly so far of all the hon. Members who have spoken in this debate—there are apprenticeships in skills, but the trade unions have not sought to train people in a modular way by providing specialist training and core training, so that as they embark upon a career there is an integration of

[Mr. Holt]

education even before they reach their training. Perhaps we could recognise and realise this by paying young people who stay at school beyond the age of 16. There is little difference between paying youngsters to stay at school to the statutory leaving age and giving them an allowance to be trained by an employer subsequently.

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): The hon. Gentleman makes reference to the trade unions and changing the ways of training by modules. I remind and advise the hon. Gentleman that module training has been quite the norm for the past 10 years.

Mr. Holt: I accept that, but I was saying to my hon. Friend on the Front Bench and to other hon. Members that this modular expansion has not yet been integrated into the education system. For that reason I hope that the CTCs which have been announced will recognise the needs of industry and that there will be a through-put of training for young people from the earliest days so that they can not only choose and diversify but also more easily re-train into other skills at a later stage in life. I find, like the argument by my hon. Friend, that many of the young people I helped to train and was responsible for were given skills that are no longer necessary. They were not given a groundwork enabling them to move into other areas.

This was one of the fundamental failures of the training boards and why it was right that the training boards were discontinued. I cannot speak with great personal knowledge of all the training boards, but I did have an in-depth knowledge of the furniture industry training board and some knowledge of the catering industry. I probably have had more free lunches via the training board than I have had as a Member of Parliament, and that says a great deal, because they were always seeking what to do and how to do it. They were profligate, bureaucratic and, in the end, meaningless. My company, for which I was responsible, was one of only two companies in the whole of the furniture industry that had total exemption from having to fill in the iniquitous forms for grant and levy. Many other people had to fill in those forms to pay the levy.

Mr. Prescott: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Holt: If the hon. Gentleman has an intelligent contribution to make to this debate—because so far he has not—I am quite willing to give way. He would not give way to me but I am much more courteous to him. If he cannot shut up, then I am afraid I shall have to be very rude to him indeed.

Mr. Prescott: I say to the hon. Gentleman that those statutory training boards that he is talking about produced twice as many apprentices as we have today.

Mr. Holt: Many of them trained in the wrong skills, and that is what it is all about—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order

Mr. Holt: They were decided by the members of the board and the officials. The vast majority of the people who did the training in the furniture industry in High Wycombe were former senior officers in the RAF because it was a nice, easy sinecure for them after they came out of their service, and they were appointed by the director who was himself in the same role.

Mr. Prescott: And you want to do something about it? You sat on the board.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I must remind the House that a great number of Members are wishing to speak. Exchanges of this kind only delay the debate unnecessarily. Mr. Richard Holt.

Mr. Holt: I am grateful, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am sure that all people, both inside and outside this House, will draw their own conclusions from the antics and the attitude of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) in the way he has sought very rudely to intervene in the speech of everyone who has spoken so far.

I wish to move on to another topic which has been mentioned by hon. Members opposite and on this side of the House. I wish to talk about restart in the field of training. In my constituency there is one jobcentre. I checked this morning with that job club. So far 60 people have been to that job club. Of that 60, 21 are still there. Nine have left for reasons which are not known. One has gone into a training scheme. Six have gone on to community programmes and 23 have gone into what I believe the Opposition would call real jobs—including one audio-visual aids technician, two PSV drivers, two security guards, one galvanising foreman, one radio repair man, two general workers. One person has gone to Wales to work as a cook, one has gone to the south-east of England to work as a nanny, one has gone to France to work as a general labourer, and two have gone into colleges to be lecturers. Those are all real jobs. They cover 23 of the 39 people who have so far gone through the job club. If the same rate of success applies to other job clubs, there will be an even greater dent in the unemployment figures than we have had so far.

I hope that my hon. Friend noted that three of those jobs were away from the north-east. Unless greater help is given to people who wish to take up employment elsewhere in this country and also in Europe, the unemployment figures in the north-east will continue to be high.

Last Saturday I had at my surgery a young couple who had had the misfortune to be out of work for some time. The man had found a job in Southampton. His house in my constituency was worth only £12,000 compared with £30,000 for a more modest house in Southampton. Therefore, he had had to give up the unequal battle of trying to keep two homes and had had to return to the dole queue in the north-east, although he had successfully filled the job in Southampton for a time.

That experience has been repeated over and over again as a consequence of an initiative which I took 18 months ago to try to link the High Wycombe and Thames valley area with the north-east in conjunction with local newspapers. The Government do not seem to have the will to tackle the problem. There is a reluctance to recognise that Rachman is dead and that it is time to open up the rental market so that more people can have the facility to be lodgers.

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): Would it not make sense to have sufficient council houses to rent in the south to enable those in the north who wanted to move to go into a public sector house for a bridging period until they had sufficient money to move back to the private sector?

Mr. Holt: I take the hon. Gentleman's point. I put forward a slightly more novel scheme because I believe in

home ownership. I have already suggested to my Front Bench that rather than building masses of council houses we should consider seriously giving substantial grants of £6,000, £8,000 or £10,000 to people who want to move. The Government might make the grant equivalent to the amount that a person would receive from the dole or from social security for one or two years and let him use that money as a deposit on a house in the private sector. The equity could be held by the Government until such time as the person had moved along the mortgage scale. If someone defaulted, obviously he would be in trouble, but this would give people a stake in the area to which they were moving, and it would not cost the Government any more than it is costing them now to keep someone on the dole for a year or a year and a half.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins (High Peak): My hon. Friend cannot expect people to move from the north to the south by giving them grants unless more houses are built in the south. That would involve opening up the green belt.

Mr. Holt: My hon. Friend can take that up with other people.

There has been much criticism by Opposition Members of the lack of training. I can give the number of professionals working in training. Professionals in training in industry and commerce are helping to train for the future. The Institute of Training and Development was established only in 1964 and in its first 15 years its membership grew to under 5,000. It is now 6,500, so it has grown by 1,500 over the last few years. The much more representative and larger Institute of Personnel Management, which is responsible for training, has grown from just under 22,000 to just over 27,000 in the past five years. So we can see that large numbers are involved in professional training.

While the Government must continue the initiatives which they have introduced, some of them need modification. It is not right to say that once a person has undertaken a period of training that gives him a qualification. We need established standards from proper technical, professional and vocational bodies who are capable of providing and organising examinations.

7.46 pm

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): The case made by the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) destroys the famous remark about getting on one's bike to find a job. Is the realisation dawning even on the Government Benches that getting on one's bike to get a job down south is not a sensible, practicable proposition for people who desperately need jobs? The debate is not about housing but about employment and training. Every time I listen to Government Front Bench spokesmen on the subject I become more depressed because we keep on hearing the same old record—nothing new. We hear the same old excuses.

The Paymaster General often refers to packages, as he did today. When he appears before the Select Committee on Employment to talk about various schemes he uses the word "packages" as if men and women were packets of tea. That indicates how much he is out of touch with the human side of the problem. Of course, he makes his usual broadsides and raises the usual bogies about how wicked the Labour party is. He condemns the policies we believe in, such as a minimum rate of pay. We make no apology for believing in a minimum rate of pay because we are against starvation wages.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman also referred to wage rises being withdrawn and pointed out that we would give protection to workers. We make no apology for that either. That does not affect the issue of employment and jobs. If conditions are right, workers will respond. That has always been the case. Usually, it is bad management that creates disputes and strikes, as I shall illustrate shortly.

There is now less talk about employment and more statements about the Manpower Services Commission and so-called training. There is a training scheme for this, a training scheme for that and a training scheme for the other. We have got training schemes coming out of our ears, but what we need are jobs.

When I read the motion tabled by the Government, which once again refers to training, I thought that it would be useful to remind the House of the scale of the various training schemes. The purpose is to help to massage the unemployment figures. When the Minister replies he may dispute that. However, to remind the House how many training schemes there are, I shall recite from the following list. There is the YTS, the TVEI, adult training job training programme, national priority skills, job training scheme, local grants to employers, other local skills action, training for enterprise, special groups, management development, wider opportunities training programme, other occupational and adult training support, the Open Tech open learning.

In 1986-87 717,105 people will be engaged in those training schemes. In 1986-87 the cost to the taxpayer for the MSC and other bodies will be £1,337 million. The Government have expended a massive sum of money on so-called training and that does not go without much criticism.

I am sure that the Minister will have taken the opportunity to read the recent report entitled "Department of Employment and Manpower Services Commission: Adult Training Strategy". It resulted from an investigation by the National Audit Office of the MSC's development and implementation of an adult training strategy. The NAO makes many reservations in the report about expenditure and training.

Paragraph 7.6 on page 23 states:

> "MSC has no national or local database recording the skills possessed by the working population and, since the introduction of voluntary registration for employment in 1982, it had kept no inventory of the skills of the unemployed. Although some data from national surveys are available, NAO concluded that MSC does not have the information which would enable it to be certain that training is not being provided in skills already in good supply or in surplus and available for use. While the classification of skills and qualifications might well pose difficult problems, and the collection and analysis of the relevant personal details would clearly be a costly task, it is difficult to see how the real requirement for MSC support for training can be determined accurately without a better balance sheet than exists at present of the supply of and demand for skills."

There is considerable criticism of the massive expenditure that is now being made by the Government on some of those so-called training schemes. Obviously, skill shortages exist in some parts of the country but it is also recognised that there is a serious mismatch for making provision for the skill deficiencies. Yet we provide all sorts of training for skills that are surplus to requirements.

[Mr. Ken Eastham]

I spoke to an officer in Manchester—not an MSC officer—and I asked him about training facilities in the city that I represent. He said that some people on YTS are training for jobs that do not even exist. I asked him to give me some examples. He said that there were courses in Manchester for beauticians but that there was virtually no chance at the end of the day of them getting jobs. Another YTS is on the welfare of animals. There will be virtually no jobs in Manchester for the people on that scheme.

Mr. Trippier: I should like and would welcome evidence of those schemes. There is no way that the Department of Employment or its Ministers would encourage that sort of thing. We have tried desperately to detect those managing agents who run courses for which there are no jobs. That is unnecessary training. If the hon. Gentleman will send me details, I will look into the matter.

Mr. Eastham: It is not my responsibility to feed the Minister that information. He has enough civil servants supporting him who could check that.

I obtained that information from the Low Pay Unit and from an officer who receives considerable feedback from people involved in some of the youth training schemes. It is up to the Minister to ask the civil servants to do their homework. He may be embarrassed to make that request. I wonder whether there are other training schemes, perhaps for ferret catchers or budgie keepers. All sorts of strange things come up when the Government decide that they want to create some sort of training scheme to keep people occupied. The purpose of the training schemes is to massage down the unemployment figures.

There are many training schemes for hairdressers, yet there is no overwhelming need for so many hairdressers. The Minister may say, "Oh, well, some of them keep on their hairdressing after the scheme." That is true, but it is also true that, with the low rates of pay on the YTS, some employers say, "We will keep you on, but we are not going to pay you any more than the YTS rate." That is sheer exploitation and is another matter that perhaps the Minister should take time to investigate.

There is also the other aggravation concerning the wages councils for which the Minister was responsible. Now there is no protection for anyone under the age of 21. There is no such thing as a minimum rate of pay. There are no workers' rights, even for holiday entitlement, for anyone under the age of 21. That causes all sorts of aggravation. It is all entwined with the YTS. *[Interruption.]* A Conservative Member is murmuring. I am always courteous and I always give Conservative Members a chance to reply. Does the hon. Gentleman wish to intervene?

Mr. Geoff Lawler (Bradford, North): The hon. Gentleman said that wages councils had been abolished for people under 21. Does he accept that there is possibly some correlation between that fact and the fact that we now have lower than the EEC average of unemployment for people aged under 25, and that school leaver unemployment is coming down rapidly?

Mr. Eastham: That is a doubtful argument. I doubt whether it can be verified. We have challenged the Minister on this issue on numerous occasions in Committee and he has never provided any proof of that, nor did any other Conservative Member. I say to the Government, please do not go along the road of thinking that unemployment has been resolved by having people working on starvation pay, because that does not work.

A great suspicion is now developing that the training schemes in Britain have been borrowed from American ideas. There is suspicion about schemes such as the compulsory labour schemes, which are supported by the Tories, such as "Pay for your dole pay" and "Work for your dole pay". They consider that they are the way out. They are called training schemes to make them look respectable.

Another area of MSC activities which gives rise to concern is the private management agents. Because the Government privatise everything, they privatise management agents. Those gentlemen are in the business for profit. In some cases they make more than £50 per student to comply with the YTS, for which the taxpayers pay. There are other ways in which the taxpayer could spend money than by putting money into private training agents' pockets.

The MSC managers are causing great concern in our area. A dispute is taking place in Sale, just outside Manchester. My right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) has written to the Paymaster General about a firm called Senior Coleman Ltd., which is in dispute with 112 workers who have had deplorable conditions. In addition, it has decided to intimidate four handicapped workers who are deaf and dumb by saying that unless they go back to work they will lose their jobs and never get another one. Unfortunately, the MSC manager locally is co-operating in recruiting scab labour to take on some of this work. My right hon. Friend said in his letter:

> "Further, I have since been informed by the Trade Union that the Regional Manager of the Manpower Services Commission based in Manchester, namely Mr. Yendley, has been actively assisting the company in recruiting workers whilst an official dispute is taking place."

The Minister said that he would like some information, and this information is freely and readily available.

Mr. Litherland: My hon. Friend highlights a deplorable case. The employers to whom he has referred are already suffering in that they are deaf and now unscrupulous and uncaring employers are added to that. Has not the Government's policy laid the fertile ground for inciting the greediness and nastiness of such employers?

Mr. Eastham: My hon. Friend is right to say that the Government encourage such activity by employers, and I am sure that public opinion will condemn the Government for using the MSC and its agencies to undermine people who have legitimate grievances. I hope that the Minister will take this on board.

I remind the Minister about the responsibilities of the employers. The trend nowadays is for employers no longer to pay for training, and instead the Government are spending the taxpayers' money on it. On 5 February, the Chancellor made an interesting statement about this. A newspaper report says:

> "The Chancellor, Nigel Lawson, yesterday urged industry to invest more in training after seeing new evidence of shortages of skilled labour in some industries and regions. Industry was now making enough profit to invest more in its future, he told the National Economic Development Council."

The employers, through the CBI, gave their reply in the same article, which said:

"David Nickson, president of the CBI, said that seven million, or one in eight, Britons were illiterate. Industry needed young people who could read, speak, add up and apply their knowledge in a practical way."

That is an appalling indictment of the Government. There are continuous cuts in education, and as a result illiteracy is increasing. This should be a matter of great concern, and money should be expended on training in further education colleges. I am told by educationists that for about £20 million we could embark on an adult literacy task force which would considerably improve the abilities of some of our workers.

Those are some of the matters that I should like the Minister to consider. I could go on for another 20 minutes, but others would like to speak. As I keep saying in the Select Committee on Employment, we want jobs. We do not want any of this artificial training—we want real job opportunities. Only then will we make progress.

8.5 pm

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): I will not pick up any of the detailed points made by the hon. Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham), although I enjoy serving on the Select Committee on Employment with him. This may be an appropriate moment to pay tribute to the previous Chairman of the Select Committee, the former hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme, Mr. Golding, who has now gone off to fish in more turbulent waters, but who did a good job, and is ably followed in the Chair by the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton). The hon. Member for Blackley spoke about a mismatch in training. When we were discussing reform of the industrial training boards, one of the points that came through clearly was that the ITBs, in spite of the best intentions, had been responsible for a great deal of the mismatch.

We have heard a lot of ritual noises from the official Opposition, but I must confess that if we ever had the misfortune of being in opposition, which we hope will never occur, we would probably also be making ritual noises. However, there is one fundamental and important difference between us. There has never been, in my recollection, a Conservative manifesto that has promised to cut unemployment. Even if we were to manage to get everything right, the United Kingdom cannot operate in isolation. We are part of the world economy and are subject to world economic factors. Someone, somewhere, be it in the middle east or elsewhere, is bound to shove a spanner in the works, as happened in 1973, which will knock us off course.

On the other hand, there has never been a Labour party manifesto that has not promised to cut dole queues, and voters will need to look carefully at the difference between Labour's promises and performance.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): The hon. Gentleman has claimed that there has never been a Conservative manifesto that has promised to cut unemployment. Can he comment on what the Prime Minister said a couple of weeks ago when she promised the nation a return to full employment? Was that being economical with the truth or does the hon. Gentleman anticipate that that promise will not figure in the next Conservative manifesto?

Mr. Colvin: There has never been an undertaking to cut unemployment in the short term, and that is the trap into which Labour Members always fall. They believe that by throwing Government money at the problem they can create jobs quickly. That may be the case, but in the long run they create unemployment rather than solve the problem. They have never succeeded in creating jobs in the long term. In spite of what the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) said, all Labour Governments have left dole queues that were longer than when they came into office.

There is a problem with the credibility of the Labour party's alternative policies. I condemn it because it will never learn from its mistakes. One has only to look at its current promise to reduce unemployment by 1 million over a two-year period at a cost of £6·8 billion. It is hardly surprising that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East is recorded in the *Municipal Journal* of 7 February 1986 as saying:

"How did we get this promise of one million jobs? Who worked on the programme? Promises such as these simply label us with targets that we cannot achieve and exposes our credibility."

It is nice for Conservative Members to be able to agree with at least something that the Opposition spokesman has said.

The so-called alliance is no better. It is a pity that alliance Members are not here. They are thin on the ground in Parliament. After some of the statements that have been made by alliance Members today, they should be here to hear our comments on some of their pronouncements. They have also said that they will cut unemployment by 1 million. They give themselves an extra year—they say three years at a cost of £4 billion. The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) made a Freudian slip. He nearly referred to the increase in employment that has occurred under the Government. He corrected himself at the last moment.

I was interested to see that, since March 1983, it is estimated that 985,000 new jobs have been created. Admittedly, a lot of them are for women working part-time, but nevertheless they are new jobs. Again, since March 1983, 457,000 more people are estimated to have become self-employed. That is good. It is a pity that alliance Members are not here to congratulate the Government on that achievement. The hon. Gentleman referred also to the fall-off in investment. We can put him right. In 1984, total fixed investment, both public and private, was at an all-time record in real terms. It is expected to have risen a further 4 per cent. in 1985 to £60 billion at current prices. It is, therefore, growing at a faster rate than the overall growth rate. This is the reverse of what occurred during the period 1974-79.

Many people ask why there was not more investment in the past and why there is so much more now. It is interesting to note that the return on capital from new investment in manufacturing industry in the period of the last Labour Government was 2 per cent. It is hardly surprising that investors were reluctant to put their money into manufacturing. The average return on new investment in manufacturing industry today is 17 per cent. Again, it is hardly surprising that investors are putting money into manufacturing, contrary to what Opposition Members would lead us to believe.

The Opposition's policy—whether alliance or Labour—would lead to some short-term jobs. We all know that. But the fact of the matter is that, in buying these jobs, which they would do with public money, they will weaken

[Mr. Colvin]

the economy and that would lead to ever higher borrowing. In turn, that would lead to higher interest rates, and that would lead to runaway inflation. As the right hon. Members for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan) and for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) admitted when they were Leaders of the Opposition, inflation is the mother of unemployment.

Conservative Members welcome the Government's motion. I even welcome some of the points made in the Opposition's amendment. I welcome the way in which they draw attention to the importance of training.

I endorse what is set out in the European Community document which was produced during our period of presidency. The Government motion takes note of that document. I wish that they had been a little more robust in what they had to say. It shows that the United Kingdom is leading the way in employment and training, although West Germany could be said to have set the style with its dual system of education and training, from which the United Kingdom has learnt a great deal.

Pages 8 and 9 of the EEC document, in the section dealing with training, called for measures to

"promote amongst both employers and employees a greater awareness of the importance of training both in encouraging economic growth and in meeting the aspirations of individuals, . . . encourage employees to invest more in training in industry, . . . aid the development of more responsive training systems, including the use of new technologies and distance learning for the provision of education and training.".

I digress to mention an experience that I had while working for my right hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Prior). During our period in opposition, he set up a manpower working group to study the problems that we knew we would have to face when we gained office at the general election in 1979. That was back in 1977-78. At that time, we seriously considered the possibility of having to face unemployment levels of around 4 million. We jolly well knew then that there would be no short-term solution. While studying the plans for the Open Tech programme we realised that many training resources in schools, colleges and universities were not being fully used. We considered that the doors should be opened to those who needed that training.

I can well understand the EEC document. It asks for Community action to examine ways of

"overcoming restrictions on access to training,".

It also calls for ways of

"identifying the developing training needs of enterprises at local level."

That leads me to a specific and welcome development training in the United Kingdom. Those whose job in is to train often complain that employers do not tell them what is wanted. What could be more logical than for employees to link in with educators and trainers, to let those at the sharp end of the job market know which skills are most in demand? The new Local Employer Networks are designed to involve employers more effectively in our system of vocational education and training.

On 3 February, this new training and education initiative was nationally launched. I welcomed the remarks by my right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General in his opening speech about that new scheme. There was a reception in the House last week, sponsored by my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet). It is perhaps a pity that more hon. Members did not go to the reception to hear what the scheme was about. The Local Employer Network scheme is a joint initiative by the Association of British Chambers of Commerce, the Confederation of British Industry and the Manpower Services Commission. It aims to make a substantial contribution to national economic performance by improving vocational education and training. It is intended to have a network in every local education authority area. Each network will feed information on present and future employment needs to local planners of vocational education and training. It will represent employers in that planning process and provide a wide range of services related to education and training. It will provide a continuous dialogue between all who are involved.

Back in November 1985, a report was published for the Manpower Services Commission and the National Economic Development Office under the title "A Challenge to Complacency". Among other things, the following was suggested:

"We think that what is needed is a network of locally-based arrangements. The roles of such network of local bodies could include monitoring firms, training activity, collating information about small firms' needs, distributing some MSC grants, gathering local labour market information and organising local skill testing."

Several of these aspects have already become central to the role of Local Employer Networks. What do we want these networks to achieve? First, they should consult employers about their needs and problems. Secondly, they should collect and interpret data on the local labour market and, thirdly, they should pass on what they have learnt to education and training providers. Those are just three of the main aims in an exciting concept. Local Employer Networks have the potential to wipe out our skill shortages by tackling the causes at local level.

The chairman of the Manpower Services Commission, Mr. Bryan Nicholson, said on the day of the launch of the Local Employer Networks:

"They offer an unparalleled opportunity for companies to ensure they get the right skills and qualifications in their workforce to help them compete in world markets."

A key feature of the scheme is joint action. The chairman of the CBI education and training committee, Mr. John Peake, said at the launch of the network project:

"For a number of years the CBI . . . has taken the view that a local employer network should be established to ensure that industry's voice is heard in vocational and educational training at local level. Industry is well represented on these issues at national, regional and sectional levels, but until now, for a variety of reasons, this has not always been the case at local level."

Now the CBI has got what it wants. I think it welcomes the plugging of that gap and its only reservation is that we do not try to reinvent the wheel and duplicate work that has already been done. The second of the three partners is the chamber of commerce. Mr. R. G. Taylor, the director-general of the Association of British Chambers of Commerce, said at the launch:

"It is ironic that even at a time of high unemployment in the UK, we have persistent shortages of particular skills which are inhibiting the growth of many companies. One of the great advantages of Networks is that they will be able to spot skill shortages before they become damaging and ensure that remedial action is taken in good time."

It is encouraging to know that over 100 networks throughout Britain will soon be responding to training and retraining needs at all levels and for all ages. They will do that for high-tech jobs, such as computer programmers, and low-tech jobs such as skilled jobs in the construction

industry. Employers of every size and type will be invited to join their local network. The plan is to commission one in every local education area within a year. The first member networks already set up are in the cities and towns of Middlesbrough, Manchester, Redruth, Slough, Aberdeen, Luton, Sheffield, Norwich, Hull, Birmingham, Solihull, Enfield and Portsmouth which is in my county, Hampshire. I am sure that hon. Members who represent constituencies in those towns and cities will welcome the existence of those network members and will play their part in the work that they do.

There is a network in Portsmouth and that is good, but it raises a question in my mind. To make a constituency and parochial point, I wonder why there are none in Southampton. I made some inquiries of Southampton chamber of commerce and was told by Mr. Peter Beebe, its director-general, that the Southampton chamber, which I think is the largest chamber in Hampshire with direct membership in the city of about 1,600 firms and businesses and about a further 3,000 associated members throughout the country, found it essential wholeheartedly to support the concept. The chamber has already got a nucleus of employers who have agreed to join the network and is working hard to expand the employer base.

I think that Mr. Beebe plans to call the members of the network together and will invite the organisers of the network to help his chamber to the next stage. He made the point that he did not want to see the network become a talking shop. There is a wide disparity between chambers of commerce and I have seen good and bad ones. The Southampton chamber of commerce is extremely good and is active in promoting business and employment. However, in some parts of Britain chambers of commerce are little more than talking shops.

All hon. Members will wish to congratulate the local enterprise networks on their initiative and will want to wish Mr. David Stanley, the project director, all the best in this initiative. I shall end my speech with the words that he used on the day of the launch. He said:

"The aim of networks by working closely with Vocational Education and Training, and planning for employment needs well into the 21st century, is to improve levels of skills and to better utilise Britain's workforce which, we hope, will in turn be reflected in enhanced economic performance for Great Britain Limited."

I wholeheartedly welcome this scheme and the Government's support for it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The debate has been in progress for four hours and only 11 hon. Members have had the opportunity to address the House. I hesitate to ask for brevity now, especially from those hon. Members who have sat through the debate, but it is necessary to do so. The first Front-Bench speaker hopes to catch my eye at 9.20.

8.26 pm

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): In moving the Government motion the Paymaster General spent five minutes talking to it and then subjected the House to a load of garbage and bile, the like of which I have never heard. He winced when the auditor's report was mentioned, and it is worthwhile looking at that report. It makes the accusation that perhaps the Manpower Services Commission and the Government are not cost efficient because there is no way of checking. One could infer from that that the Government have a lot to answer for in the way that the MSC is run. It is rather strange that the MSC is not cost efficient, because the Government have spent the last seven years browbeating the public sector into becoming cost effective. It does the Government no good to preach that to the public sector and practise something totally different by seeking to manipulate employment and training.

On a number of occasions the Paymaster General refused to give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott). Then he took the hump when my hon. Friend gave him similar treatment. Perhaps he will learn a lesson from that.

One of the reasons for the country being in such a mess is the lack of Government forward planning. I have listened to the Prime Minister a number of times and I listened to her today at Prime Minister's Question Time. I have also listened to Government Ministers, and to hear them one would think that there were no problems about unemployment or the Health Service or education. They are not living in the same real world as I am.

There are many problems in my consituency and I suggest that the Paymaster General and the Prime Minister should come down from their ivory tower into the world of reality that the people of Britain have to endure. Perhaps they should stop behaving like the little Dutch boy who put his finger in a hole in the dyke to stop the water from coming out. We would make better progress if the Paymaster General pulled his finger out and got on with the job that he is paid to do.

In the Yorkshire and Humberside region there are old industries that have been the backbone and wealth of the country for many years. They have certainly seen us through two worlds wars and helped industry to recover from the effects of the wars. Of course, they have been exploited and, having been exploited, they are now left to rot.

The high unemployment in Yorkshire and Humberside creates many problems which I do not have time to go into. Part of the Don Valley area in my constituency has one of the highest unemployment levels in the Doncaster area with the exception of Thorne on the east. The people of my constituency are good and proud people and they want the opportunity to work. The steel industry, the pits and the fishing industry, from Sheffield to the east coast, are now being left on the scrap heap. As the old industries die out, there is nothing to replace them. That is as a direct result of Government policies and a lack of forward planning.

I am sick to death of hearing Ministers blaming past Governments for today's faults. I have never heard owt so daft in my life. The Ministers blame the previous Labour Government, the Macmillan Government and future Labour policies, but not today's policies. It is the Government's policies that can help solve today's problems. I hope that for the good of the country the Government will step aside and let a Labour Government in with the sort of policies that my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) was talking about. They are good, sound policies.

The apprenticeship scheme has been referred to. The Coal Board had an excellent apprenticeship scheme. It had to train over 50 per cent. more than it required because the private sector did not want to spend any money on apprenticeships. Of course, the private sector offered higher wages, hence the need for the Coal Board to train more apprentices. Unfortunately, with the Government's

[Mr. Martin Redmond]

policies and the rundown of the industry, such apprenticeships, even though they have been scaled down in years, are not coming through. Because the Coal Board is not taking the youngsters on, we have problems with those youngsters.

It is daft to say, as one Minister did, that we should have lower pay for the north and keep high pay in the south. The *Daily Mirror* contained an article attributed to the Paymaster General. It says, "Ban comparability payments." I heard the Paymaster General make a remark earlier in reply to a question saying that Lord Young gets nowt. Perhaps he is frightened of getting some comparability with Lord Young.

The CBI should be concerned, as the Government should be concerned, because the number of jobs available down south and the lack of jobs up north is forcing wages up in the south. If jobs were forced up north, there would be a better balance in wages. If the Paymaster General wants me to go into detail I will be pleased to see him later over a cup of tea.

We talk about wages being the cause of the lack of job opportunities. I do not hear the people who advocate that sort of policy talk about the high wages and salaries of the directors and captains of industry. That is in order according to the opponents of wages for the workers. Of course, we must have profits to reinvest in industry. Well, when the exchange controls were lifted, all the profits went abroad to build factories to bring goods back to Britain. The philosophy of the Government is that the lowering of income tax will create jobs because of the spin-off effects. I do not see any jobs coming from the big fat profits that the directors have been making under this Conservative Government.

I shall now come back to forward planning. We have to keep coming back to it because we have to plan if we are to meet the challenges of the 21st century. The Government's motion talks about the MSC, YTS, ATS and uncle Tom Cobbleigh and all. I ask you. They fiddle the figures. I looked at Prime Minister's Question Time and I thought, Christ, Groucho Marx and his team. I can just imagine them running around. I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I swore, but the Government's policies are enough to make a parson swear. We do not have forward planning. For example, there has been great publicity by the Prime Minister about the Channel tunnel. It is said to be a massive project which will enhance Europe and so on, but she has left it to the private sector to raise the funds. I have no argument about that but, at the same time, we must have decisions in relation to infrastructure. All the jobs that the Channel tunnel will create must not be down south but must be brought up north either to the west or east or both. The Government must make those decisions now to enable local authorities such as Doncaster to come up with suitable schemes to complement that decision.

It took a large amount of Government money to try to lift Corby out of the mire that Government policies had put it in. When one is dead weight, it costs much more. Help in my constituency and in Yorkshire and Humberside is needed now.

An application for development status was turned down. The letter said:

"The AA map has to have some stability."

The initials "AA" stand not for Automobile Association but for assisted areas. While we are talking about stability, may I ask why cannot local government have stability? In seven years there have been about 13 schemes in relation to rate support grant that have caused all sorts of problems for forward planning. We need help now, not two years on, because that suggests that Nero fiddles while Rome burns.

I ask the Prime Minister to bring about a co-ordinated team that will embrace all Government Departments within a region so that they can start planning for the future. Government Departments do a little bit here and a little bit there. The British Enterprise Board and British Rail are all doing separate things and there is duplication. We need forward planning so that we can work as a team, but not as the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretary of State for the Environment did earlier this week. There is the Secretary of State for Education and Science's grand design for education. The Government should get their heads together with the Department of Education and Science to see how we can co-ordinate, not when the lads are reaching maturity but early on, so that we can have the sort of core training that will equip pupils to meet the challenges and changes of the future.

I should like to comment briefly on the MSC which has a training and retraining scheme for the private nursing home sector. Local authorities employ a hell of a lot of people in that area and they should have the same facilities. There is a high turnover of staff in that area of social service work and the local authorities should have that facility.

Unless we take positive steps, we shall see a breakdown of law and order in this country. It will get worse and riots will bring the troops on to the streets. That will happen if the Minister does not listen to the advice of Labour Members and bring about some sensible forward planning.

8.41 pm

Mr. Michael Marshall (Arundel): In following the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond), I should like to say that he has been present for most of the debate, as I have. He has shown some restraint in saving his remarks until he was called to speak, unlike his hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), who gave an unfortunate exhibition on the important occasion of this debate. Although I do not agree with the views of the hon. Member for Don Valley, he expressed them in a good humoured and balanced manner. I should like to respond briefly to just one of the points that he made and which, I think, it is important that we debate among ourselves. He said that, if elected, a Labour Government would seek to freeze all opportunities for overseas investment. In saying that he is running into a classic trap. British industry, which has been built up over many generations and which operates throughout the world, provides not only a stream of dividends but an essential underpinning for much of the invisible earnings of the City, to the tune of about £7 billion a year. I shall be happy to debate that point with him on another occasion.

In meeting the spirit of what you said earlier, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should like to concentrate my remarks on training and retraining, especially in relation to skills shortages. I wish to do that because throughout the debate —I have heard it all—one of the key aspects has been

the changes that have been caused by technology. That was touched on by my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart). The hon. Member for Don Valley criticised Governments for blaming their predecessors. It is true that all Governments do that and all Governments can be criticised for not doing as much as is humanly possible. That is the nature of the beast. However, the Government are facing problems of technological change on an unparalleled scale. I should have thought that there would be common ground across the Floor of the House as we try to look at the ways in which we could resolve some of those grave issues.

There is no doubt that the shortage of skills is the pre-eminent problem that we face in relation to training. A year ago the CBI said that three in every five companies would take on people in the skilled areas if they could overcome the problem of training. Companies were facing difficulties in filling jobs that required skills, qualifications and experience.

I should like to comment especially on information technology because that area is not only the fastest growing but is the key to future growth and prosperity and to matching our competitors. If we do not manage to achieve that build up of skills, we shall see our international trading position and thus our domestic economy badly eroded.

I differ from many hon. Members in feeling that during the debate there has been a concentration on what could be termed public activity, in terms of what Governments, the Manpower Services Commission and, to a degree, the universities and polytechnics are doing, and the public funding that is used.

I do not have any difficulty in supporting the motion because important initiatives have been taken. However, if we do not recognise what industry is doing about training we shall neglect an important area of debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) partly answered the criticism that was made earlier by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East by discussing the limited amount of training that is done by some companies. However, in the period which my hon. Friend describes, the return on manufacturing industry averaged 2 per cent., and there was a great problem in putting aside resources for training because of the limited funding that was available to meet that task. As my hon. Friend rightly pointed out, there are now more profitable opportunities for British industry, up and down the country. There is an opportunity to move ahead once more in relation to industrial training.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East was certainly adrift when he refused to recognise the substantial areas in which training is successfully carried on by industry. Within the Palace of Westminster, many hon. Members consider that issue with blinkers on.

The Select Committee on Science and Technology in the House of Lords recently issued a useful report on education and training for new technologies. However, it tended to concentrate on the idea of public funding, whether in Government schemes, or by universities and polytechnics. In my view, the Committee did not achieve the right balance because when one considers the figures, there is no question that industry still does far more training than any other part of Government or the education system.

The central training provisions of British Telecom are far larger than the entire electrical engineering resources of all our universities and polytechnics. As another example, ICL and IBM also provide far more training individually than the entire computer science training units at all our universities and polytechnics. Such companies underpin and, in many cases, underwrite much of the work done by universities and polytechnics, and I welcome that. We must look at training for new technologies if we are to build on what is successfully happening in some companies, and if we are to open up the way for others.

In a sedentary intervention earlier today, the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) asked how companies could be encouraged to do that. I should like to suggest to my hon. Friend the Minister some thoughts about that, especially in the light of the Budget that we shall consider on 17 March. To reiterate the problem once more, the National Computing Centre's latest estimate showed that 60 per cent. of all companies involved in information technology do not take on trainees. Therefore, there is a danger that they will look to others to do the training and then poach those who have been trained. The Minister may recall that the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-West, (Mr. Butcher), warned, in a 1980 pamphlet entitled "The Big Steal", of that increasing problem. However, that problem is far greater today.

What can be done? Two years ago I was a member of a working party that argued that 3 million new jobs could be created by the end of the century if certain legislative restraints were removed and if the Government provided the opportunities that would open the way for the information technology industry to develop and expand. If we moved in that direction, we could see that number of jobs created. I shall be happy on another occasion to debate those figures. We have seen some movement in that direction, as is reflected in the creation of about 900,000 new jobs.

I should like to outline one or two suggestions which could give added encouragement to training. I strongly disagree with suggestions made by Opposition Members that a further levy on industry for training would be the way ahead. Opposition Members have been plain about their views, and the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East admitted today that the Labour party would tax small businesses. That would hit at companies in the growth sector which are least able to meet that kind of impost. That sort of taxation is the wrong way to go. It is true that the alliance parties have argued along the same lines. Therefore, the arguments at the election will be fairly poised. However, we could consider encouraging companies to use their own money and in that respect we should look carefully at training costs and taxation.

Perhaps the Government could be persuaded to consider this proposal within taxation policy. Training costs, including pay, could be treated as a loan and that loan could be subsequently repaid, if there was a premature departure of the person who was trained. Otherwise, it would be a tax write-off. That would begin to help build apprenticeship training. Many hon. Members on both sides of the House recognise that there is a problem caused by the decline in our apprenticeship system. In Germany there is a form of indenture apprenticeship which is successful. Perhaps we should move in that direction, but allowing companies a tax incentive.

[Mr. Michael Marshall]

Similarly, I would extend the same principle to individuals seeking training. Those who have deep knowledge of information technology reckon that someone with no knowledge of it can acquire the digital skills and basic needs in 18 months. It is important that we should recognise that. Moreover, the underpinning of industry requires constant up-dating. Over the coming years we shall see the need for people to train and to be retrained. Individuals, whether in work, about to start a job or unemployed, should be given an incentive to undertake training. I should like to see such training allowable as a deduction against personal taxation.

It is possible to give generous tax relief to individuals or companies, perhaps in the American style, for making donations to education and research. I would take that process one step further and say that in recognising companies' activities in training it would be reasonable to set up a Queen's award for training for companies of all sizes.

The idea of a repayable and tax-free loan recognises the collapse of the apprenticeship system as we have known it. In future we can find ways to prevent poaching and to provide a greater sense of stability and continuity in this area. On individual training for future employment and a tax-free allowance, information technology skills can be acquired in a relatively short period. The incentive of that should appeal increasingly to a society which will have more and more people working from home in small information technology businesses. I see that almost as a reversion to the growth in craft industries where many people, working at a keyboard, can relate to a centre and will need to meet for social rather than industrial or technical reasons. That is the background in which such individual training should be encouraged.

Tax-free donations for those who support education and training would be in keeping with the Government's consistent line in so far as they have already changed taxation policy to assist the arts. That would be a sound development. It would provide opportunities for many people to show that they believe in the importance of that area, particularly those in industry who have perhaps been involved in building their business and who can provide seed corn for other opportunities.

It may be said that a Queen's award is a gimmick, but I do not believe so. The Queen's award for export is regarded with great pride. My right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General and my hon. Friends must have seen, as I have, the Queen's award for export flag flying over companies which have achieved it. We underestimate what people will do, not for monetary award but for pride.

A few years ago many hon. Members were impressed when we saw the great response to the campaign, "I am backing Britain". It reflected the deep patriotism of many of our people. We should encourage them to say, "I am training for Britain", and let us help them to do that.

8.54 pm

Mr. Stan Thorne (Preston): The background to my speech is a travel-to-work area in Preston where 17,722 people are unemployed. Today we are talking about job creation and the motion refers to employment and training initiatives.

First, we must recognise certain priorities in overcoming this problem. I am convinced that it will be difficult, even for a Labour Government, radically to improve employment opportunities. I am certain that we must concentrate on labour-intensive industries, particularly the building industry. The shortage of houses, the problem of school repairs, the question of health centres, nurseries and so on would be met by major investment in the building industry. Moreover, that would create many jobs in the short term. In turn, that would have a multiplier effect on manufacturing industry.

I am aware that technology is changing. The Government have cut skillcentres and I hope that a Labour Government will give urgent priority to re-establishing a wide range of skills. But, despite those skillcentres, fewer jobs will be available and that is a fact that we must face.

We should already be planning for a much shorter working week, for example, three or four days' work. That raises the question of planning for leisure. There is no justification for asking workers in Britain today to work 50 or 60 hours a week, considering our unemployment figures. I am thinking, not of leisure on the poverty line but of leisure that can be creative. For that we must invest in public services. A Labour Government will give tremendous priority to meeting people's needs if they wish to be re-elected after a five-year term and to put Socialist measures into effect. Only Socialist measures can ultimately solve our economic problems. Anybody who believes that private enterprise can meet the needs of the British people over a long period and in real terms is living in cloud-cuckoo-land. We must control our resources, and plan our economy and the way in which we meet the needs of people in terms of buses, railways, street lighting, old people's homes and care centres. We are not meeting those needs; the Government do not have that sort of priority. Private profit is still the Government's main consideration.

My son-in-law has been unemployed in Liverpool for six years. He would like to be an ambulance driver. He inquired about the prospects, but there were no vacancies; yet the local ambulance services are crucially short of resources. People are suffering as a consequence.

We need investment in a large number of areas to achieve growth in the economy to meet the need for new jobs. Using the country's wealth to create jobs and relieve poverty is a human and moral consideration that must be uppermost in the mind of the next Labour Government.

Training is mentioned in the motion. Millions of people will have to be trained, and that will need considerable planning. Hundreds of thousands of adults in Britain could do extremely valuable work by going back to school as mature students and obtaining qualifications. That demands resources. Will there be the necessary investment in education to provide retraining, re-education and the application to new technology that is so vital? Those are some of the problems that the next Labour Government will face. I am confident that they will solve them.

I do not propose to emulate other speakers who have taken 20 minutes to make a few valuable points, but I must mention the problem of Leyland Trucks. Leyland Trucks is still facing a considerable problem with regard to job losses. It is suggested that Paccar or Daf could take over Leyland Trucks. Research shows that both companies would demolish Leyland Trucks, and thus there is a major concern that 5,000 jobs could be lost in direct terms, but many more indirectly. Paccar and Daf spell doom for job

prospects in the area. This is at a time when programmes at Leyland's assembly plant are increasing. Leyland are again producing fire engines. What, one might ask the Government, is the Ministry of Defence doing to ensure that military vehicles are manufactured at Leyland Trucks? That is a clear possibility, but the Government do not care.

Employment is a major priority for the next Labour Government: they will ignore it at their peril. I am confident that the Labour party will make a realistic appraisal of needs and resources, and will take control of those resources which are vital to establish jobs, and will not hesitate to maintain that as a powerful priority.

9.3 pm

Mr. Geoff Lawler (Bradford, North): I shall follow the themes of the hon. Members for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr Prescott) and for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham) on the question of the training programmes that the Government are providing.

Both hon. Gentlemen slated the Government's training programmes. They did not put forward any constructive alternatives, say what they would do when they came to power, or what was wrong and what could be done.

Mr. Eastham: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lawler: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will allow me one minute. They did not say how they would seek to improve training constructively. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister would welcome constructive criticism and that he would not be ashamed to say that, if there were better ways of training people, the Government would not be slow to listen to them.

Mr. Eastham: I am sorry if the hon. Gentleman did not pick up one of the points that I deliberately tried to make. I was referring to illiteracy and some of the shortcomings in education. I was suggesting that it would be a good idea if the Government were to redirect some of the money away from bogus training schemes to further education colleges to improve literacy.

Mr. Lawler: Resources to further education colleges are increasing in real terms. The hon. Gentleman confirmed what I have just said by referring to bogus training schemes. I shall pick one example, the youth training scheme.

The Labour party, especially its spokesman, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East, must make up its mind about the youth training scheme. Does the Labour party welcome it? Is it a scheme that is doing good and achieving results—which is why the majority of trade unions and certainly the sensible trade union leaders are supporting it—or does the Labour party think that it is a skivvy scheme and a bogus scheme? If so, the Labour party should say so so that everyone knows precisely where it stands.

If the Labour party thinks that the YTS is a skivvy scheme and a bogus scheme, what would it introduce to replace it? How would the Labour party increase the training of young people? All we know from what we have heard is that a levy would be imposed, yet the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East went on to say how terrible it was that so many companies managed to be exempted from the levy in respect of training boards. Surely the problem would be even greater if a levy of 1 per cent. were imposed on all companies, let alone if it sustained the bureaucracy to which my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) referred.

The only other definite proposal which we have heard from the Labour party is that a greater allowance should be paid to YTS trainees. That is very nice, but will an increased allowance mean that there will be less money to spend on the training of young people, or will it mean that companies will have to pay the top-up allowance? If companies have to pay that allowance, they will be able to afford to recruit fewer young people. Youth unemployment has been a serious problem and the number of apprentices has fallen because, over the past 20 years, the price of youth labour had been constantly bid up by the action of unions and weak management. Consequently, many young people have been priced out of jobs and training.

Although I welcome the change of heart by many trade unions, old attitudes persist. Only the other day I was at a construction company office and was told of a young man over 21 who was a labourer but who wanted to train as a bricklayer. The company was happy for him to do so and the labourer was happy to take a wage cut so that he could go on to the construction industry training board scheme and be paid at the appropriate rate. He recognised the investment in training that would be made by the company. But he was not allowed to undertake that training because his union would not let him. The union put a block on it. So long as such union attitudes persist—as they would if the Labour party came to power—there will not be the numbers of people in training that we so desperately need.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lawler: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I want to continue because there is not much time.

It is right that those who have suffered most from unemployment — the youth — should be be benefiting most from the Government's steps to increase training and put more people in work. The pledge that no school leaver under 18 will need to be unemployed is a major one which any Government would love to give. It means that there is now an effective vaccine for everyone under 18 against the disease of unemployment. There can be nothing more wasteful than for our youth to leave school with no hope and no training to undertake.

Unemployment for those under 18 is an option only for those who have been misguided enough to listen to the likes of some hon. Members, to organisations such as Youthaid, to those who, unfortunately, have been misinformed or to those who choose, for their own reasons, to be deliberately idle. The time has come for that not to occur at the taxpayers' expense.

The youth training scheme has been successful because it has changed the attitudes of employers who now voluntarily subject themselves to rigorous inspection to ensure that the training which they provide meets the quality demanded by the MSC. Employers do that so that they can obtain sponsorship from the MSC. Employers now have a commitment to train, which means that the numbers trained have increased and the financial commitment has increased. An ideological commitment is returning to industry, which recognises the importance of training for all the reasons that we have heard in the debate.

[Mr. Lawler]

There are positive sides to the changes. An increasing number of companies and an increasing number of employer associations are incorporating YTS in their training arrangements and reforming the old apprenticeship systems — for example, in the electrical contracting and construction industries.

More significantly, and moving away from traditional training and craft areas, people are being trained who would never have had the opportunity even two or three years ago. Shop assistants are receiving proper training in core skills to enable them to diversify during their working lives so that they are not left stocking shelves. Workers in warehouses are learning how to use computers so that they have opportunities to diversify and advance their careers. Those basic core skills mean that everybody leaves the YTS with a qualification to take to future employers. They have the knowledge that their qualifications are worth something and are what they employer wants. That is a major change of attitude.

It is no coincidence that about 29 per cent. of school leavers go into unskilled jobs but that of those leaving the YTS the figure is only 15 per cent. We are making training available to all. That means that companies are extending their skill base; that a work force can adapt and retrain as the changing economy demands; that the country has fewer unskilled people chasing a declining number of jobs in that category; that young people have something that they can sell and that they have a start in life.

The most satisfying aspect of my discussions with young trainees was to discover that young people who had been written off at school as academically hopeless and given no hope of a future by their careers teachers were now, because of the YTS, able to do something as valuable to themselves and society as can those who are more academically gifted.

There has been a change of attitude among many people who now have a widespread acceptance of the YTS, especially those on it. That is where the Labour party is dangerously out of touch with the youth of today. Who can blame young people being cynical about politicians when they hear Opposition Members, including the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East, continually carping about the YTS? Yet 90 per cent. of participants find the scheme extremely worthwhile, and one reason for that is that it creates jobs.

My constituency in Bradford has above average unemployment. The latest figures — I checked them today — show that 75 per cent. of people leaving the YTS go into work. Overall, 82 per cent do something and only 18 per cent. go back on to the unemployment register. It is no coincidence that school-leaver unemployment in Bradford is going down and that more and more young people go into skilled jobs.

We have heard a great deal about shortages and undoubtedly they exist — for example, in the construction industry, as was mentioned by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer). In the Yorkshire and Humberside area there were 1,192 entrants to CITB courses in 1979, while in 1986 there were 1,904 entrants — 800 more than in 1979. The Opposition cannot have it both ways. They cannot say, on the one hand, that we need training in all those skill shortages to fill vacancies and, on the other, condemn all that the Government are doing to expand training by claiming that that does not create jobs. They have to make up their minds.

Training creates jobs to fill the skill shortages that so much hamper the expansion of production. It allows new products and new methods of production to be developed, and also equips our young people with the skills they need to set up in business on their own. Enterprise is alive and kicking with young people. Some 26 per cent. of those receiving the enterprise allowance are under 25. I am pleased to say that the attitude of many young people has changed. They no longer leave school with the attitude, "Who will give me a job?", that the world owes them a living. Instead, they ask, "How can I create a job for myself and also for others?"

The lesson to be learnt is that 16-year-olds, taken on as permanent employees at possibly twice the YTS allowance but receiving little or no training, are not doing themselves a favour by sacrificing their long-term potential for short-term gain. The Government's target should be not 66 per cent. of school leavers looking for employment going on to YTS but nearer 100 per cent., which would mean the transfer of about 140,000 young people aged 16 from employment into YTS, though not at additional cost to the Government, because employers would realise a saving of about £1,500 per employee by paying allowance and training costs rather than a wage.

Consequently, we should eliminate almost completely unskilled jobs. We should remove once and for all the stigma that YTS is second best. Also we should remove any distinction between employee and trainee. All would have a legally guaranteed contract. There would no longer be two classes of youth labour. We should also catch up that much sooner with the number of under-18-year-olds who are in vocational training and education in advanced competitor countries. Eventually, the proportion of the work force with a vocational qualification would begin to match the proportion in, for example, Germany.

Many of today's young people still perceive that the going for them is tougher than it was for their parents. So it is, if the easy option is preferred, and if the level of their expectations is no higher than £60 a week and the first job that comes along, with no training and no career prospects. If, instead, a school leaver wants the opportunity to achieve a level of skill competency that will enable him or her to go for a high wage job, with good prospects, the prospects for young people now are much brighter than they have ever been.

9.16 pm

Mr. George Park (Coventry, North-East): During the 1980s the recession bit deeply into manufacturing industry in Coventry and the west midlands. Internationally known companies such as Alfred Herbert disappeared, and others — such as British Leyland, Alvis, Talbot, GEC and Rolls-Royce — drastically slimmed down their labour force. But what has become clear in the past 12 months is that the recession is still very much with us. Even the suspect official figures show that last month in Coventry there were 25,000 unemployed, plus 844 school leavers.

In parts of my constituency of Coventry, North-East, unemployment levels are as high as 40 per cent. Business organisations that are not prone to criticise the Government have issued outright condemnation of the Government's inactivity. The West Midlands Engineering Employers Association says:

"We are sick and tired of the Chancellor telling us we need to keep wage settlements low. That now seems to be the whole answer to our problems. But in a recent survey 46 per cent. of wage settlements in the West Midlands were below 4 per cent. and more than 80 per cent. below 5 per cent."

The Chancellor's argument is that as labour is cheaper, firms will take on more workers, but reduced real wages lead to reduced demand and higher unemployment.

The Chancellor has now apparently passed the parcel to the Paymaster General, judging by his speech to the City University Business School yesterday. That speech gains credence because of its source, but Ministers are just as capable of coming out with daft ideas as anyone else.

The Paymaster General conjures up an "Alice in Wonderland" picture of employers distributing largesse to their employees in totally unjustified amounts, unrelated to their performance or to the position of the company — a situation I never came across in a lifetime of working on the shop floor. Companies are urged to pay lower rates of wages, as it is said that this will produce more jobs in the regions. The ultimate logic of that argument is that if we worked for nothing we should get all the jobs.

National pay bargaining is condemned, but the Paymaster General and his advisers seem unaware that in many sectors, such as engineering, national bargaining seeks to establish basic minima, with regional and company variations negotiated in hard-won agreements at local level. Job evaluation seeks to establish the value of a job to the employee and the employer; it has to be related to the ability of a company to pay and its prospects.

Instead of indulging in these flights of fancy, if the Government wanted to be constructive they could do something about the rates of interest which push up the costs of borrowing for research and development to enable companies to continue to be prosperous. They could do something about cheap, subsidised imports of castings, for example, from Spain and Brazil which have already cost us 700 jobs in Nuneaton. They could do something about the dumping of cement by Greece. They could stimulate demand by spending money on the infrastructure. For example, we have in Coventry 944 unfit dwellings, 4,935 buildings which lack basic amenities and 4,182 which need renovation. If we started to rectify that situation nationwide the problem of the labourer wanting to be a bricklayer would be solved because there would be jobs for all the people in the building industry.

The Government could do something about the open access to the United Kingdom market, which does not apply in the reverse direction. I have not got time to develop that argument, but people know all about the tariff barriers that our goods have to jump in other countries which exporters from those countries do not meet when their goods enter this country.

Despite the huge totals of the unemployed, which have trebled since this Government came into office, employers still say that there are skill shortages. This brings me to the question of training. The Government repeatedly stress that training must be market-led and that in the long term responsibility must lie with the employers; but it is well known that in a recession one of the first costs to be cut is that of training.

In engineering the intake of apprentices has dropped from 27,000 in the mid-1970's to around 8,000 in 1985 —although I realise that there are other approaches to training. The Government have channelled resources through the Manpower Services Commission, but there is a need for real liaison to see that the money is used effectively. Too much reliance is placed on local labour market intelligence to inform the planning of training provision, but this cannot be relied on to give a firm prediction of future training needs. This may partly explain why, in the three White Papers on training, no mention was made of the needs of women or of black people nor of the reasons for the closure of the industrial training boards and skillcentres.

Instead of trying to break the backs of the trade unions through punitive legislation, the Government will be well advised to look to coherent and well-reasoned policies towards British industry, based on reality and not on fancy, and not drive further wedges between north and south by advocating reductions in wages to go with the reductions in jobs which we have already had—and I include in the north anywhere above Watford. The Paymaster General has said that expectations must change. Let him make a start by creating the expectation of a job and a decent home for millions of our fellow citizens.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Many hon. Members on the Opposition and Government Benches have been waiting to take part in the debate. Unfortunately, because of the length of some of the speeches, some hon. Members have been squeezed out, including me because I gave my name to you, Mr. Speaker, this morning.

Could I make a point of order which I hope is constructive? Some two years ago I suggested to one of the members of the Select Committee on Administration that next to that digital clock in this Chamber there should be another digital clock, the same as on the Annunciator, showing when an hon. Member gets up. When Members rise to speak they do not realise the length of time they are speaking. It is all right to have a clock on the desk so that the Clerk can see how long an hon. Member has been speaking, but sitting on this side of the House we cannot see and do not realise the length of time an hon. Member has been speaking. Can that be taken up with the Leader of the House to see whether something can be done about it, so that instead of appeals being made from the Chair for short speeches hon. Members who speak will be conscious of the time?

Mr. Speaker: I fully share the frustration expressed by the hon. Gentleman and I say to the other hon. Members who have been unable to be called tonight that they only need to look at the list at the end of the Chamber to see the length of the speeches. One solution would be for the House to pass the ten-minute limit on speeches, which would have enabled everybody who wished to speak to do so.

9.26 pm

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): My hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) put forward a suggestion which will be supported throughout the House with a great deal of sympathy. I add my commiserations to those hon. Members on the Government Benches who have not been able to participate tonight, but I suggest that they should level some of that criticism at the Paymaster General, who spoke at inordinate length at the beginning of this debate.

[Mr. John Evans]

This has been one of the most cynical motions that the House of Commons has ever had before it. It

"commends the Government . . . welcomes the national launch . . . congratulates the Government".

We have not heard one word tonight from the Paymaster General or any of his hon. Friends about the fact that there are 3¼ million people who are registered as unemployed in this country. In fact, about 4½ million people are out of work who are available to work if there were any jobs for them.

The fact that the wording of the Government motion comes entirely from the EEC document entitled, "Action Programme for Employment Growth", which is itself something of a joke, only adds to my cynicism of almost everything that this Government have done in employment and unemployment over the past eight years. There was a very strange omission from the Paymaster General's speech this afternoon, and indeed from the speeches of all his hon. Friends. Only two weeks ago, at the action for jobs breakfast, about which we heard such a great deal, the Prime Minister told the country that she was aiming for full employment. It is significant that the Paymaster General and the Secretary of State have said not one word about that remarkable promise that the Prime Minister made to the nation only a fortnight ago.

I have followed employment and unemployment issues ever since I came into the House of Commons. I have worked with or against every Secretary of State who has ever held that office, but I am bound to say that the present twin incumbents of the office in my view have reduced the Government's credibility on statistics in general and unemployment statistics in particular to the lowest ever level. The truth is that no one in this country now believes the Government's unemployment statistics. The Paymaster General and the Secretary of State are not in the least concerned with the plight of the unemployed. We never hear anything from them about the problems of unemployed people with families, particularly those who have suffered long-term unemployment.

The Paymaster General is not even concerned with the actual numbers of unemployed because he constantly alters the totals to mask the amount of unemployment that exists in our society. He is certainly not concerned with the growing divide between north and south, although I accept that the "south" has to be very carefully measured. Certain figures were released recently which I found fascinating and saddening and which indicate the depths of the north-south divide. Let us take three constituencies in the north-west and three constituencies in the home counties. I appreciate very much the problems of women, but nevertheless male unemployment is a very solid indicator of the depth of the problem. The unemployment rate in Liverpool, Riverside is 38·4 per cent., in Chesham and Amersham 3·9 per cent., in Manchester, Central 36·3 per cent., in Esher 4 per cent., in Knowsley, North 32·2 per cent., and in Beaconsfield 4·2 per cent. That is a clear indication of the depths of male unemployment in the north and south of this country.

Mr. Litherland *rose*——

Mr. Evans: I am sorry; I cannot give way to my hon. Friend although I have referred to his constituency. Time is extremely short.

The Government are not remotely concerned with the decline in manufacturing industry. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton), in a devastating critique of the Government's statistics, pointed out that there has been a drop in employment in manufacturing of 1,750,000. My hon. Friends the Members for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy) and for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) outlined the devastation in their areas where once-great industries have been reduced to virtual rubble. Certainly the Government are not concerned about the decline in skills, although we have heard a great deal about skill training from the Government Benches.

Some interesting figures were released recently by the engineering industry training board. They give a clear indication of the size and scale of the problem. On page 7 of the document issued on 22 January the EITB said:

"Between 1980 and 1984 the recruitment of craft and technician trainees into the industry fell by 50 per cent. In the 1986-87 training year total recruitment is provisionally estimated at 8,125, against over 20,000 in 1980-81. This will include 2,175 YTS trainees."

Later the EITB said:

"CBI surveys in 1985 began to show increasing evidence of shortages of traditional craft skills."

It takes four years to train a traditional craft apprentice, so in 1985 we were beginning to see the results of the Government's folly in 1981-82.

The one and only concern of the Government and their Employment Ministers is statistics. I would not dream of accusing Ministers of the Crown of lying to the House. I would not even dream of accusing them of subverting the truth. They may conceal it at times and certainly they are often economical with the truth, which appears to be an ongoing issue for them. None the less, if we compare the Government's position on unemployment and employment measures with reality, we find that the two have little in common.

As the public are aware, the unemployment figures provide the classic example of the Government's handiwork. There have been some 19 changes in the way the figures are compiled or presented. All the changes have had the same effect—to reduce the gross total of those eligible for benefit. I shall not go over the precise figures. Suffice it to say that if the Labour Administration of 1979 had used the same basis of counting the unemployed as the present Administration, there would have been fewer than 1 million officially registered as unemployed when the 1979 election took place. I remind Conservative Members that they won that election on the lying slogan that Labour was not working. How many of them are now ashamed of the filthy campaign which they ran on that occasion against the Labour party?

The Government will tell us that there have been only six changes in the presentation of statistics. I have written to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment, the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Lee), giving him evidence of the 19 changes. So far I have not heard from him. No doubt we shall learn from the Department of Employment that two plus two equals three.

Another example of the black propaganda employed by the Department of Employment is the title given to its latest wheeze to get the unemployed off the register in time for a general election—the job training scheme. The first point about that scheme is that there are no wages. The people who will be dragooned into the scheme, who will

be mainly young people, will get only their previous rate of benefit, but it will not be called benefit. To get round the nightmare of bureaucracy and regulation which passes for a welfare system, conscripts to the scheme will receive payments slightly lower than their previous rate of benefit, topped up to exactly that level by a training allowance. The Government have still not decided what they want to call the new payment. I suggest that they ask some of the people who have been involved in the pilot areas and they will probably receive some interesting suggestions.

Secondly, all the information which is available on the so-called training that is involved in the scheme and which the young people would receive shows that it will be negligible—perhaps five or six hours a week. That total is equivalent to about three or four weeks' training in six months. At the end of that six months we are told that they will obtain a qualification. In fact, they will gat a useless piece of paper which will guarantee them nothing. There will certainly be no work for them.

When the Minister replies, will he tell us what those young people have been trained for and where the jobs are that they will receive when they have finished their six months' training? The job training scheme will not improve Britain's training record, which has been well documented in a whole range of reports.

In a report submitted to the MSC in 1985 entitled "Adult Training in Britain" it was noted that:

"for the workforce as a whole, off-the-job training occupied on average 1·9 days per year. This represents perhaps 14 hours compared with the 30-40 which is thought to be good practice in West Germany—and the 9·5 days per year which it has been calculated British managers spend on business lunches, above a normal lunch break."

This new scheme will not improve on that. Indeed, to dignify this concoction with the title of a scheme is beyond a joke. However, the Government are not joking. They are deadly serious in their endeavours to get this scheme off the ground, so much so that within weeks of it being offered to young people in pilot areas around the country, and without waiting for an appraisal of its effectiveness, the Government have decided to increase its availability nationwide and to increase the number of places to 110,000 before September.

Now we hear of proposals to increase the scope of the scheme still further, to the 220,000 under-25s who have been unemployed for more than six months and to the whole of the age group without a job. That would probably involve about 500,000 people.

Time grows short and, unfortunately, much of what I have prepared must be left on the cutting-room floor. However, it must be said that this rather cynical motion talked of more help for the long-term unemployed. If Ministers really want to help the long-term unemployed, why do they not give the higher rate of supplementary benefit to the over-55s, who would truly benefit from it? The truth is that in vast areas anyone who is over 55 and is unemployed is on the scrap heap. He will not get a job in the future. It is cynical of the Government to suggest anything otherwise.

On the matter of cynicism, the speech that the Paymaster General made yesterday is possibly one of the most synical speeches that he has ever made in his political career. He talked about offering a five-point action plan designed to remove barriers to flexibility in pay bargaining. He said that an annual pay round should be banned. However, I remind the Paymaster General that we are still a democracy and it is for the employers and trade unions to decide whether they wish to abandon the annual pay round.

The Paymaster General talked about abandoning the going rate. As my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) said, the MSC advertisements on television talked about paying the rate for the job. Presumably that will be dropped from the advertisements.

The Paymaster General talked about abandoning comparability and job evaluation. Surely those are tools which are necessary in industrial relations and which are used by all managements.

Finally, the Paymaster General talked about ending national pay bargaining. Certainly, in the private sector, pay bargaining has always been about minimum rates. Considerable plant bargaining follows national pay bargaining and that gives wide variations across different parts of the country.

The Paymaster General said that all these practices

"restrict labour market flexibility, encourage excessive pay increases and destroy jobs."

He did not offer a single shred of evidence in the speech, in the press release or in his speech today to the House. He gave the game away when he said:

"In the public sector, virtually all employees are covered by national agreements. Where the government is the employer we will seek to gain acceptance of a wider geographic variation in pay rates . . . Greater variation in pay rates will help reduce differences in regional unemployment rates. Lower wage costs in the regions may encourage firms to move there."

Why are the firms not flocking there now? Why are they not flocking to the north-east, where the wages are lower? Why are they flocking instead to the M4 belt and other areas where wages are higher, and retreating from the regions?

The Government have served notice that they intend to attack workers in the public sector, the Civil Service trade unions and workers in local government. Notice has been served that the Government intend to ensure that those who live and work in the outlying regions had better expect wage cuts from the Tory Government soon.

There is a deep cynicism at the heart of the Tory party. On Monday, I read in *The Independent* about the plight of a dozen former Ministers in the Tory Cabinet, who have picked up a remarkable batch of directorships and consultancies over the past years. They include a former Secretary of State for the Environment, the right hon. and learned Member for Hexham (Mr. Rippon), who has increased his directorships from 33 to 47. Presumably he cannot manage on his £18,000 a year.

On page 1 of *The Independent* on the same day there was an article saying that the Secretary of State for Employment is seeking further cuts in the unemployment benefit. The article said:

"Lord Young, who carries the support of the Prime Minister, is convinced that more limitations on social security benefits are needed to persuade more people, particularly school leavers, to take up the Government's jobs and training schemes."

It is all very well for well-heeled former Secretaries of State and City-slicker Members of Parliament to earn fat salaries, but the unemployed and the poor have to suffer at the hands of the Tory Government. There is much talk about an early general election. The sooner the better. We

[Mr. Evans]

can put the Government's policies in front of the country, get the Government out of office and get in a Labour Government. I commend our amendment to the House.

9.42 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. David Trippier): Throughout this long debate, I have been fascinated to hear which Government schemes the official Opposition have chosen to attack, and which they have chosen to leave well alone. With the exception of the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy), they have chosen to avoid talking about small firms and entrepreneurship, I suspect for two reasons. First, they have to concede that the Government have taken the high ground on the subject, with record figures in self-employment and the net growth in small firms reflecting our success, as was made clear by my hon. Friend the Member for Lincoln (Mr. Carlisle). Secondly, they do not believe that they could convince the electorate that they understand enterprise or small firms. They admitted as much by not mentioning them once in either of their manifestos for 1979 or 1983.

On the other hand, the Opposition talked a lot about what should be done that could destroy this sector, such as the significant increase in local authority rates, which would finance their half-baked ideas on council expenditure, and increases in taxes which would kill off the entrepreneurs and risk-takers and nullify the projected increase in the jobs about which they fantasise. If, after all that, the firms in the sector are dead but will not lie down, the Opposition will hit them with a statutory training levy. That proposal was as eloquently rejected by my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall) as it is by me. How can the Opposition say that they are in touch with the electorate when they want to hand them the poisoned chalice entitled "Real needs, local jobs"?

The Opposition are fond of quoting my Department's statistical data but choose to ignore the more than 1 million extra jobs that were created between 1982 and 1984 in firms employing fewer than 20 people. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) worships at the altar of the regional enterprise boards, but even they recognise the vital importance of new and emerging companies. It is a slow process, but they are beginning to recognise that new jobs will come from small firms—a fact that we have been trying to hammer home for the past few years. Conservative Members want to know what restrains the Labour Front Bench from declaring wholehearted support for small businesses. Is it that, by increased support given through local authorities, they can benefit only a mere fraction of the total population of small firms, whereas by increased rates and taxes they will damage them all? I point out to the hon. Member for Attercliffe that Sheffield is a good example of an area with high rates.

These days, we are talking about 1·6 million small businesses and 2·7 million self-employed people. They are record figures. Unless local authorities are to subsidise, invest in or lend to every small business, which is a ludicrous proposition, any help given to the chosen few will be a drop in the bucket alongside the increased charges that they will have to face, according to the recent Labour party policy document.

Mr. Bruce *rose*——

Mr. Trippier: I have no intention of giving way. We face a shortage of time.

How many small firms meetings have been attended by the hon. Members for Kingston upon Hull, East, for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman), for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) and for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short)? Not a lot, I should think. How many of those who have attended such meetings have found that their audiences have asked for substantial increases in rates and taxes, or did the Shadow spokesmen not mention that point? The Opposition have not mentioned it in the debate.

One of the most successful schemes introduced by the Government is the enterprise allowance scheme. Most people would find it difficult to attack the scheme. It is like motherhood—one could not knock it—but that does not stop the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East from having a go. Shortly, we shall launch the 200,000 business set up under that scheme. Opposition Members should tell the people who run such businesses and employ people that they are not in real jobs and hear what they have to say. They should tell people employed in tourism that they are in candyfloss or Mickey Mouse jobs and hear what they have to say.

There are conflicting claims between the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East and the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) about whether a statutory levy is to be introduced for all businesses, which would have the effect of increasing corporation tax by at least 15 percentage points. The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) accurately referred to the European Community document, the action programme on employment growth, which stands as part of the motion. Frankly, the Opposition should be prepared to listen to what the hon. Gentleman said about it. We could learn a great deal from the European Community social affairs council. Over the past 18 months, not just from December, the action programme adopted by the Council—adopted unanimously, as my right hon. Friend said—sets four priorities for action. First on the list is more help for small businesses and the self-employed. There was not a dissenting voice in Europe, only from the British Labour party. The council suggested better training for young people and adults, more help to get the long-term unemployed back to work and steps to loosen the labour market by, for example, the encouragement of more part-time and temporary employment.

The real lesson to be drawn is how far the countries of the Community, whatever their political colour, have moved away from the 1960s-style economic policy that is still so loved by the Opposition. Only the official Opposition and the alliance are left still believing that one can somehow spend one's way out of unemployment. The message is very clear. Everyone except the Opposition is out of step. They have learned absolutely nothing from the past.

What about the policies of the alliance? There is disarray in the alliance. I listened carefully to the speech by the hon. Member for Gordon. He will remember that in January 1986 the Liberals announced officially:

> "We aim at creating one million jobs in three years at a cost of £4 billion per annum."

By the spring of 1986 the equation had been changed again. Officially the SDP-Liberal alliance—they were together then—said that their Budget policies would reduce unemployment by at least 750,000 over three years.

At the Liberal party conference in September 1986—what a wonderful conference that was, especially when it discussed defence policies — the Liberals committed themselves to a policy of reducing unemployment to 2 million over the lifetime of a Parliament, while in the previous week the SDP proposed to cut unemployment to under 2 million within two years. That was an even more ambitious target than that of the Labour party. This morning it was changed again, according to the article that we all read in The *Guardian* written by the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth). He says the target will be achieved within three years, so he is moderating the policy somewhat.

Mr. Bruce: You will not achieve any reduction.

Mr. Trippier: Did you have a word with him before you came into the Chamber?

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members must not keep bringing me into the debate.

Mr. Trippier: At least we all know that, despite its past conflicting claims, the Labour party says that it can reduce unemployment by 1 million. But how and at what cost will it do that? That is the question The *Guardian* asked last weekend. How many jobs must be created in order to knock 1 million off the register? Is it 1·3 million, 1·5 million, or 1·7 million? No account is taken of the jobs that will be shed by companies crippled by the increased rates and taxes that are proposed.

Why should the Labour party be any more credible now than it has been in the past? Every previous Labour Administration promised to reduce unemployment and every one has presided over substantially increased unemployment. *[Interruption.]* It did not work in the past so why is it more likely to work in the future? *[Interruption.]* The Leader of the Opposition has said that under a Labour Government local authorities will be the engines of growth in our economy. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. We often hear things in this Chamber with which we disagree but we listen to each other.

Mr. Trippier: Labour models its policy on a plan drawn up by Southwark council. Southwark's proposals call for the creation of 6,000 new jobs within two years and these would include a pool of 400 council employees to cover for absences and nearly 1,000 trainee positions in council departments. About three quarters of the jobs created would be people working for the council. On the basis of Southwark's own figures, the total cost of that plan, if applied nationally, would be £20 billion.

However, it is not just the cost and the nature of the employment envisaged that make these proposals demonstrably daft. The weakness of the scheme is compounded by the fact that nearly a quarter of Southwark council's existing white-collar jobs are currently vacant. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East hailed the Southwark blueprint as "the best thing that had happened on the employment front for a long time." That is a clear indication of his failure to understand how real and lasting jobs are created.

Mr. Rogers: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Trippier: No.

Miraculously, the Opposition urge us to spend more on training, but when we introduce a scheme to help that process, like the job training scheme, they say that it is rubbish. The Opposition cannot have it both ways. In recommending an expansion of the scheme, the Manpower Services Commission stresses the absolute priority that must be given to quality. That point was made by some of my hon. Friends.

I shall now respond to the point made by the hon. Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham). No one would seek to deny that in geographical terms there is a skill shortage in certain sectors. However, there is no need to get carried away about that because the figures show that fewer than 15 per cent. of firms currently expect output to be constrained by a shortage of skilled labour. That percentage contrasts with the figure of 50 per cent. that applied when the Labour party was last in government. We did not hear much about that from the hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans).

The hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) tried to rubbish restart. The aim of restart is to provide people who have been out of work for a long time with opportunities to help them back into the labour market. How can one attack that? In fact, 4 per cent. of interviewees are placed immediately into work as a direct result of the interview. Many others go from restart into opportunities such as the enterprise allowance scheme, the community programme, training and jobclubs which, in turn, lead to a job. I know that it was news to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East, but 60 per cent. of those leaving jobclubs go into a job. I bet the people who have found those jobs do not think that that Government initiative is tea and sympathy. I bet they do not think that in Langbaurgh, as my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) was quick to point out.

The hon. Member for Blackley and my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Lawler), in his excellent contribution, spoke about YTS. The hon. Member for Huddersfield made a point of assuring the House just last week that he and his hon. Friends have never voted against the youth training scheme. He is right. I am glad that he said that and I welcome it. However, it does not stop his hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East from denigrating the young people on the scheme. Time without number — we hear it again today — he has referred to YTS as a "skivvy scheme". That is an insult to those on it and an insult to the trade union members who are commissioners on the MSC.

In spite of all the rhetoric about the need for more spending on training, it is shameful that the previous Labour Government vetoed an embryonic form of the youth training scheme on the ground that it would be too expensive. The House will be interested to hear that the Department of Employment is today spending five times as much on training as the Labour Government did in their last year of office.

We are used to the Labour party accusing us of fiddling the figures but I am surprised to hear it trying to roast this old chestnut again today. The measures we have introduced to help young people and the unemployed are popular with the people they are designed for, even if they are not popular with the Labour party, and they work. That does not suit the Opposition, so every time we introduce something new they say we are interested only in numbers and not in people. What did the previous Labour Government do?

Mr. Litherland *rose*——

Mr. Trippier: Listen to this. I bet Opposition Members did not know this. Did the Labour Government add on to the unemployment count everyone on Government training schemes or receiving subsidies, everyone on STEP, the youth opportunities programme or those kept in work through temporary subsidies? Of course not. They knew then, as they know now, that people working on schemes such as the community programme or those receiving full-time training are not unemployed. If the Labour party employment spokesman was able to set about reducing the unemployment count by 1 million as he claims he can, will that be before or after he has added on all the people on special employment and training measures and all the young people who are being trained on the youth training scheme?

When he is put on the spot, as he was on "Weekend World" on Sunday by Matthew Parris, he was blown out of the water, as was his party and his policies. The reply he gave to the question about what his party would do if it was to come into power was pathetic. He said that he believed the Labour party could reduce unemployment by creating more jobs. He went on to say:

"we will spell out where they come from and you keep dragging me down to three hundred thousand."

The hon. Gentleman cannot be specific. He kept referring to the "Bryan Gould Committee". There is a new application coming from him for the plain English award for 1987. Because he now has to refer everything to the committee of his "comrade", as he calls him, the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), he will probably become more balanced because now he has a chip on both his shoulders.

The truth is that the Opposition policy is wholly shredded, which is probably what has happened to the document that was supposed to be released at the weekend. Their efforts in the debate have been abominable. They are in disarray. Never have their policies been so absurd. They must be rejected.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 160, Noes 221.

Division No. 91] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley, N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen McKay.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*

Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Sir Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
McGurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Malone, Gerald
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Neubert, Michael
Ottaway, Richard
Portillo, Michael
Powley, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Francis Maude and
Mr. David Lightbown.

Question accordingly negatived.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

MERCHANT SHIPPING

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

That the draft Merchant Shipping (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 26th January, be approved.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

Question agreed to.

PETITION

Mr. Alexander Ogorodnikov

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): I have the honour to present a petition on behalf, mainly, of my constituents, whose religious headquarters are in the constituency of Ilford, North. I wish to associate myself and my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, North (Mr. Bendall) with the sentiments of the petition.

It is a short petition, and if I may I will read it.

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.

The Humble Petition of Oasis House, Chadwell Heath, sheweth.

That the Soviet Christian Alexander Ogorodnikov is in abject conditions in a Soviet labour camp on a charge arising from his leadership of a Christian discussion group.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House encourage the Foreign Secretary in his representations to the Soviet Government with the purpose of obtaining Mr. Ogorodnikov's release and reunion with his wife and son.

And Your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

Electrical Products (Supply to BAOR)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

10.15 pm

Miss Betty Boothroyd (West Bromwich, West): In a nutshell, the debate is about the experience of British electrical manufacturers and the problems that they meet in trying to sell their products into the West German market. More particularly, it is about manufacturers of electric lighting products produced by such firms as Simplex Lighting of Tipton in my constituency, which tells me that it is unable even to sell its lighting products for installation in British Army of the Rhine establishments in West Germany because of the insistence by German installers of an approval mark which is needed in addition to the European recognised standard of safety.

We have the ludicrous situation of British defence establishments equipped with non-British electrical goods, and men and women in our defence forces reading and writing their letters home under lighting produced in Germany and paid for by British taxpayers.

But the debate is also about the impact that this barrier to trade has on our historically high trade deficit in manufactured goods which is presided over by the Government. It is about the consequent loss of revenue to the electrical manufacturing sector and the resultant loss in terms of jobs.

Lighting equipment produced by Simplex and many other similar manufacturers in this country is made in accordance with a standard known as BS4533. The Minister will know that this equates with the harmonised European standard of IEC 598. It is nonsense that, in spite of complying with all the harmonised European standards, electrical products supplied to West Germany must, in addition, carry what is known as the German VDE mark of approval. This insistence of the VDE mark is bound up with German insurance law. That law allocates responsibility for liability, in cases of damage, between the manufacturer on the one hand and the installer of the equipment on the other.

The installers of the equipment have a professional body which arranges employers' liability insurance. To obtain insurance cover, goods must be VDE approved. So, only German electrical products can be used in the Federal Republic for its insurance law to be valid. However competitive we become in terms of costs, we do not stand a chance because of this national approval system. Allowed to operate as it does, this situation directly contravenes the free movement of goods provisions of the treaty of Rome, so an illegality is being perpetuated.

Naturally, I am concerned about this situation. In the first place, it is illegal. Secondly, it has an adverse effect on the electrical manufacturing sector in the United Kingdom. As the Minister knows only too well, the west midlands is an area of manufacturing, or it once was. The people whom I represent are at the sharp end when job opportunities are lost because of obstacles to trade which the Government seem to fail to do anything about.

I need hardly remind the Minister tonight that, for almost a year, I have been making representations to the Ministry of Defence, the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of the Environment. In a pathetically inept manner, Ministers have passed the buck from one to another. I have asked more than a dozen parliamentary questions to try to stimulate some action, but I am forced to raise this matter on the Adjournment tonight because of the unsatisfactory responses that I have received.

If the Minister has examined his file he will know that what I am seeking is, first of all, for the Government to confirm the implementation of the low voltage directive of the EEC. That directive is known as directive 73/23. The Government also need to establish the incompatability and indeed, the illegality of adding to that the national VDE mark of approval that is insisted on by installers in the Federal Republic. It has now reached the stage where only the Government can enter into those negotiations with our EEC partner, the Federal Republic.

When I wrote to the Department of Trade and Industry, the Minister agreed that it was incompatible and on 22 July last, and in relation to action being taken in West Germany, he wrote:

"The way they do this, demanding a VDE mark, would however, seem to us incompatible with the Low Voltage Directive."

The Minister went on to say that he was taking the matter up with the German Ministry of Economics.

Even earlier than that, on 30 April last, a Minister at the Department of the Environment wrote to me acknowledging that Simplex Lighting products met the international standards, but he admitted regarding West Germany:

"In relation to international agreements, it is questionable whether or not the spirit of the agreement is being observed."

He went on to say that, in collaboration with the Department of Trade and Industry, he was pressing for consideration to be given to the wider issues involved. I have heard nothing from either Department since those dates.

There is action that could be taken. The Minister is aware that when goods comply with recognised European standards, as these do, under article 3 of that directive, it is made clear that their free movement should not be impeded. Yet, exports are impeded because of the insistence on this national marking.

I regret the fact that this is a very technical debate, but I assure the Minister that I have looked into this matter very carefully. The Government could bring action against West Germany under article 170 of the EEC treaty because the Federal Republic is failing to fulfil its obligations. I do not expect that the Government will take that action but I am keen to know what alternative action will be taken —and taken speedily—to see that British exports do not meet such obstacles.

I wish to consider another aspect of the matter. In answer to a parliamentary question, the Minister agreed that

"Any restrictions must impact on the . . . lighting industry"—[*Official Report*, 21 November 1986; c. *373*.]

However, he said that he could not assess the precise extent of loss of revenue.

Surely that cannot be right. Even if the loss to British electrical manufacturers of the West German market cannot be assessed—I appreciate that—some assessment can be made in relation to British defence establishments. It is, after all, the Property Services Agency's policy to encourage the use of British equipment in Crown establishments. Therefore, it must be possible to assess by how much manufacturing contracts could be increased were Crown Suppliers able to supply luminaires to the

British Army of the Rhine. On 21 November last, in answer to my question, the Minister, who was then at the Ministry of Defence, said:

"The average value of electrical installation work tendered for in property occupied by BAOR is about DM80 million per annum."

That is about £30 million a year. The Minister then said:

"The great majority of this work is placed with German contractors".—[*Official Report*, 21 November 1986; c. *358*.]

In spite of the excellence of British products and in spite of our prices being competitive, on the Government's own admission the majority of this work goes to German contractors, and it does so because German insurance law demands a national mark that is incompatible with EEC standards, and the British Government have so far done nothing about it. There can be no greater example of the Government's lack of support for British industry than this.

I have a great deal of sympathy tonight for the Minister. I had to telephone three Government Departments before I found out who was to respond to this debate. In all logic, I think that it should have been the Department of Trade and Industry, but this job has landed in the lap of an Environment Minister. Even so, I gave his office some notice of the points that I wished to raise, because I want some answers.

Despite the Minister's direct responsibilities in the Department of the Environment, it will not have escaped his notice that our manufacturing trade balance has taken a nose dive since his Government came to office. Six years ago, our trade balance in manufactures was in surplus to the tune of £5 billion. Since then we have moved into a deficit of over £7 billion. That historic situation has been brought about by the incompetence of this Government in responding to the real needs of the manufacturing sector.

Nor, I think, will it have escaped the Minister's notice that millions of jobs have been lost in the manufacturing sector. If he looks tonight at his own Government's figures, he will discover that about 200,000 jobs were lost between 1979 and 1986 in the electronic and electrical engineering industries. Many of those jobs were obviously lost in the west midlands.

What I am seeking tonight will not redress the massive imbalance in industrial and human devastation. I do not pretend for one moment that it will, but I believe that it will help those firms that are trying to compete with their hands tied behind their backs. I ask the Minister tonight to take action in support of British jobs and industry and to seek the lifting of what I consider to be an illegal obstacle to our export trade.

10.27 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): I know that the hon. Member for West Bromwich, West (Miss Boothroyd) has raised several questions in the past about this subject with both the Property Services Agency and the Department of Trade and Industry. The essential point, I believe, concerns complaints that British companies make about the difficulties that they experience when wishing to sell products to the British Army in Germany. For that reason, it falls to my Department to answer, although wider issues are raised, and I shall start by referring to them.

The low voltage directive, which came into force in the United Kingdom in 1975, covers the kind of light fittings that the hon. Member has referred to in her previous queries, along with most electrical equipment, with some exceptions, operating in the ranges 50 to 1,000 volts AC and 75 to 1,500 volts DC. This provides that electrical equipment, which meets the safety requirements of harmonised standards drawn up by the European electrical standards body, CENELEC, or standards produced by its international equivalent, IEC, must be allowed to be sold in all Community markets unless the member state can prove that the equipment does not meet the safety provisions of the directive itself.

Instead of using standards, manufacturers can make a declaration on the safety of the product, or offer a certificate produced by a recognised certification body as proof of conformity with the directive, and free circulation must be allowed unless the product is proved unsafe. Additionally, a product for use by the general public, but not for industrial or public sector use, tested by a certification body recognised under the directive must be accepted without further test by a certification body in another member state. Thus a product tested to a specific standard by, for instance, the British Standards Institution or others listed in the directive must be accepted by a certification body in another member state if the standards used by both are identical. A product tested, for instance, to a British standard which is not identical to a German DIN standard will not be covered by this arrangement.

As regards British light fittings, those meeting British Standard 4533—and although the hon. Lady said that that was equivalent to the International Standard IEC598, I am informed that it is only partially equivalent—as my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry told the hon. Member on 24 November, officials in the Department of Trade and Industry have pursued the question with the federal economics and labour ministries in Bonn and have received an assurance that no legal or de facto regulations exist which require light fittings to meet a German standard or carry a German, for example UDE, certification mark. It is worth pointing out that the standard IEC598 is not a European harmonised standard but an international one. That means that it has no effect on the right of goods to free circulations.

In respect of luminaires meeting an international standard, low voltage directive 73/23 allows for their free sale without additional testing, but it is open to member states to query an assertion of conformity if unsupported by certification or other proof. However, the British standard covering luminaires, which I believe the hon. Member was querying, is, I understand, only partially equivalent to the international standard, and it would be open to German authorities to demand evidence that the product meets other general safety requirements. The same would apply in the United Kingdom to a foreign product suspected of being unsafe. It would be open to the manufacturer to have his product tested and certified in the United Kingdom by a body recognised under the directive, and this would ease the task of proving safety.

I shall now turn to the construction work which the Property Services Agency carries out for the British forces in Germany. I think that there is a certain misunderstanding about the scope of our operation there. The rules for such work are set out in a supplement to the NATO Status of Forces Agreement Treaty Series No. 73 (1963) between the Federal Republic of Germany and all the NATO foreign forces stationed in Germany. Thus the agreement

[Mr. Christopher Chope]

covers not only the United Kingdom but the United States, Canada, Holland, France and Belgium. The salient features of this agreement in the context of the hon. Member's question are that construction work is subject to German contract law and is carried out on our behalf by the German Construction Administration; the land and property remain in the ownership of the Federal Government and buildings have to be maintained to German standards, because Germany is the host nation; buildings revert to the Federal Government when no longer needed. The United Kingdom may apply its own standards in the field of public safety and order where these are equal to or higher than those prescribed in German law, but responsibility then rests with the United Kingdom for the application of those standards.

In the rare cases where the United Kingdom carries out the work direct that is, not through the German authority, for security or other operational reasons it must

"respect the Federal Republic regulations regarding competition, preferred tenders, and prices applicable to public contracts".

As a result of the NATO Status of Forces Agreement virtually all the Property Services Agency's work is carried out for it by a German Federal Government authority known as the German Construction Administration which is a network of offices at federal and lande level, spread throughout the British Army of the Rhine area. The federal contract rules for construction tendering procedures are used in the same way as for any other public contracts placed by the German authorities. These make provision for competition and action to combat restricted and unfair practices.

The salient points in the context of the question are as follows. Specific products, or methods, or specific places of origin or sources of supply may only be expressly specified if justified by the value of the work concerned. Designation of specific products or methods — for example, trade names — may be used exceptionally, however, only with the suffixed note "or of equivalent type" if it is not feasible to provide a description by means of accurate, universally understood terms. Standard trade terminology should be used to specify the service; the relevant DIN standards can be used. It is for those reasons that it is not the same situation that arises with PSA contracts in this country. We are talking about a totally different situation, constrained by the rules set out in the NATO Status of Forces Agreement.

I shall now turn to the practical application of the NATO Status of Forces Agreement in the terms that the PSA carries out its work for the British forces. First, I need to say something about the German construction industry. The German Construction Administration, and its subordinate organisations in the Lander at the regional level, normally use German contractors, most of whom are small businesses specialising in particular aspects of the building trade. Large general contractors such as we know them in this country are a rarity. PSA try to encourage British contractors to compete wherever possible, but for the most part such contracts that have been placed with British firms have tended to be for specialist equipment. The German contractors and manufacturers are liable in German law for any faults that arise from the work they carry out. They therefore act with extreme caution in choosing the equipment they wish to install and lean towards using fitments which have a recognised German standard as a defence should a case be brought against them. In Germany, DIN standards and VDE certification are used widely and German contractors are therefore used to supplies having such German clearance.

It is against this background that British manufacturers have to establish a market for their goods, and nobody can overstate the difficulty that they have. While the EEC low voltage directive allows for the access of many goods in the way I have described, there are practical difficulties to overcome. Even when we have educated German contractors to accept goods other than those with VDE marks, there is the practical difficulty of German contractors obtaining the British products and securing the essential back-up service which they would reasonably demand before feeling secure in their purchase of the British product. There are thousands of small electrical companies throughout Germany which have established sources of supply from wholesalers. British suppliers would need to establish outlets for their supplies and spares and servicing. Clearly the normal rules of competition would be applied by German contractors in selecting the equipment they wished to use.

Interdepartmental consultations are now proceeding to consider how best to improve the prospects for British manufacturers to supply their products to the British forces in Germany. There will need to be consultation with the German Construction Administration on whether they can apply the German contract law in a less restrictive way in order to allow products to be supplied to the British forces which do not necessarily comply with German standards but nevertheless meet the general safety requirements. We are looking currently particularly at the clause which states

"Standard trade terminology should be used to specify the service; relevant (DIN) standards *can* be used."

Discussion has also started in Brussels on a new works directive covering public building contracts in the Community which will make mandatory the use of European standards where they exist, which, in the near future, should also assist the free circulation of products within the Community. One strong incentive which should encourage German contractors to consider British supplies will be price. While no direct comparison records have been kept, it is considered that, while up to about a year ago German products had a competitive edge over their British counterparts on price, this has probably changed in our favour because of the change in the exchange rate.

The hon. Lady referred to some of the queries which she has raised before and the non-reply to some of those queries. I am informed that full replies were given to the parliamentary questions on 24 November by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry. Therefore, I do not think that I can accept the hon. Lady's criticism.

Miss Boothroyd: What I was complaining about was the fact that Ministers tell me that they have written to the German Ministry of Economics and they would let me have their response. This was last year. I have had no response to that.

Mr. Chope: I shall ensure that the hon. Lady is kept informed about the consultations. This is an issue which she has been pushing very hard. It is appropriate that we have the opportunity to discuss it so extensively.

Another issue raised was whether it would be possible to take action under the treaty of Rome. I am instructed that action under the treaty can be taken only if there are Government regulations causing barriers to trade. As the hon. Lady has been told previously, there is no evidence of any such regulation or any informal arrangement having such an effect. That is why we cannot take action under the treaty.

I am most anxious that British suppliers have the maximum opportunity to sell their goods in Germany. In 1983 the PSA held a seminar under the auspices of the British Overseas Trade Board to detail the building opportunities in Germany and other overseas countries where the PSA has work and to encourage exports. I thought that that was an important initiative. I do not think the response from contractors and suppliers has been as good as it might have been. Each year since; we have supplied the Export Group for Construction Industries with lists of projects which will be tendered for in the coming year with the same objective of encouraging exports. I want to ensure that those contractors, manufacturers and suppliers with an interest are given the maximum support to compete.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at nineteen minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 13 February 1987

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Orders of the Day

Crown Proceedings (Armed Forces) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

9.35 am

Mr. Churchill (Davyhulme): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Of all the duties that Parliament has taken upon itself, few are more ancient in origin or more fundamental to the purpose of our being in this place than the redress of grievances. Predating by far the power to make or break Governments, redressing the grievances of the ordinary citizen against the overmighty power of the Crown or the Government has been seen by parliamentarians down the centuries to be one of the highest duties of our two Houses of Parliament. I am glad to say that to this day that remains the case, although I regret that it should still be necessary.

The Bill seeks to rectify an injustice that has become increasingly more glaring—the discrimination between members of the armed forces and the ordinary citizen in seeking damages in cases of injury or death arising from the negligence of others. An ordinary citizen or his dependants may sue through the courts and obtain substantial damages, but members of the armed forces are denied that right. This discrimination has given rise to much bitterness and a sense of injustice among those who have served their country loyally and suffered for it, not once, but twice—first, in suffering injury or death in the course of their duty and, secondly, in being denied the proper level of compensation that would be their due if they were in any other walk of life. I count myself fortunate that the opportunity has fallen to me to rectify this injustice.

I should especially like to thank my fellow sponsors of my Bill, who are drawn from all parties, as well as those who have campaigned outside the House to secure a change in the law. I pay special tribute to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley), who has been a leading light, in recent years, in the campaign to have the law changed. I welcome the fact that he is a sponsor of my Bill.

The concept of Crown immunity dates back to at least the 13th century and was based on the maxim that "the King can do no wrong." In practice, that meant that the King could not be sued in his own courts. That remained the situation until 1947, when the first post-war Labour Government brought in the Crown Proceedings Act as a reforming measure aimed at removing much of the Crown privilege and granting the citizen, for the first time, the right to sue the Crown. However, the Government of the day were adamant that that right could not be extended to members of the armed forces by reason of the special and hazardous nature of their employment. Indeed, they went further. They removed the right, which had previously existed, of one member of the armed forces to sue another in cases of injury or death caused by negligence. It has to be said that this was a right that was rarely used in practice and was discouraged by the fact that the Crown was not legally obligated to stand behind any officer or soldier who might have been sued.

The then Attorney-General, Sir Hartley Shawcross—now the noble Lord, Lord Shawcross — on Second Reading of the Crown Proceedings Bill in July 1947, stated:

> "It is necessary in the course of Service training, in order to secure the efficiency of the Forces, to exercise them in the use of live ammunition, in flying in close formation and, in the Navy, in battle conditions with, perhaps, destroyers dashing about with lights out, and so on. These operations are highly dangerous and, if done by private citizens, would, no doubt, be extremely blameworthy".

Parliament at the time accepted that it would not be appropriate for service personnel, even in peacetime, when it is often essential to push training to the limits of realism, with risks comparable to those encountered in actual operations, to be able to bring civil actions for negligence against one another. It was considered in the atmosphere of 40 years ago that to do so would run against the fundamental requirement of mutual trust, confidence and loyalty which is essential to an effective fighting force.

However, 40 years have since past; years in which, apart from Korea and brush-fire wars in various part of the globe, we have been at peace. The general climate of public opinion in civil and human rights has changed considerably since that legislation was enacted. Throughout society there is now much less willingness to accept that the special circumstances of life in the armed forces justify depriving the service man or service woman of the rights enjoyed by his or her fellow citizens, particularly in peacetime, and particularly in circumstances that are similar to those experienced by other disciplined forces that are engaged on hazardous duties, such as the police and the fire brigades. This change of opinion is undeniably in the right direction and we in Parliament must respond to it.

Section 10 is outdated and places at a distinct disadvantage a section of society in peacetime in a way that does not apply to those who do not have the honour to wear the service man's uniform. Because of section 10, a service man who is injured in peacetime as a result of negligence on the part of one of his colleagues is denied the right to pursue a claim for damages in court. Instead, he is paid, regardless of faults, his pension and disability benefit if he is forced to quit the armed forces. These payments are normally tax free and are operated as necessary to take account of inflation. However, let us not forget that the existing legislation was enacted many years ago and in rather different circumstances. What may have been valid in the deliberations of 1947 is certainly not so today.

On Second Reading of the Crown Proceedings Act in 1947 the then Attorney-General acknowledged that if a service man who was injured on duty remained in the service he would get proper medical care and treatment.

[Mr. Churchill]

On the other hand, if he was invalided out of the service or died he or his dependants would have pension rights. The Attorney-General went on to say:

"the capital value of the pension rights, in terms of money is, in general—I am not saying it is so in every case, because one cannot be certain in every case what damages will be awarded—as valuable as the probable damages which may be recoverable in an action at law if such an action lay."—[*Official Report*, 4 July 1947; Vol. 439, c. 1681-83.]

It is evident that it was not the intention of the Labour Government or of Parliament to place the service man at a disadvantage compared with his civilian counterpart, but rather to provide what might today be called a "no fault" system of compensation that effectively cut out the lawyers and the courts, and with them much expense and delay. Regrettably, that is not how things have worked out.

Sir John Page (Harrow, West): As so often happens in the House, when one listens to the arguments one starts disagreeing with what one thought one might believe in. If the captain of a destroyer dashing about at night in assumed wartime conditions, as my hon. Friend set out earlier, bashes his ship into another, with the loss of many lives, and negligence could be proved, would the captain not be in the same position as, say, a lorry driver?

Mr. Churchill: Yes, I understand that to be the case, although I am not learned in the law. If that were to happen, provided that negligence could be shown though undoubtedly the courts would take account of the fact that military formations take part in especially hazardous operations, even when exercising in peacetime, and allowance would be made for that. Under the terms of the Bill, if enacted, those who were injured or killed in consequence of that act of negligence would be able to sue the individual or individuals responsible. However, those responsible would enjoy the full indemnity of the Crown, which would stand behind them financially. Even today, without that, they would be subject to the full rigours of military discipline for any acts of negligence that they may have committed.

The situation has changed dramatically over the past 40 years, above all with the fact that the awards made by the courts to civilians who are the victims of negligence have far outstripped, sometimes by a factor of 10 or more, compensation available to the service man. By way of example I cite a case drawn to my attention by my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop), who cannot be here today as he has to attend a constituency appointment in the west country. He writes:

"For many years I fought—and without any eventual success—to receive adequate compensation for a young man who had a brilliant career as an amateur boxer. Unfortunately, through gross incompetence, he was terribly burned in an entirely avoidable accident while under instruction inside the fire tunnel at RNAS Culdrose. Whereas he had every right to expect a successful career as a boxer after his engagement in the Royal Navy, the injuries which he received had the consequence that he was refused a licence by the British Boxing Board of Control. Instead of a well-paid career, he has instead part-time work as a labourer."

Had that young man been a civilian, the courts would undoubtedly have taken full account of his blighted career as a boxer and the remuneration that would have gone with that career. As it was, because he wore the Queen's uniform and is judged still to be fit to do a part-time labouring job, he qualifies for only a 20 per cent. pension from the Ministry of Defence. This is the sort of injustice that my Bill seeks to correct.

Nor am I the first to attempt this reform. As long as 15 years ago the injustice of this Act had become apparent, and in 1975 the former Member for Upminster, Mr. John Loveridge, fought unsuccessfully to bring in a similar Bill. Since then more and more cases of injustice have come to light. I propose to cite only one, though I feel that to do so may be invidious because there are so many cases that deserve mention and to which no doubt other hon. Members will allude.

It is a recent case, which involved 19-year-old Vincent Anderson, a sapper in the Royal Engineers. He died on 15 July last year of heatstroke, after being made to run in a deepsea diving suit on a hot day. The pathologist said that the diving suit prevented the body's normal cooling process from working and should never have been used for exercise outside water. Mr. Anderson's father, in a letter to me, alleges that not only has he been denied sight of the Army's report on this incident, but that the report was not made available to the coroner, who, no doubt, because of his incomplete possession of the facts, amazingly returned a verdict of accidental death.

It is my hope that that kind of shameful cover up, when death was plainly caused by negligence rather than by accident, will no longer be possible once the Bill is enacted. I also hope that those who are responsible for such training, which is rightly realistic and can be dangerous, will take their responsibilities even more seriously to ensure that no serious injury or harm is caused to trainees.

I have a son in the Royal Navy and when his mother heard that he would be put through the fire tunnel she said, "I will call up his commander. It is monstrous that my boy should be treated in that way." His mother was especially worried because she had heard that officers can be reprimanded for unrealistic training if a proportion of those involved do not sustain minor burns when going through those fire tests. However, I believe that it is fair to point out that it was precisely because of the realism of the training to which the armed forces are subjected—I cite particularly the case of the Royal Navy—that their loss of men during the Falklands campaign in the south Atlantic was far lower than it might have been. Though many ships were blown up and lost, in no case did more than 10 per cent. of the crew lose their lives.

That was directly attributable to the realism of their training in peacetime and I would not wish that training to change, but in cases such as the one I have cited it is clearly unforgivable for sombody to be put in a deepsea diving suit in the heat of a summer's day and be required to carry out vigorous exercises in suits not designed for that purpose. When this legislation is enacted it will be impossible for the Ministry of Defence to escape liability—as no doubt it will seek to do so in the case that I have cited, as it has in previous cases—by resorting to the infamous section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act 1947.

For 15 years or more successive Labour and Conservative Governments have refused to countenance any change in the law. It is to the great credit of this Government, and especially my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, who have taken such a close personal interest in this Bill, that not only have the Government agreed to reconsider this matter, but, in the

face of the natural inertia of bureaucracy, have determined that section 10 should be repealed. The Government's decision is courageous, for it represents an implicit admission that the existing system is unjust. Such an admission strikes at the heart of the doctrine of bureaucratic infallability. It will be severely frowned upon by the "Sir Humphrey" brigade when they gather at the Athenaeum or such watering places as they may frequent.

My right hon. and hon. Friends deserve the gratitude of the House for having the fairness, good sense and courage to recognise that it is unacceptable, in peacetime, to deprive members of the armed forces—all of them volunteers—of one of their basic rights as citizens——

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): In his discussions with the Government, did my hon. Friend consider the possibility of amending section 10? Although I support the Bill, it appears to place members of the armed forces in exactly the same position as the lorry driver previously mentioned. Surely there is a distinction and that that was the original reason for section 10. Would it not be possible to amend the section to remove the injustice, while at the same time reiterating the specific and special position of the armed forces?

Mr. Churchill: Over the past three years of the inquiry those matters were considered at great length and in detail by the Ministry of Defence. The outcome of my hon. and right hon. Friends' deliberations was that there was no longer any justification, in peacetime, for service men and women to be denied their rights. I do not believe that it is right for those on training exercises to have their lives jeopardised or brought to an early and sorry end, such as in the case that I have cited. Such a result clearly demonstrates negligence on the part of those organising the training. If it means that the organisers will be more careful in the future, that is right and proper.

The Bill is brief. It seeks to repeal, from the date of enactment, section 10 of the 1947 Act, while retaining the power to reactivate that section in the event of actual or impending hostilities or at a time of great national emergency. Reimposition would be effected—the precise terms of reimposition would be defined—in an order by the Secretary of State by statutory instrument, subject to negative resolution by either House of Parliament. I believe that it is a commonly held view that there would be a need to reactivate the provision of section 10 in combat conditions. If that is what my hon. Friend the Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter) was alluding to, I accept his point.

It would be unrealistic to expect service men engaged in battle to have the right to sue their fellow service men or officers for negligence. Clause 2 provides

"for the revival of section 10 if it appears necessary or expedient to the Secretary of State to revive it—

(a) when national danger is imminent or a great emergency has arisen,"

—such as a major insurrection or an invasion or,—

"for the purposes of warlike operations in any part of the world outside the United Kingdom or other operations outside the United Kingdom in connection with warlike activity."

Such activity may include military or peacekeeping operations in a combat area such as the middle east.

Clause 1 retains the general provision that section 10 will continue to have effect in relation to wrongful acts or omissions that gave rise to injury committed before the date of enactment. In other words, the Bill will not be retrospective.

Successive Governments have resisted retrospective legislation as a basic concept, especially where such legislation imposes a retrospective liability on others. Secondly, it would clearly be wrong to impose retrospective liability on a service man for past actions, even if the Crown, his employer, were to stand behind him. That would involve individuals who are alleged to be guilty of negligence over the years being brought to book in a court of law for actions which, at the time they were committed, they were not liable under the law. That is a strong argument against retrospective legislation. Thirdly, the questions have to be asked, where should the line be drawn in dealing with past claims so as to be fair and just towards all claimants? How could there be a logical cut-off point for considering claims either by the Ministry of Defence or by the courts? How could those whose claims fell on the wrong side of an arbitrary line be satisfied? How could the Ministry of Defence, and ultimately the courts, be expected to assess old cases where the necessary documentary evidence or witnesses are no longer available?

Those are practical answers to which, sadly, there are no ready answers. For that reason, I believe that the only reasonable course of action is to legislate for the repeal of section 10 from the date of enactment. I recognise that this will be a bitter disappointment to the families of victims of section 10 who have campaigned so hard to secure a change in the law. Sadly for them, it will only benefit others.

Clauses 3, 4 and 5 are largely technical and deal with consequential adaptions of existing enactments, financial implications and interpretation and extent respectively. I must confess that there is one aspect of my Bill about which I am not entirely happy. I refer to the financial and manpower implications, which, as hon. Members will appreciate, are strictly in the domain of Government. As a private Member, I cannot commit public expenditure. Only the Government can do that. Indeed, the Bill will require the Government to introduce a money resolution, because without that all our discussions today will be in vain.

The explanatory and financial memorandum to the Bill sets out the financial and public service manpower effects. I must freely acknowledge the debt that I owe to my hon. Friend the Minister, his officials and the Treasury Solicitor for drawing up the Bill. In the circumstances, what I am about to say may be thought churlish or ungrateful, though it is not intended to be either.

When I first saw that very nearly half the total financial provision required to implement the Bill—£9·3 million out of a total of £19·75 million—was to go on legal fees and administration, I was appalled. When I went on to read that the Treasury Solicitor's Department proposed to take on 52 additional staff at an annual average cost of £32,000 each, and that on top of that "legal and other costs" would account for an additional £6·6 million, I was outraged.

I have to tell my hon. Friend the Minister that my sense of outrage has not diminished and that it is shared by almost every colleague learned in the law whom I have consulted since the Bill was published. I must ask my hon. Friend to ensure that these arrangements are looked at again, for they are not satisfactory. It is difficult to avoid

[Mr. Churchill]

the conclusion that somebody, somewhere, is trying something on, and I am not prepared to have my Bill used as a vehicle for what might be called generating jobs for the boys.

I have a suggestion to make in this regard. Rather than allow the Treasury Solicitor's Department to take on a whole raft of expensive legal advisers to prepare for more and more vexatious and costly litigation, which it is estimated will swallow up 47 per cent. of the provision to be made under the Bill, the compensation offered by the Ministry of Defence should be so self-evidently fair that the number of cases that go to court is minimal. The overwhelming majority of the resources set aside for the Bill could then be applied to the purpose that Parliament intends — compensating the injured and the bereaved rather than lining the pockets of a gilded array of expensive legal parasites.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): This is crucial. Does my hon. Friend think that it would be desirable for these legal matters to be put out to private solicitors, who, though expensive, would be much less expensive than those to whom he has referred?

Mr. Churchill: That is an interesting suggestion which I am sure my hon. Friend the Minister will want to consider. In view of my various forays into the law, I know that even private enterprise lawyers can be inordinately expensive. I am not entirely sure that what my hon. Friend suggests would save money.

What I should like, and what I venture to think the House would like, is for the Government to say, "Here is an injustice. We are prepared to remedy it and to set aside about £20 million to achieve that." Generous compensation should be made. The overwhelming proportion of the £20 million should go to the victims, not the lawyers. The compensation that has been offered recently has patently not been fair, but if it was, somebody who chose to go to law might risk having compensation reduced. I believe that the House wants a far greater proportion of the money to go to victims.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Can my hon. Friend give the House any idea of the probable number of cases that would have to be considered each year?

Mr. Churchill: It is difficult to do that. Inquiries have been made of the Ministry of Defence. As far as I am aware, no clear estimate can be produced, although Ministers must have had some guesstimate presented to them to be able to come up with the figures and for the Treasury Solicitor's Department to assess the staffing levels that would be required.

If it proved possible to deal with 90 or 95 per cent. of cases on the equivalent of a no-fault basis without going to litigation, the number of staff required and the cost of legal fees would fall dramatically. That is why I suggest a transfer of resources from the legal profession and administration to compensation for victims.

Mr. John Powley (Norwich, South): My hon. Friend said that a guesstimate had been made. Can he say whether it is in tens, fifties, or hundreds?

Mr. Churchill: As I said before, the financial memorandum is very much the responsibility of the Government. No doubt my hon. Friend the Minister will try to catch the Chair's eye, whereupon he might be able to provide the answer, which, I am afraid, I am not equipped to provide.

Mr. Porter: I do not think my hon. Friend realises that what he is saying goes to the heart of the Bill. The Bill allows a member of the armed services to sue in tort. That involves a civil wrong, and a civil wrong must be proved. All these gilded parasites, of which I have the honour to be one, are necessary in a new and specialised form of law, I should have thought. I agree that the Treasury will make as much out of it as it can, and I agree with my hon. Friend about that. If he is seeking a no-fault form of compensation for the armed forces, that is a very different matter from what the Bill suggests, which is the ability to prove a civil wrong.

Mr. Churchill: My hon. Friend is correct. I am not suggesting that we should move to a no-fault scheme, but I hope that the compensation scheme operated by the Ministry of Defence will be analogous to such a system, to the extent that by providing generous compensation the overwhelming majority of victims and their dependants will recognise that the system is fair and that if they were to go to the courts there might be two or three years of anxiety and worry, only to find at the end of the day that the had received less than the generous provision that had been made for them. It would still be their right, of course, to sue through the courts of law, which is the right of any citizen other than those serving in the armed forces.

With the one exception of the financial and manpower provisions, which I trust my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces will endeavour to rectify before the Bill reaches the statute book—which with the all-party support that it enjoys I am confident that it will—I commend to the House this Bill which will provide justice for the men and women of the armed forces who serve their sovereign and our nation with such loyalty, courage and dedication and who are entitled to look to us in this House to safeguard their rights.

10.12 am

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): This is a historic day for the armed forces. We are beginning the process of sweeping away legislation which has deprived service men and women of rights that have been enjoyed by everyone else, including all other public servants, such as police and firemen. I welcome the Bill warmly because it will remove an injustice, and I warmly congratulate the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) on his luck in the ballot, his choice of subject and his splendid speech.

I disagree profoundly, however, with what the hon. Member for Davyhulme said about retrospection. He was utterly and totally wrong, as I hope to prove shortly. His argument against retrospection was invalid and I was sorry to see Conservative Members nodding when he was advancing it. The case for retrospection is a powerful one and I deplore any quibbling about costs, whether they be hundreds, thousands or millions of pounds. If negligence is proved, the cash should be found by the Ministry of Defence, and if it is proved that there was negligence in the past cash should be found for people disabled in the past.

The House should be ashamed that it has allowed section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act 1947 to remain on the statute book for 40 years. I echo what J. S. C. Reid,

later Lord Reid, said when he denounced the thinking behind the clause, as it then was, when the Bill was before the House in 1947. He condemned it as

"a piece of departmental obscurantism and nothing else."

I support that view—a view that was expressed strongly at the time but was disregarded. In his excellent brief on the subject, John Poole, who does such marvellous work in the Library, quoted an article in the *New Law Journal*. Describing the passage of the 1947 measure, the author of that article stated:

"There was much well-informed and cogent criticism of the clause on the part of a number of lawyer MPs, which the speeches of the Attorney-General and Lord Advocate by no means fully answered."

As the hon. Member for Davyhulme rightly said, those Law Officers were members of a Labour Government, so it is not a party point. It is also true that they failed to answer the objections to section 10, although the case against it was strong then—and it is even stronger now.

Departmental obscurantism did not appear for the first time in 1947 and we have faced it throughout the campaign to abolish section 10. The Ministry of Defence has claimed that there is no clear difference between military and peaceful action. I am not joking—it has actually made that claim. Is it really suggested that there is no difference between men shooting and being shot at and those carrying out day-to-day non-combative duties? It is hard to believe that such a case could be advanced by the Ministry. We have been told that discipline would be imperilled if we abolished section 10. Does anyone really imagine that there would be mutiny in the Army or the Navy merely because we gave service men and service women the right to sue? We have also been told that negligence would be hard to prove, but does that mean that there is no point in trying to prove it? That is an absurd doctrine for the Ministry of Defence to peddle to Members of Parliament and members of the armed forces. We have been told, too, that the alternative provisions are very good, although every service man who has been disabled as a result of negligence knows that they are extremely bad. Those are examples of the sort of bumbledum that the Ministry has ued to disguise the great injustice suffered by service men and women.

When the most recent campaign to abolish section [illegible] was launched, stories of what had happened to service personnel came tumbling out. They were tragic human horror stories of service personnel being maimed or killed by, for example, ropes being cut by others abseiling down cliffs, missiles backfiring, vats of poisonous liquid overturning, tanks and lorries creating havoc, backs broken, skulls broken and hearts broken. There were also serious burns. Those are the facts that have come to light since the campaign was launched. Many people are suffering a lifetime of disability, some of them confined to wheelchairs for life, and in some instances young men and women have been killed. All this has happened while personnel have been on non-combative duties.

Service men and women risk their lives in time of war—that is an acceptable doctrine—but they are entitled to defence against negligence in peacetime. The largest group of protestors against section 10 are the nuclear test veterans. About 20,000 took part in the atomic tests in Australia and the south pacific in the 1950s and the 1960s. In those days, the defence authorities' attitude to protection seemed as casual as if they had been at a Guy Fawkes bonfire party. But was that really so? I do not think that it was.

A document marked "Top Secret" and dated 20 May 1953 from the Defence Research Policy Committee to the Chiefs of Staff states:

"The Army must discover the detailed effects of various types of explosion on equipment, stores and men with and without protection."

That means that soldiers must—it is not my word, but the word used in that secret document, *must*—be guinea pigs in discovering the effects of the explosions, without protection. Some of those men suffered grotesque and horrible deaths—there is no doubt or dispute about that—and others are still suffering severely. Anyone enduring such ordeals and written about in that way by military officials should at least have the right to some special consideration.

The ugly thread of alleged negligence runs through all those horror stories about the atomic tests as well as through the cases mentioned by the hon. Member for Davyhulme and those that I have described. The victims have been denied the right to seek legal redress, as have the relatives of the men and women who died. In many cases, they have been denied information about what happened and how and why it happened. That lack of information upsets the people involved and the bereaved relatives, and I am glad that the Member for Davyhulme referred to it because it is a scandal which must be reversed. We have had 40 years of evasion, cover-up and denial of justice. I should emphasise that I exclude the Secretary of State and the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces from those criticisms as they have given the campaigners a fair hearing. I go further and congratulate them on the decision that they have made. It is the right decision and I appreciate it very much, as do the people involved.

I have been proud to work with the campaigners and to lead the parliamentary side of the campaign. I should pay a special tribute to the clumsily named Section Ten Abolition Group, which has been nicely abbreviated to STAG, and to Carol Mills, who tragically lost her own son through alleged negligence. She has led STAG with intelligence, determination, imagination and diplomacy and I congratulate her and her associates, many of whom have been put to a great deal of trouble and have travelled from all parts of the country. Many of them are severely disabled and have joined lobbies and deputations at great cost to themselves. All future members of the armed forces will be indebted to them. I also pay tribute to the British Nuclear Test Veterans Association and to the British Atomic Veterans Association, which have been so ably led by Ken McGinley, Sheila Gray and Tom Armstrong. Today those people celebrate a great victory.

Like Winston Churchill, the great war leader, I believe that one should be magnanimous in giving us this victory. Their refusal to grant retrospective provisions for those who are already disabled arouses the suspicion—I put it no higher than that—that they are simply giving way as little as possible to intense political pressure.

The exclusion of service personnel who are already disabled is a shabby act of betrayal because it excludes loyal people who have placed their trust in the armed forces, people who have been willing to risk their lives—and who have lost their health—in the service of their country. It also excludes the very people who have campaigned successfully for a change in the law. If service

[Mr. Jack Ashley]

personnel of today and tomorrow are entitled to seek legal redress, as the Bill provides, the disabled personnel of yesterday are equally entitled to do so.

I know that some hon. Members are unenthusiastic about retrospective legislation—I will give way to any hon. Member who wishes to intervene—but I had hoped that they would recognise the vital distinction between retrospective penal legislation, which is utterly unacceptable, and the retrospective legislation that I seek, which would give the same rights to all service men and ex-service men.

Retrospective legislation to abolish section 10 would not punish anyone, and it is wrong to assume that it would. I will explain why. The Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces stated in a written answer to me:

"Where one service man is sued by another for alleged negligence arising out of the execution of his duties my Department will stand behind him and will meet the cost of any damages awarded against him".—[*Official Report*, 16 December 1986; Vol. 107, c. *501*.]

I welcome that assurance from the Minister. The whole point is that the costs would be borne not by the man found to have been negligent but, on that assurance from the Minister, by the Ministry of Defence. There would thus be no penalty on the individual concerned but there would be a benefit to the person disabled as a result of the negligence.

If the House gives the Bill a Second Reading, I propose to table an amendment in Committee to make retrospective provision for the abolition of section 10 so that people who are already disabled can benefit from this valuable legislation. There are countless parliamentary precedents for remedial legislation in the past 400 years. I shall not go into detail now, but there was remedial legislation in the House of Commons in the 16th century and there have been countless examples ever since. Parliament has shown its generosity by remedial legislation in the past, but I am not asking for generosity today. I am asking for justice for people who are already disabled, who have risked their lives and lost their health in the service of their country.

10.29 am

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley (Surrey, South-West): I express my appreciation to my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) for choosing this subject for his private Member's Bill. I supported him a year ago, and I have more confidence that this Bill will reach the statute book and redress a clear grievance and anomaly. I also express my appreciation to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) for his enormous efforts. I was present at the inaugural meeting of the Section Ten Abolition Group in the Jubilee Room and have taken a close interest in the development of the campaign. Obviously, I also appreciate the assistance given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State and others in refining the measure.

Section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act 1947, although clearly well intentioned at the time, has resulted in what now seems to be a great injustice, that service men killed or injured while on duty are uniquely denied the right to sue for negligence. The Bill would place service personnel on an equal footing with civilians and civil servants and they would be able to secure the same level of compensation. It has been well pointed out that there is no justification for service men not having the same rights as civil servants in the Ministry of Defence.

Families of service men killed by negligence would have the same rights to sue and they would be entitled to obtain full details about what happened. The right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South highlighted how often a lack of information from the Ministry of Defence can fuel a justifiable sense of grievance and loss. Ignorance and a sense of not being given all the facts impose a great extra burden at a difficult time.

In 1947 the Government's position was fairly uncritically endorsed, although some expressed misgivings. It seems that the then Attorney-General did not intend to penalise service men, but rather to protect their position. It assumed that if a service man was injured or remained in the forces he would receive proper treatment and that if he was invalided out or died he and his dependants would have pension rights. Clearly, much depends on the value of those pension rights.

In the development of compensation for all sorts of injury we are moving away from the concept that the situation where the accident took place, whether at work, on the street or at home, is important. There is no sense of justice in having entirely different compensation arrangements depending on where the accident happened, as opposed to the long-term debilitating effects. Clearly, in times of war there may be a clear-cut distinction between military and other action, but in peacetime that distinction is not nearly so clear.

My hon. Friend made great play of retrospective legislation and the extent to which this opportunity should be taken to meet the grievances of those who have already suffered. Clearly, it is the right, indeed the prerogative, of the Opposition in particular to say that a Government are not doing enough. My view is that it would be hard on those service men who were previously involved to have their cases reopened. I wonder whether there may be a middle way. I understand that with pneumoconiosis a special compensation fund was introduced to assist those who had already suffered, without giving them the full rights of those who may be affected in future.

As so often happens to hon. Members when they seek changes and reforms, my direct experience of this problem started with my contact with a constituent. I was approached by Lt. Cdr. Mocatta in March 1985. He was a naval officer until 1964 when he retired at his request to work as a sales engineer in the mechanical engineering industry. Until September 1984 he enjoyed excellent health, but that year he went into hospital and after various investigations and operations, mesothelioma—a chest cancer resulting from prolonged contact with asbestos—was diagnosed. As an engineering officer for many years he had come into contact with asbestos dust during refit periods in the dockyards and in civilian ship repair yards. He came to see me on several occasions and over subsequent months I wrote to the Department and others several times to press his case.

Cdr. Mocatta always put the case clearly and fairly, arguing that others in his position should have the same considerations as civilians. He never overstated the case, but put it forcefully and movingly. One of his letters states: "it seems grossly unfair that serving and retired members of Her Majesty's Forces are barred from being able to claim compensation in respect of the killer diseases like asbestosis and mesothelioma where as Industrial Civil Servants and

Civilians, under existing Health and Safety legislation, are able to. It also seems equally grossly unfair that in the event of death of serving and retired members of Her Majesty's Forces their wives and dependants are similarly barred from claiming compensation, where as the dependants of Civil Servants and Civilians can."

Throughout our correspondence he was particularly concerned about the effects on his widow and dependent children.

During his difficulties Cdr. Mocatta received great help from the Royal British Legion and the Society for the Prevention of Asbestosis and other Industrial Diseases. His family with many others joined STAG when it started. I pay tribute to voluntary groups which give practical and emotional support to individuals and campaign effectively for changes in legislation. I hope that that is what we shall see today.

Cdr. Mocatta's struggle to secure his rights as his condition deteriorated is a further example of the fact that, however well intentioned our legislation, it is complex and troublesome to establish what is available, how one gets a war disability pension, and how one qualifies under the industrial injuries scheme and for a war widows pension. It is difficult to circumvent and struggle through the labyrinthine complexity of our welfare and Whitehall bureaucracy. On the whole, people are well intentioned, but the delays, appeals and difficulties at a time of great family unhappiness and stress must never be forgotten when we introduce legislation.

I support the Bill because it simplifies rather than pleads a special case. It seeks to give service men the same rights as civilians rather than to do what is easy in welfare legislation: find a special case, add another little benefit for that category of people and then another little benefit for another category. During our debates we frequently enthuse about how we hope to redress a grievance, but in reality we add to the work of our welfare rights officers and lawyers who must get through the maze of benefits available.

I have no hesitation in supporting the Bill. I see it as part of a general re-evaluation of the role of Crown immunity. It is an obscure concept to many, dating from the medieval maxim that the king cannot be sued in his own courts. There may still be areas where Crown immunity is useful, but I welcome its gentle erosion.

Only last year my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services agreed to abolish Crown immunity in National Health Service hospitals for food, health and safety legislation. In the NHS, Crown immunity had become too easy an excuse for inaction. I hasten to add that the hospital kitchens in my constituency have won prizes for being the cleanest in the region. Now NHS hospitals will risk prosecution, like any other private agency, if their kitchens and premises are not up to standard.

The Bill is sensible and important and will redress a long-standing grievance. A letter from the widow of Cdr. Mocatta reads:

"It is less than a year since the Section Ten Abolition Group (S.T.A.G.) was formed."

The first meeting took place shortly after her husband was informed that there was little hope for him and, sadly, he died a month later.

"As the first anniversary of my husband's death is approaching I know how delighted he would have been that in the future Service personnel and their families will have the same right as any other citizen in the case of an accident or industrial disease."

She speaks for many. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme on bringing forward this important measure.

10.40 am

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): Like other hon. Members who have spoken in this debate, I congratulate the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) on his good fortune in the ballot and on using his opportunity in such a constructive and positive way by bringing in this legislation. We appreciate the lead that the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) has given on this issue. As with many other issues, he has alerted us to injustice and shown us ways in which that injustice can be corrected. The Bill corrects a basic injustice and re-establishes what I imagine most people believe to be the case, that everyone is equal before the law.

Those of us who represent traditional service constituencies take the view that service men already make enough sacrifices on our behalf. The difficulty of ensuring that their standards keep pace with those that exist outside the services is a continuing problem. Many of us are beginning to realise that it will not always be easy to attract into the services or, more important, to retain within the services men and women with the skills and expertise that we shall need in an increasingly sophisticated set of armed forces. We shall certainly not do that if we continue to enshrine in legislation the concept of treating our service men differently from other members of our community and putting them at considerable legal disadvantage. It may be the case at the moment that young recruits sign away their rights without understanding what they are doing. I suspect that that will not continue in an increasingly aware society.

Like others, I read with great interest the extremely helpful research note produced by the Library on this issue. I add my commendation to those already made in the debate. When looking at the history of the 1947 legislation I was fascinated to see that, even in those days, Ministers introducing such legislation were clearly not totally satisfied that it met certain neeeds. Certainly the Lord Chancellor at the time, the then Viscount Jowitt, gave a clear impression, both on Second Reading and in Committee, that he was under some pressure from the services. On Second Reading he said:

"this clause . . . is one of the clauses that I have been pressed and indeed compelled by the Service Departments to insert in order to overcome the misgivings or, if you like, the reluctance which they feel, and have traditionally felt, about the introduction of the Bill."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 4 March 1947; Vol. 146, c. 69.]

That statement gave the background to the matter. The forces were reluctant to see such rights being given to service men. Indeed, Viscount Jowitt was even more blunt in Committee, when he said:

"The short and the long of it is that I am under an obligation either to get this clause as it is or to withdraw my Bill."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 13 March 1947; Vol. 146, c. 382.]

He could not have put the situation more clearly.

The problem has been that, over the years, the services and service Ministers have argued that giving service men such rights was either not necessary or involved insuperable problems. As other hon. Members have mentioned already, the argument ran that service men who suffered as a result of negligence would be able to obtain, through pension rights and other benefits, sums

[Mr. John Cartwright]

comparable to what could be gained by legal action through the courts. The hon. Member for Davyhulme pointed out, and, to be fair, Ministers have accepted, that this is no longer the situation. That argument certainly has not stood up to close examination for some time, and does not stand up to close examination today.

There was a curious argument that it was difficult, if not impossible, to establish a clear dividing line between injuries sustained in military action and injuries sustained in other service activities. Again, that argument no longer holds good. The issue has been skilfully dealt with in the drafting of the Bill.

It is argued also that negligence is hard to prove within the services. Of course it is, but negligence is hard to prove in civilian life, too. The onus is always on the person who takes legal action to prove his case. I cannot see that service men should be in any different position from those outside the services.

Then there is the curious argument about which the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South reminded us, that somehow discipline in the services will be undermined if service men are given the same rights as those outside the services. The reverse might be true. The morale of service men might be a great deal higher if they knew that they have certain basic rights. If those rights are taken away from them, or if they realise that they are to be put at a disadvantage, their morale might suffer and discipline problems might be a good deal worse than they would be if service men were to be given their full rights.

Like the hon. Member for Davyhulme, I examined with some incredulity the financial and public service manpower effects of the Bill as set out in the explanatory and financial memorandum. My examination of the background of the issue shows that the Ministry of Defence has always been extremely reluctant to try to make any estimate of the number of people who are affected by section 10.

Clearly, somebody made some estimates when drawing up this part of the memorandum. It says that it is difficult to make reliable estimates. We all understand that point. If it can be argued that 52 additional staff in the Treasury Solicitor's office and 15 additional staff in the Ministry of Defence are needed, somebody must have estimated the number of cases that will come forward. It will be helpful to have some idea about that matter from the Minister.

My main concern was underlined by the hon. Member for Davyhulme. If hon. Members consider the proportion of funds estimated to be needed to compensate those who have suffered and the proportion that will go in legal costs, administration and so on, it suggests—I put it no higher than this—that a great deal of effort will be directed towards resisting claims and applications, and rather less towards helping those who may suffer as a result of negligence. The Minister may regard that assessment as unfair. I hope that he will reassure us on this point. The bald figures, as set out on the face of the Bill, do not appear to be tremendously encouraging.

On the difficult issue of retrospection, the Secretary of State is quoted as saying that legislation is for the future and, therefore, the issue of retrospection cannot be addressed in the Bill. That would be a more powerful argument if we did not know that Governments of all persuasions introduce retrospective legislation when they deem it to be in the national interest. All hon. Members could think of examples. The concept that legislation must always be for the future is not a valid argument against retrospection in this case.

The hon. Member for Davyhulme referred to the fact that if we introduce the principle of retrospection we shall to some extent jeopardise service men who might be accused of negligence in relation to activities that took place a long time ago. I accept that as an argument against retrospection, although I accept, too, that if the Ministry of Defence stands behind those service men they will have no immediate financial liability. However, there is a natural concern that something that took place a long time ago may be dragged up and ex-service men may find themselves put at a considerable disadvantage as a result. That argument is much more persuasive than the argument that legislation should be for the future.

The most difficult problem about retrospection is the third one to which the hon. Member for Davyhulme referred — that is, where one draws the dividing line. How far back does one enable someone, or, indeed, his heirs and successors, to go? That is a more difficult issue. The problem that we must address is one that we often face, that, in trying to correct one injustice, we appear to create another. That should weigh very heavily with us.

If we consider only what will happen in the future and appear to be doing nothing to help those who have suffered in the past, the public will be rightly concerned, and in Committee we must try to find a way round that problem. This relates particularly to the veterans of nuclear weapons testing. The Government have repeatedly said that no service men have suffered from nuclear weapons testing. I do not necessarily accept that statement. If, however, that is the case, I cannot understand why they should be so reluctant to argue it out in the courts.

If the Government believe that they are right and that they can prove that no service men have suffered from being involved in nuclear weapons testing, why should their case and the cases of those who believe that they have suffered not be tested in the courts? That would be a far better way of dealing with the problem than simply hiding behind the argument about retrospective legislation.

I agree with the hon. Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) that we should seek to remove generally the outdated, medieval concept of Crown immunity. The hon. Lady said that she would prefer a gentle erosion of Crown immunity. I should prefer a wholesale re-examination of that concept. Instead of it being done on a piecemeal basis—a bit here, a bit there, and a bit somewhere else—I should prefer the Government to say that they are prepared to give up Crown immunity completely. If, however, the Government believe that Crown immunity is needed in certain key, specific areas, let them make a case for retaining it. That would be very much better understood by the general public.

I strongly support the Bill, but I hope that in Committee we will look in more detail at the retrospective aspect of what is being done. The public will expect Parliament not just to remove a potential injustice for serving and future service men. They will just as much want Parliament to introduce the concept of justice for those who have suffered in the past.

10.52 am

Mr. Lewis Stevens (Nuneaton): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) on

selecting this subject for his private Member's Bill and also on the way in which he introduced it. Also I pay tribute to the work that is being done on behalf of those who have been affected by section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act 1947 by the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley). He has worked hard to bring the matter to the attention of the public and to persuade the House and the Ministry of Defence that action needs to be taken.

I welcome almost every aspect of the Bill. It will put service men and service women on exactly the same basis as other people. They will be protected against negligence while they serve in the armed forces. However, we cannot ignore completely the problem of retrospection. It will not go away. The effect of the Bill is that section 10 is no longer necessary and that it is outdated. Many people have believed that to be so for many years, but one should be able to look back and consider who should have been protected. The right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South said that in Committee he will move an amendment to that effect. I shall support it.

I appreciate that there may be difficulties. The hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) asked, where do we draw the line? If we said that all cases could be dealt with, no matter how old they were, theoretically cases that arose before the introduction of section 10 could be considered. That would be unfair. Although complications would be introduced into what at the moment is a simple and easily understandable Bill, we must consider where to draw the line.

Service men who are injured are known to receive less compensation than they would receive in the civil courts. That was not the intention of the 1947 Act. It was thought that there would be little difference between civilian and service awards. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has confirmed that in most cases there is now a substantial difference between the two. Now, therefore, is the time for it to go, but how far back did that difference arise? When was the balance destroyed between what was awarded to service personnel who were injured and had to leave the services because of disablement and what was awarded in civilian courts? I do not know the answer to that question. I hope that the Ministry of Defence will deal with it, because it may provide us with a guideline.

The right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South referred to the fact that many people believe that they are deprived of information, particularly when children or next of kin have been killed. Under section 10 there is no likelihood of suing the Minister of Defence, and that creates uncertainty. People wonder what really happened and whether they were told the truth.

In my constituency there was the unfortunate case of Lance-Corporal Maria Hornsby who was tragically killed in a car accident in Northern Ireland. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces has been kind enough to answer several letters that I have written to him on the subject. Part of the problem is that nothing can be done about that fatality and tragic loss and there is uncertainty about what really happened. Those who are left wonder what really happened. If they were able to take the Ministry of Defence to court there might be compensation for them, but that is not the main issue. People would then be satisfied about what had happened to those who were very special to them.

Many members of the armed services who have been killed or injured were very young, and many of them—as was this young lady—were excellent athletes. They had before them a glowing future and they were thoroughly enjoying life. In many cases they also enjoyed life in the armed forces.

When service men are injured people should also be able to know what happened, but in the event of injury and, possibly, disability there is a closed door because of section 10. What happened is not made clear and those who were involved do not know the full story. I hope that my hon. Friend will correct me if I am wrong about that, but my impression is that in the case of both death and disability little information is given to those involved, which provides little satisfaction or comfort for them.

I am surprised at the cost quoted in the financial memorandum. I always thought that if no great sum of money was involved that was a good reason to get rid of section 10 because the cost would not create a major problem. If a large sum was involved, that was an equally sound reason to abolish the section because it was obviously working unfairly.

I share the concern expressed earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme that so much money has been allocated in the explanatory and financial memorandum to meet the legal requirements associated with abolition. I have always been keen to reduce the amount of legislation. Every Government during the past 10 years has produced too much legislation. That creates work for the legal profession. It appears that the repeal of section 10 will create much legal work.

I appreciate that, with retrospection, early cases would need to be taken fully through the legal process to determine precedents. However, it is possible that, those precedents having been set, many subsequent cases, as with many civil claims, could be settled out of court. I hope that the involvement of the legal fraternity and the necessary administration will not mean prolonged high costs.

In dealing with these issues, we shall encounter many complications, given the wide range of cases that may be initiated. However, I hope that, when the Bill goes through, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will consider carefully with his colleagues at the Department how we may reduce the need for and impact of the legal profession.

It is necessary to keep that to the minimum because of the long time that claimants may have to wait, as can happen with the legal process. For some that will create problems. They may need an immediate settlement.

At present, according to section 10, since men are not liable while they are on duty and while they are

"on any land, premises, ship, aircraft, or vehicle for the time being used for the purposes of the armed forces or the Crown;"

it is hard to say on how few occasions they do not come under the Act. It covers such a wide spread that members of the armed forces, other than when they are out relaxing and not involved in the forces in any way, are covered by section 10. That does not give much scope to people in the armed forces to claim for anything other than a normal civil accident or something of that sort.

I welcome the Bill and I hope and expect that it will go through without opposition. Although I support the idea that some retrospection is necessary, and I hope that that will be part of the Bill, I hope that the moves on retrospection will not prevent the Bill from going forward. If the Bill does not include retrospection, the issue will

[Mr. Lewis Stevens]

return to us time and time again. I beg my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and his Ministers to consider carefully the possibility of some form of retrospection.

11.3 am

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): The Bill repeals section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act 1947, which section deprives service men and ex-service men of the right to sue for negligence, no matter how seriously disabled they may be. It also deprives families of service men who are killed by negligence of the right to sue.

During the proceedings of the Select Committee on the Armed Forces Bill on 24 March 1986 the official Opposition moved an amendment to the report of the Committee. After rehearsing section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act, we said:

"The consequence of this provision is an apparent denial of natural justice to the service men involved. It places them in a less fortunate position than a civilian injured in a similar accident, and applies where a service man is not facing an enemy, nor subject to harassment or attack from hostile forces. It is understood that a departmental inquiry is being conducted into this matter by the MOD, but as yet no indication has been given by the MOD, of when it is likely to report, if the report is to be published and whether the Department accepts the main thrust of public concern and criticism of Section 10. The Committee therefore recommends that as a matter of urgency the Department should expedite its inquiries and that its report be published before the end of this Session of Parliament with a view to introducing any necessary amending legislation to Section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act in the next Session of Parliament."

The Minister who is to reply to the debate today, the Minister of State and his Parliamentary Private Secretary voted against that provision. However, happily, in the same sort of flash of conversion as happened to St. Paul on the road to Damascus, they saw yet again the wisdom of the Opposition's case and brought forward the Bill as a matter of urgency.

Mr. Churchill *rose*——

Mr. McNamara: With respect to the hon. Gentleman, I shall finish this point of my speech and then give way. The Government have brought forward the Bill as a matter of urgency. They have seen the importance of the matter, and I understand why they did not seek to tell Select Committee the way in which their thoughts were going. I welcome the step that the Government have taken in introducing the Bill.

Mr. Churchill: The hon. Gentleman is doing my right hon. and hon. Friends less than justice. The Labour party does not have a record of which to be proud. It is not for him to say that Conservative Members have been dilatory in accepting the need for a change of law. The Labour party was in power for many years, during which time it could have taken the necessary action. The Labour party did not even do it for the future, let alone for the past. They killed the Bill of Mr. John Loveridge who was then the Member for Upminster.

Mr. McNamara: That always proves the foolishness of giving way, because I was going on to castigate former Labour Governments. Having seized upon the point, the hon. Gentleman did not listen to the remainder of my paragraph, in which I was going on to explain that I understood why at that time the Government did not feel that they could make that point to the Select Committee.

I am also making the point that the official Opposition had come round to supporting the principle of repealing section 10. That is what we did if one wishes to make a party point, but I was not seeking to do so. I was merely trying to introduce, if necessary, a little bemusement into the debate on the Bill. The official Opposition had the same blinding flash of conversion just four or five months before the Government announced their change on 8 December. As the hon. Gentleman will know, in politics, as in everything else, timing is all. We welcome the decision that the Government made on 8 December. Therefore, I welcome this change that has been made in the policies of Governments of different parties since the introduction of the Act.

I also take this opportunity of congratulating the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) on his good luck in the ballot, on introducing this Bill, and on his chivalrous regard for the work that was done on this matter by my right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley). If my right hon. Friend had been successful in the ballot, this is the kind of Bill that he would have introduced, though there might have been one or two differences.

I take this opportunity to congratulate the various bodies which have worked so hard to p roduce the pressure upon Governments and upon parties to introduce the alterations embodied in the Bill. I have in mind the British Nuclear Test Veterans Association, chaired by Mr. Ken McGinley, and the Section Ten Abolition Group, STAG for short, which was chaired by Mrs. Carol Mills. They deserve special recognition. Mrs. Mills lost her 18-year-old son Jonathan, an apprentice in the Royal Navy. He was serving his first tour of sea duty and was under instructions when a guided missile was fired by mistake. Jonathan, who stood directly behind the missile, was caught in the full force of the efflux.

The Mills will never get their son back, and numerous other sons, such as Desmond Clingham and Martin Ketterich, will never be able to walk again because they have been paralysed for life. All those people have been denied the opportunity to sue for damages. While money will never replace their lost lives or legs, the principle is important. The denial of natural justice to our service men is the principle that we are seeking to correct in the Bill. It is a belated recognition of an injustice that has been done to the men and women who serve and defend our country.

Section 10 is to be repealed, but cases of injustice will remain and linger. That is one of the problems. Even with the repeal of section 10, there are some matters of concern, not only to the individuals who have been threatened or feel they are under threat, but to the population as a whole. There is the problem of the yet unfinished study by the National Radiological Protection Board of the United Kingdom participants in the atmospheric nuclear weapons tests. The study is investigating two groups—a study group and a control group—to determine the possible effects of radiation produced by nuclear weapons tests. It is concentrated on cancer mortality and morbidity and their association with recorded levels of radiation exposure.

The operations in which our personnel were involved were nuclear weapons testing in Australia and the south Pacific, experimental nuclear work in Maralinga, in the Monte Bello Islands from 1953 to 1956, and in Christmas Island in 1962 and the clean-up operations in Maralinga

in the 1960s. It is hoped that the eventual analysis will provide evidence for the incidence of cancer among those who were exposed to radiation on those occasions.

What will happen when conclusions are reached? Under section 10, people who suffered have no right to compensation. It would be helpful to know when exactly the study is to be completed. Originally it was to be finished in 1985, but the completion date has been moved to 1987. We are still waiting. It would be helpful if the Minister could say when it will be completed. As long as it is delayed there will be no way whatsoever in which one can examine the Government's claim that

"no one was harmed as a result of exposure to ionising radiation from the United Kingdom test programme." — [*Official Report*, 14 January 1986; Vol. 89 c. 905]

That was said by the then Minister of State for Defence Procurement, the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont). Is that a legitimate claim? Even without the results, the protocol to the NRPB study states:

"It is known from observations on people exposed to substantial radiation doses that high levels of ionising radiation may result in injury or disease. Very high doses may result in almost immediate effects and will often cause early death. It is also generally accepted that effects may be experienced as a result of exposure to lower levels of radiation and that these effects may cause illness, most notably cancer, after the passage of many years".

That creates other problems of the limitation period for bringing actions. That is a matter of concern to us.

The leaders of all the parties have received a letter from Mr. McGinley in which he asks them to

"state categorically before the next election whether or not you will order a full and open judicial inquiry into the current health of each British ex-service man and civilian who was involved in the British Nuclear tests held in Australia and the Pacific between 1952 and 1958.

Also the current health of ex-servicemen who were involved in the American nuclear tests which took place on Christmas Island in 1962."

My right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition replied:

"While the survey which is now being conducted by the National Radiological Protection Board is a step forward, it is merely a statistical exercise and does not, and cannot, get to the root of the problem.

The next Labour Government, as a matter of urgency and priority, will set up a full judicial inquiry on the lines set out in your letter and we will also consult with your Association on the terms of reference of the inquiry."

Mr. Powley: He would say that, wouldn't he?

Mr. McNamara: The hon. Gentleman should not say things like that, because I was going on to say that most of the other party leaders have given similar undertakings, although the Prime Minister's was not as firm as those of other Opposition leaders.

The second problem is not only what will happen about Maralinga, which is a specific, urgent, pressing and large-scale test, where negligence might be alleged. On the evidence and documents referred to by my right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South, it seems that there was a deliberate attitude by the service chiefs in putting men at risk. That must be of concern to the House and to the nation, and adequate compensation should be given to those who were treated as human guinea pigs in those trials.

Another problem that arises over the repeal of section 10 is that at present it applies only to physical injury to members of the armed forces. The hon. Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) referred to this. The Crown is also not responsible for damage to individual service men's property on military land, even if it is damaged as a result of carelessness by service men on duty. The Ministry of Defence will have to consider that. Several cases have come to light, and no doubt there has been correspondence about them in the past.

The House today has to address itself not only to the future, but to the past. Sad cases have been brought before us. Page after page of names have been supplied to us by various bodies. If we accept that there is an evil to be remedied and an injustice to be set aside, what is our attitude to those who have suffered and who have caused us to come to that conclusion? We must also consider their dependants and their families. I listened with considerable care to the arguments of the hon. Member for Davyhulme. Some had force and some were procedural arguments which, while they presented difficulties and raised matters of concern, are problems that we in the House should be prepared to overcome.

What worries me is the extent of the knowledge that the Department has of the number of claims that might be outstanding against it if the legislation is made retrospective, and what that will mean in terms of cost. In the past week I have tabled several questions on this issue and the Government replied that the information can be made available only at disproportionate cost. Unless we have a substantial reply from the Government on the question of retrospection, the House, and certainly the Committee considering the Bill, will explore the issue thoroughly to see whether we can find a way of giving adequate compensation and recompense to the people and their families who have suffered as a result of negligence during their military service.

The hon. Member for Surrey, South-West mentioned a matter with which I have considerable sympathy. As she said, there is a precedent on retrospection. It is in the Pneumoconiosis Etc. (Workers' Compensation) Act 1979 and the Pneumoconiosis Etc. (Workers' Compensation) (Determination of Claims) Regulations 1985. Pneumoconiosis often affects miners or people in that industry long after they have stopped working. There is a parallel with those who have suffered damage as a result of exposure to radiation in Australia and elsewhere.

The Pneumoconiosis Etc. (Workers' Compensation) Act 1979 makes:

"provision for lump sum payments to or in respect of certain persons who are, or were immediately before they died, disabled by pneumoconiosis, byssinosis or diffuse mesothelioma; and for connected purposes."

The statutory instrument covering that Act states:

"no claim shall be considered for payment by the Secretary of State unless it is made within the period of 12 months from the date on which disablement benefit first became payable to that person or, if such benefit becomes payable before the Act came into force, before 4th July 1980."

In case people become horrified by what appears to be a limitation, regulation 4(5) reads:

"Notwithstanding the previous provisions of this Regulation the Secretary of State may extend the period for making any claims referred to in the said provisions for such further period as he considers appropriate, having regard to the circumstances in any particular case."

There is here a precedent for dealing with the radiation problem and for those cases where, bearing in mind the arguments raised by the hon. Member for Davyhulme, it is felt that the difficulty of proving negligence or of settling old scores and worries may be dealt with by the establishment of such a scheme and fund. If we consider

[Mr. McNamara]

the degrees of compensation paid under that scheme, both in lump sums and income, it appears that they are far more generous than the scheme under the armed forces pension scheme which was established to meet negligence cases.

There will be precedent, opportunity and occasion in Committee to consider these matters and explore them further. We have given one and a half cheers to the Department on this matter, and we could on this brief occasion give "three hearty cheers" for the Ministry of Defence if we can deal with the question of retrospective claims.

I share the concern expressed by hon. Members about the rather strange and threatening financial explanations at the beginning of the Bill. I have two criticisms in that regard. When applications have come forward previously for claims, they have not been properly considered as claims for negligence. Secondly, as the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) suggested, it appears that we are setting up an MOD defence fund.

We must be careful about husbanding public funds. While we must ensure that only proper claims are recognised and paid, we should lean over backwards to defend the integrity of the MOD. Where there is call for a degree of sympathy and balance, if there is any doubt, the matter should be resolved in favour of the injured person or his family. The system appears to be lacking in generosity. I hope that that is not the case, and that as a result of today's debate and the arguments from both sides of the House section 10 will be repealed and that in Committee we can redress the harm that has been caused to individuals and families.

Mr. Porter: Is the hon. Gentleman's argument not in favour of more generosity in terms of gratuities and pensions, rather than a request to the MOD to be generous with public funds when no clear case of negligence has been made?

Mr. McNamara: That is not the case. The point at issue is that the amount of compensation — lump sums or pensions — does not match the normal payments made in civilian life. Merely improving the gratuities, increasing the number of payments, or giving the claimant the benefit of any doubt will not overcome the fundamental injustice of the way in which such matters are dealt with in the armed services.

We must consider the cost. It would appear that there is an MOD defence fund rather than an attempt to bend over backwards to help those who have been injured while serving in the defence of our country. If the main thrust and duty of any Government is the defence of the nation, the people upon whom we place that responsibility should be treated generously and, in the circumstances that we have discussed today, they should be given the benefit of the doubt.

To enable the House to move on to more pressing business, I invite the Opposition to support the Bill. If the Opposition have not considered every jot and tittle of the Bill, that is because we believe that the House accepts the principle of the Bill, and we should also accept the principle of the next Bill.

11.25 am

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): I want warmly to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) on bringing forward the Bill and laying it before the House. He has taken a major step towards righting a wrong that has worried many of us for a long time. It is now 40 years — not that any of us present today in the Chamber have been Members for that length of time — since the introduction of the Crown Proceedings Act 1947 with its notorious section 10 which has inflicted so much injustice and unfairness upon certain personnel in the services and their families dependent upon them.

This is a moral issue. It is a matter of justice that service men should not be placed at a disadvantage when compared with their civilian counterparts. It must be a matter of principle that Parliament and the Government should accept that families of service men who are prepared to risk their lives in the service of our country so that the rest of us may live our lives in freedom and peace should not suffer from any injustice in comparison to others. That should always be Government policy. Indeed, it is and has been Government policy in other areas. As an example, I want to quote from a Government circular dating from 1955:

> "That these men should be penalised in this way, solely by reason of the fact that they have been serving their country, is a most grievous injustice which should not be allowed to continue."

That related to housing. If it was Government policy in 1955 — when Duncan Sandys was Minister of Housing and Local Government — and that policy has often been repeated since, if that is Government policy in relation to housing — admittedly a very important need — the same principle should apply to compensation for the families of those who have lost their lives as an indirect consequence of serving their country as members of the armed forces of the Crown. The circular to which I have referred continues:

> "Sailors, soldiers and airmen, returning to civil life after a period of years in the forces, as often as not possess no fixed abode anywhere at all. To insist, in such circumstances, on a residential qualification is to make it quite impossible for many of them to get their names put on to the housing list, however great may be their need . . . I consider that an application for a council house, made within one year of his leaving the Forces, by a regular ex-Serviceman, who has found employment in or near the district, or who has family connections with it, should be considered exclusively on the basis of his housing needs without any regard whatsoever to his length of residence in the locality."

That circular established that Government policy is that service men as such should not be placed at a disadvantage in civil matters. The same principle should apply to compensation for injuries sustained as a result of being a member of the armed services.

This issue involves not only justice and moral questions. It also relates to the value that we, as Members of Parliament representing our constituents, put upon the armed forces of the Crown. Several hon. Members have Naval, Royal Air Force or Army establishments in their constituencies and can illustrate, by reference to those establishments, the tremendous value that we put upon the work of the Army, the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force.

I shall illustrate that by reference to the only military establishment in my constituency — the Royal Military School of Music at Kneller Hall, Twickenham. That establishment trains British Army bands which are the envy of the world. It has a high standard of excellence. Military bands lift the nation's spirit. We all feel uplifted

by the sight and sound of British Army bands on royal or state occasions. They are among our finest traditions. They contribute to our economy. That is an added reason for the House to put value on the armed forces, their service to the country and their moral right to receive proper and fair compensation if they suffer accidents.

Our military bands help to attract to our shores visitors whose spending generates employment and income and yields tax to the Government. The amount of that yield cannot be measured, but it exists and allowance should be made for it. We should value highly not only our splendid military bands and the place where they are trained, but all the armed forces of the Crown.

Military bands not only enhance morale and help recruiting. Their members serve as medical orderlies in wartime or take on other roles. They have immensely high standards. There is ample justification for our strong support of the Bill which promotes justice and fairness and should command the unqualified support of all hon. Members.

I am worried about the retrospection aspect to which several hon. Members have referred. Ideally we all should like the Bill's provisions to be retrospective. We can understand the feelings of the families who have suffered loss through accident in recent years. One accepts the strength of their case, but I am anxious that if the Bill provides retrospection, many claims going back as long as 30 or 40 years would be made. The evidence in such cases would be of variable quality. Litigation could be enormously expensive and disproportionate to that which would arise on a limited scale in respect of future accidents. I am worried that if hon. Members press for retrospective legislation the Bill's prospects will be damaged. I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will comment upon that.

The House should examine the argument thoroughly today, in Committee and on Report. With that one reservation, I believe that we should support the Bill wholeheartedly. I hope that not one hon. Member votes against it.

11.35 am

Mr. John Powley (Norwich, South): I commend the Bill and the way in which my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) presented it so succinctly. I hope that the sympathy expressed by hon. Members will be shared by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, who has always displayed a sympathetic attitude to such matters. Recently I brought a matter to his notice and, although that case will not be covered by the Bill, my representations were received sympathetically. I hope that the same attitude will prevail in my hon. Friend's consideration of the Bill.

I confess to a personal interest in the Bill's progress. My son, who is 21 years of age, signed on 12 months ago as a regular member of the Royal Air Force. My wife and I had no hesitation in commending as a career regular service in the RAF. When considering my son's career we were not aware of the implications of section 10. However, had we known about them, I do not think that we would have changed our minds. A career in the Royal Air Force or in any of the armed forces commends itself to many hon. Members. Many of us have undertaken national service or other types of service with distinction. I wonder how many men in the RAF are aware of the implications of section 10. I doubt whether my son was aware of them. I think that service men should be aware of those implications. I hope that as a result of our discussion today they will become aware of the intended repeal of section 10.

Natural justice will be served in the repeal of section 10. It is logical because in the police and fire services, for example, redress is available if negligence is proved in a court of law. Out of the context of war it is natural justice that a member of the armed forces should be able to seek redress.

There is no Royal Air Force station in my constituency, but right hon. and hon. Members will be aware that East Anglia has a considerable number of RAF stations within its boundary. The station that is twinned with the city of Norwich is RAF Coltishall, a fine station. I visited RAF Coltishall about three weeks ago with some of my Norfolk colleagues. We looked over the establishment to see what goes on and what duties and operations it performs. We looked round the workshops. There are many similarities to a factory workshop—the station services and repairs Tornado aircraft and instruments of high technological content, and a lot of work goes on there. In that context, it was easy to see that mistakes and accidents could happen. I am not suggesting that accidents have happened —none were brought to our notice—but, using one's industrial experience, one could see that they could occur and that there could be cases of negligence. Those who suffer as a consequence of negligence should receive appropriate compensation, just as if the negligence had occurred in a factory where people can seek compensation.

Nobody likes accidents, but we cannot ignore the fact that they occur. With the best will in the world, whatever safety precautions are in force—we saw many of the precautions at RAF Coltishall—acts of negligence can occur in all sorts of peaceful circumstances. In such circumstances, there is no reason why proper compensation should not be paid.

In a speculative mood, I wondered whether over the past 40 years section 10 had made any difference to recruitment in the armed forces. I ask whether, if people are aware of section 10, it has had any effect. Has anybody who has been considering a peace-time career in the armed forces said, "Section 10 is in operation; if an accident were to happen through negligence I could not claim compensation. Therefore, I shall not pursue a career in the armed forces." I do not know whether that has happened, but I pose the question.

Following that argument through a little further, I ask whether the abolition of section 10 under my hon. Friend's Bill will help recruitment in the armed forces. It might help if people knew that, were negligence to occur and were they to suffer some injury, they would be entitled to some form of compensation appropriate to the injury that they had suffered. I ask the Minister to consider that point.

We are talking about possible permanent injury to, in general terms, a young person—nobody of my age would sign up for the RAF or other armed services; I am well past that age. Were anybody to suffer injury through negligence it could affect them for the rest of their lives, for as long as 60 years. They could be incapacitated through somebody else's negligence. That is a long time and they should be entitled to compensation to make their lives a little easier in the event of such negligence.

One accepts the provision in the Bill that in wartime the section should rightly and properly be reintroduced. That is entirely right and proper. Section 10 was passed in 1947.

[Mr. John Powley]

There may have been some justification in it in the circumstances of the time. I wonder how the House would have reacted to the statement by Viscount Jowitt when the then Bill was in Committee in the other place. He said:

"The long and short of it is that I am under an obligation, either to get this clause as it is or to withdraw my Bill."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 13 March 1947; Vol 146, c. 382.]

In my limited experience of this House, and from what I have gleaned of the other place, a statement like that might receive short shrift from right hon. and hon. Members today.

A number of hon. Members on both sides of the House have referred to the costs outlined in the explanatory and financial memorandum. I was horrified at the suggested cost of £20 million and many extra personnel. However I recalled one or two of my experiences in local government before I was elected to the House. I made suggestions to chief officers for various projects that I thought were worthwhile. When it was apparent that the chief officers were not keen on those suggestions, they would start off with "Yes, of course" and then proceed to tell one how difficult it would be, how many staff it would need to implement them and how much they would cost the ratepayers. It was an attempt to dissuade one from proceeding with one's suggestion. It may be a somewhat cynical attitude, but I recognised something of that in the reaction to the Bill. I support proper compensation in proved cases. While there will inevitably be an administrative burden, I hope that the costs will not be as high as they appear to be from the financial memorandum.

I apologise for having intervened in the speech of my hon. Friend the member for Davyhulme, but it is important that some estimate is given of the number of people who might wish to take advantage of the repeal of section 10, and those in a better position than I to judge these matters should be able to give it.

I did my two years' national service, and that limited experience showed me that inevitably there is a barrack room lawyer in one's squad or section. I do not doubt that repeal may precipitate the barrack room lawyer's argument from somebody in the armed forces who is seeking to exploit the situation. I am afraid that we shall have to learn to live with that penalty, as these people exist. However, that should not be a reason against the repeal of this section. It should not inhibit us from passing this legislation, as I hope that we shall, and wishing it well.

Most people in the armed forces are responsible, and would be sensible about claims for compensation, and would not make frivolous or unnecessary claims. I accept that there are such barrack room lawyers, and I mean no disrespect to the legal profession.

Mr. Porter: Why not?

Mr. Powley: We all need solicitors and legal advice at some stage. The law might not give us the proper advice that we need if we are disparaging about lawyers. Most people are genuine and act in a responsible manner in such matters.

I hope that retrospection will be considered in more detail in Committee. My inclination, and it is only that, is that retrospective legislation has always been found to have considerable difficulties. I tread carefully about supporting it, and it would need considerable force of argument to persuade me to do so.

I hope that the Government will deal with the Bill sympathetically and will assist my hon. Friend in its passage both here and in the other place. I hope, too, that when it is enacted, if it is, the personnel who perform their duties with loyalty and dedication will do so in the knowledge that, should an accident occur and should they suffer a disability, they will receive right and just compensation.

11.53 am

Mr. Julian Critchley (Aldershot): As the hon. Member representing the home of the British Army, I strongly welcome the Bill. I live in Farnham and therefore am a constituent of my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley). She said that there is in our area a hospital of which the kitchen has won the highest award. As I am a former restaurant correspondent of a glossy magazine, she owes it to me to let me know which hospital has won this award.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) on a reform long overdue. Its purpose is to restore to service men the rights of redress removed in the 1947 Act. I would not have believed that the sight of my hon. Friend in full sail would strike fear in the hearts of the just. It is only sensible that the Ministry of Defence, in advance, has decided to strike its colours. I understand that, save for the clause on retrospection, the Bill is acceptable to our great Government. That is a welcome example of the irresolute approach.

Police and firemen have long enjoyed access to the courts, where awards in recent years have become more generous. It is only just that service men and their wives should have the right to sue for negligence, except, of course, during military action.

Retrospection is a much more difficult matter. Sadly, I have come to the conclusion that we should set our face against it. It is estimated that the cost of this reform, were it to be implemented, would be £19 million a year by the mid 1990s. Money has been at the root of the defence of Crown immunity for years.

It has already been mentioned that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services was obliged, following a television programme, to concede that the restaurants and the food in hospitals should be subjected to the processes of law——

Mr. Porter: And the cockroaches.

Mr. Critchley: —and the cockroaches—in order that patients should be better fed.

The Crown still enjoys immunity against planning permission — it can develop without reference to planning permission. I wonder whether, in the fullness of time, that immunity will also be removed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme must be congratulated on the reform that he is introducing for which he will be long remembered. I hope that his name will be attached to those reforms — "The Churchill Reforms of 1987". Perhaps my hon. Friend will now switch his attention to the whole problem of Crown immunity, and that will serve to keep him out of mischief in what is bound to be election year.

11.58 am

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): It is a great pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Aldershot (Mr. Critchley).

Mr. Ashley: That is one of the poorest speeches we have heard.

Mr. Greenway: I was just about to say how much pleasure my hon. Friend gave the House.

We owe a particular debt to my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) who has brought us together on this important issue. This Bill seeks to provide compensation to those who suffer injury through negligence. The terms of that sentence load one's mind strongly in favour of the basic principles of the Bill. It must be right. When the Bill becomes law it will remove many injustices.

I sympathise with my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Powley) who spoke of the enormous sums paid to lawyers, often resulting in the advice that one should do nothing. That is of essential importance in our consideration of the Bill. I note that my hon. Friend spoke of his great respect for lawyers. He admitted that that was a type of insurance to ensure that he would have their support, help and protection whenever he comes to need it. I hope he will never be in that position. I believe that he misjudges the legal profession as I am sure that its members are strong enough and professional enough to give straight help and advice without being "greased up". I am not sure if that is the right expression but I am sure my hon. Friend the Member for Aldershot would know about that sort of expression.

My hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme drew attention to the important fact that £9 million or 47 per cent. of funds to be made available for the implementation of this Bill would go on providing about 52 lawyers for the Defence Department. They would be taken on at a cost of £32,000 each. That is worrying and I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to see whether there is an alternative.

A simple adjudication process might replace the litigation implicit in the Bill. That could be achieved by establishing a set of suitable criteria within which a claim could be heard before an adjudicator. Perhaps the Bill could be amended so that only lay people appear before a professionally qualified adjudicator to consider each case on its merits. Service men and women who bring forward a case should be able to do so simply, and receive help from the adjudicator if necessary, but strictly on the understanding that lawyers would not be involved on either side.

Simple judicial procedures involving complicated matters are used every day in schools, for example, about which I know a good deal. Headmasters and headmistresses hear complicated complaints about the behaviour of children and damage to children or their property every day from children, their parents or teachers. A point of view is put and considered by the head teacher who makes a decision on the basis of what is fair and just.

I wonder why a similar process could not be established by the Bill, thereby leaving lawyers out altogether. When lawyers are involved, so is vast expense. I do not understand why lawyers' fees are so high. There may be some reason for it. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter) will be able to enlighten us. It is expensive to employ a lawyer to do the simplest thing, such as write a letter. The legal aid service cost the nation £320 million last year. A reasonable number of people were assisted, but not a vast number.

We must move away from expensive legal processes to ones which provide equal justice but without the paraphernalia and expense. We would thus release £9 million for compensation — nearly double what would otherwise be available. I cannot believe that any feasible and cogent amendment to that effect should not be considered and proceeded with.

I urge my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme, in conjunction with our hon. Friend the Minister, to see whether he can sweep away the proposed 52 lawyers and therefore the need for their special training. If he can accept that radical suggestion, which would make much more compensation available to people, many of whom suffer seriously, that would be welcome.

12.5 pm

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): I should like to be able to say that it is a great pleasure to take up the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway). Unfortunately, that is not the position. I shall come to his remarks about lawyers later in my speech.

It is a pleasure, however, to take up some of the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Aldershot (Mr. Critchley), who rightly said that the town that he represents is the home of the British Army. My hon. Friend did us the honour of not repeating everything that had been said prior to his intervention. He merely welcomed the Bill. I shall try to follow his example to some extent, but never having been employed by a glossy magazine I do not have the same delicacy of touch that he tries to adopt. When he has finished listening to the debate, I have no doubt that he will address his mind to the matters that occupy him so much, such as whether someone has three or four buttons on his cuffs or whether he wears suede shoes. He might be interested to know that there are three buttons on my cuffs and that I am wearing leather shoes.

I welcome the Bill but I have some reservations, though not of principle. The 1947 Parliament has been rather badly abused. It is important to remember the circumstances of the time. Britain was on a war footing and it had a huge amateur army. We are no longer on a war footing and we have a small and highly professional army. It can be said that in 1947 gratuities and pensions more or less compensated the individual for the "damages" that he forwent. At that time the Legal Aid Act 1948 had obviously not been passed — that was a measure for which I thank God—and people were not litigious. They did not sue for small injuries or for small damage to property. They do now and so the circumstances have changed very much.

Part of the argument that I have heard advanced this morning — I have put this to my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme, (Mr. Churchill) and to the hon. Member for Kingston-upon-Hull, North, (Mr. McNamara) — is that gratuities or pensions should be upgraded for those who are injured in the armed forces for whatever reason. If they were upgraded, it would be unnecessary, as far as I can judge, for any negligence to be proved. I have not mentioned so far the right hon. Member for Stoke on Trent, South (Mr. Ashley), but he has made much of the running in the battle which I did not think the Ministry of Defence would concede. I congratulate the right hon. Gentleman as well as my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme, whose Bill I support wholeheartedly.

[Mr. Barry Porter]

The armed forces are different from other areas of life in one respect that will create a field of law, whatever my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North thinks. I have in mind circumstances in which the forces are training for military action, which my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme has mentioned briefly. The issue to which a judge must address his mind in considering a matter of tort —a civil wrong—and whether there was negligence or not at the time is, in effect, "What would the man on the Clapham omnibus think?" That is the test of reasonableness. I beg leave to doubt whether the test of reasonableness of the man on the Clapham omnibus will be the same test as that of the man on the Crusader tank. I believe that there will be a long series of legal and factual arguments on what is reasonable in all the circumstances.

I have a suspicion, not quite akin to a fear, that there may be alterations in the system of realistic military training, which could reduce its value. Like doctors in America, and lawyers in this country, the military commander, at whatever level, would be looking over his shoulder and wondering whether the writ would be flying, rather than the bullet. I do not know whether that will happen, but I suspect that that could affect the high professionalism of our armed forces. That will have to be guarded against vigorously. I had hoped that the Bill would be amended to take account of realistic military training. Hon. Members who serve in Committee—I am not offering to do so—might take account of what I have said.

I should like to comment briefly on retrospection, which any lawyer dislikes. However, it has been pointed out quite clearly that Governments have used retrospection to overcome a little embarrassment—for example, fairly recently there was the little matter of local government finance. I never understood it, but apparently we used retrospection then, and no doubt it will be used again in the future.

The significant point that has been raised about retrospection relates to the radiation argument. We have yet to see the end and the result of that inquiry, but it seems, prima facie, if my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North will forgive that legal phrase, that there was at least negligence in the way in which those people were treated during the nuclear tests. It seems wrong not to give an undertaking that if that turns out to be the case the people who were at the forefront of those nuclear tests should be given some consideration.

However, that should not be done in the Bill because it is not possible to fit it in. I hope that in Committee the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South will seek meetings and have discussions with the appropriate Ministers to see whether he can reach some accommodation, rather than mess up a reasonably good Bill. That deals with retrospection to my satisfaction.

Having recovered my temper, the only other point that I wish to make relates to cost. I have no idea how the Department have reached the figures in the financial memorandum. For all I know, they could have got them from the third question in "Trivial Pursuits". There is no way of calculating the potential cost.

During my past 10 to 20 years as a jobbing solicitor in the north, at least a dozen people have come to see me —they were the sons and daughters of service personnel or the soldiers themselves—to see whether something could be done about an injury that they had received. For either no cost or a minimal cost, they were told that there was nothing that they could do because section 10 would apply. I do not know how one could calculate how many such people there would be in the country. Therefore, the calculations in that part of the financial memorandum are misleading. I am sure that a reasonable stab has been made at them, but the figures could be a good deal less, or a good deal more. The one significant and determinable calculation relates to defence staff and the 52 additional staff in the Treasury Solicitor's department. I do not know whether they would all be necessary.

I take issue with my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North about his most naive and childish suggestion that there should be an arbitrator—whatever that might be—on the strict understanding that no lawyer would be involved. Earlier in my speech, I suggested that we are entering a new field of law. Is my hon. Friend suggesting that when the qualified arbitrator brings up a question of law the poor individual should be left to argue his point of law, for or against, without benefit of legal advice or access to somebody who knows what a tort is? I doubt whether my hon. Friend had the slightest idea what a tort was before I told him. He suggested that, because a headmaster or headmistress is capable of dealing with administrative matters in a school and with children, he or she is somehow qualified, if I understand him correctly, to deal with these complicated matters. That is completely ludicrous.

Mr. Greenway: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Porter: Yes, if my hon. Friend is not going to be silly.

Mr. Greenway: My hon. Friend was not paying attention to my remarks and I shall not enter into the spirit in which he is making his remarks. I simply suggested an alternative process which could be developed, in which lawyers could not be involved.

Mr. Porter: The whole purpose of the Bill it to put members of the armed services on an equal footing with others who have a right of action in the courts for negligence or some other tort. My hon. Friend is suggesting that we do not give them the same right of audience before a court of civil jurisdiction, either the High Court or the county court, according to the common law and statute law of England. He is suggesting that this is some sort of administrative matter and that once a precedent is established each case follows it. I am afraid that it is not as simple as that.

It would be purposeless to defend or attack the legal system, and in any event I sense that I am in a minority today. This hang-the-lawyers atmosphere which pervades the House too often and assumes that lawyers are on this earth to make a fortune at the expense of the general public to no good purpose is a calumny which I shall be willing to defend vigorously on another occasion.

If we want a proper legal system and these people brought into the common law of England, as we do, lawyers must advise and assist. I do not know, and I doubt whether the Department knows, what the cost of those lawyers should be, but at least those lawyers and their costs, most of which will be covered by legal aid, are subject to parliamentary scrutiny. Therefore, my hon. Friend's disquiet about the sums involved could perhaps

be dealt with again through discussions and arguments with the appropriate Ministers. That certainly is not part of the Bill.

I wish hon. Members who will serve on the Committee well. They will deal with a worthy Bill. Indeed, it may be called the Churchill reforms 1987 — I know not. Although I have minor legal reservations about it, I wish it well and I shall be present to vote for it on Third Reading.

12.17 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Roger Freeman): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) on his good fortune in securing a place in the ballot and on selecting this Bill for consideration. I perhaps reflect the views of all hon. Members when I congratulate him and admire the clear, compassionate and compelling way in which he introduced it. It has achieved a broad measure of support on both sides of the House, although I note that some hon. Members have reserved their position on certain issues. If they are selected to serve on the Committee, they will doubtless pursue those issues with great vigour. I intend first to deal with the main issues encapsulated in the Bill and then to answer as many questions as I can from the Government's standpoint.

I am aware of the strength of feeling which section 10 generates both in Parliament and outside and I respect the sincerity of the views of those who have been pressing for change. I know that it is often wrong to single out individuals for tribute, but I wish to endorse the tribute already paid this morning to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley). He has pursued his aim to repeal section 10 with great courtesy and determination and he has been supported outside the House by the Section Ten Abolition Group campaigners and others. I pay tribute to him for the way in which he has pursued his campaign.

We should not forget the service men and women who have been injured or have died, not just in the 40 years since the Crown Proceedings Act was passed, but over many years. It is all too easy to get involved in detailed discussion about the niceties of particular legislation and to forget the human tragedy and suffering of service men and women who have had to leave the services and, indeed, the suffering of their dependants. I know that that thought is shared by the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South and, indeed, the whole House.

Section 10 the Crown Proceedings Act 1947 has been on the statute book for 40 years. As hon. Members have recalled, the arguments that persuaded the Government of the day and both Houses of Parliament that it needed to be enacted were complex and relevant to the circumstances of the time. Equally, the arguments for change, which all hon. Members have advocated with vigour and sincerity over recent years, are well recognised. In October 1983, the Government set up an interdepartmental working group of officials from the Ministry of Defence and other Government Departments to review the operation and effects of section 10. The time taken to study carefully and objectively all the legal and administrative issues is a measure of how seriously we have approached the problem and how anxious we were to arrive at the right conclusion. That conclusion, welcomed by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) on behalf of the Opposition, was announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence on 8 December last, when he announced the Government's decision that it was right to repeal section 10.

The Government are happy to welcome and support the Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme and I share the expectation that his name will be associated with the measure for many years to come. The Bill seeks to give members of the armed forces the right of access to the courts to sue for legal fault in cases of personal injury or illness attributable to their service —in other words, to put them on a par with their fellow citizens in peacetime.

It might be useful to reflect again upon the history of section 10. Before 1947, service men and women were unable to sue the Crown, but they were able to sue other service men and women. The 1947 Act not only prohibited service men from suing the Crown, as had always been the case, but precluded them from suing other service men and women. We are considering the total repeal of that prohibition so that service men will be able to sue other service men and the Crown — their employer, the Ministry of Defence. In 1947, Parliament took the view that service personnel would not be financially penalised by the provisions of section 10 because they received benefits, regardless of fault, which in most cases were comparable with those that a civilian might expect to obtain through the courts.

Our review of the operation of section 10 in recent years, however, has shown that damages awarded by the courts in some personal injury cases involving proven negligence have risen to a level which may considerably exceed the benefits that an injured service man would receive. Therefore, we have taken the view that the repeal of section 10, as proposed in the Bill, is the only satisfactory way to remove this disadvantage to members of the armed forces. The existing benefits to which injured service men or their dependants are entitled are paid on a no-fault basis and there is no intention to withdraw them. The repeal of section 10 will result in an additional option being open to those who consider that they have suffered as a result of others' negligence. It may be helpful if I briefly outline the present system of no-fault and automatic payments to service men, whether or not there is an act of negligence by another.

Mr. McNamara: Am I right in saying that it is not a matter of "either" or "or" but that this is additional?

Mr. Freeman: The hon. Gentleman is quite correct. I apologise if I gave the opposite impression. I repeat that by the repeal of section 10 the service man or service woman receives an additional right. Those who have to leave the services as a result of injury will receive, in any case—as they have always received and will continue always to receive—the automatic benefit payments that I shall briefly describe. In addition, service personnel will have the right, if they believe that an act of negligence has occurred, to sue other service personnel and the Crown.

Mr. Porter: So that the House will be under no misapprehension, will my hon. Friend confirm that if service men sue and are successful, the amount of pension and/or gratuity will be taken into account, either in whole or in part, in assessing the final sum to be paid in damages, so it is not an addition in the true sense of the word?

Mr. Freeman: My hon. Friend is right about abatement, but I think that he will find that if there is to

[Mr. Freeman]

be abatement, it will be abatement by the Ministry of Defence and the Department of Health and Social Security of the annual pension payment to the successful plaintiff. There will be no abatement of the sum awarded by the courts. I repeat that if there is to be abatement, it will not be abatement of the initial lump sum payments by the Ministry of Defence or the Department of Health and Social Security. I shall pursue this point further and we will return to it in Committee, but I think that I am right in saying that if there is to be abatement it will be abatement of the ongoing payments.

I will outline to the House the automatic payments to service men when they are invalided out of the service, when the disability is due to service and when that disability is more than 20 per cent. The DHSS pays a tax-free war pension which is dependent on rank and disability but not on length of service. That regular payment is indexed. The Ministry of Defence pays a tax-free service pension which is dependent on rank and disability but not on length of service. There is guaranteed minimum total pension from both DHSS and MOD which is dependent on the degree of disability. Both the pensions paid by DHSS and MOD are indexed for inflation and both are tax free. In addition, the Ministry of Defence pays a tax free lump sum and a terminal grant. Those sums are paid at the outset. If the disability subsequently increases, the pension will be increased subsequently. Provision is also made for dependants, in the sad event of a service man dying as a result of his service.

In 1947, Parliament also accepted that it would not be appropriate for service personnel to be able to bring civil actions for negligence against one another because of the implications that this might have for discipline and training. I acknowledge that that was an understandable concern, but I believe that it is no longer relevant. I will explain briefly why.

During our review we carefully weighed the potential conflicts between the operational needs of the services and the rights of individual service men, and concluded that the balance of advantage lay in repeal. The Ministry of Defence will stand behind any service man who is sued by another service man for negligence in the execution of his duties. That will ensure that there is no adverse effect on service morale and discipline or on the quality of service training. However, if appropriate, our normal disciplinary proceedings will in any event proceed if another service man is guilty of an act of negligence. Although we shall stand behind him in a court case, he may still be subject to disciplinary proceedings by the service concerned. I think that I reflect the views of all members of the armed forces, who welcome the Bill because it provides considerable benefits and rights for individual service men without any attendant risk or disadvantage to the effective management of the services. I can confirm that in the past few months on visits to units in the United Kingdom and abroad I have gone to some lengths to satisfy myself and the Government that there will be no disadvantage to the rigours of training as a result of the introduction of the Bill.

My hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Powley) raised the question of the effect of the repeal of section 10 on recruitment and also whether its existence in the past had been a bar on recruitment to the armed forces. There is no evidence that section 10 has had a harmful effect on recruitment to the services. Conversely, I would not expect its repeal to have any material effect in the opposite direction. We are looking carefully at how to bring more clearly to the attention of young recruits their rights and responsibilities on other issues. Section 10 is no longer relevant, but on the issues of drug abuse, homosexuality and racial discrimination, for example, I accept that we have a responsibility to review constantly the way in which we inform recruits of their rights, responsibilities and obligations. We will continually strive to improve the way in which we communicate that to our new recruits.

My hon. Friends the Members for Harrow, West (Sir J. Page) and for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter) also raised the question of training. For example, how would the captain of a destroyer react if, dashing around in the North sea, he struck another vessel and a sailor was injured? I can only repeat once more that the key point is that the Ministry of Defence will stand behind the service man who is sued. Therefore, although the service man and the captain of the destroyer might become the subject of a board of inquiry, the NCO responsible for training exercises or training operations need not feel in any way inhibited about pursuing those training exercises as he will know that he will not be financially disadvantaged if a successful case is brought.

My hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel), whom I congratulate on his ingenuity in introducing another subject into the debate, expressed concern for the wellbeing of service men at all times, and I share his concern. I also echo his congratulations and the praise that he distributed fairly and equitably among all the services and all service men. We take great care in talking to officers and to service men and service women of all ranks in the United Kingdom about any changes that we propose in conditions of service, and we have done so in this case.

The Bill seeks to retain the power to reactivate section 10 at a time of great national emergency or in the event of actual or impending hostilities. That is widely accepted by the House. Indeed, I have not heard any hon. Member advocate in the debate that section 10 should not be reimposed in time of war. It is not possible or desirable to draw hard and fast definitions of the circumstances in which the Government might seek to reimpose section 10, but the wording of clause 2 is satisfactory in this respect, making it clear from that the Secretary of State will need to consider it necessary or expedient to make an order to reactivate section 10 by reason of a great national emergency or imminent national danger or in the event of warlike operations or connected activities outside the United Kingdom. We are talking about a grave situation in Britain or elsewhere, and I draw the attention of the House to the fact that the wording of clause 2 to a large extent mirrors the wording of the provisions of the Reserve Forces Act 1980 dealing with the call-up of reserves. Although there is no intention to create a formal link between, say, mobilisation and the reimposition of section 10, hon. Members will recognise that that gives an indication of the gravity of the circumstances in which reimposition of section 10 would arise.

The issue of retrospection and of ex gratia payments for cases that arose before 8 December 1986 has been raised by most hon. Members, but my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme has acknowledged that the repeal of section 10 should not be made retrospective. It may help

if I repeat the reasons for that. They will be well known to the House and they have already been rehearsed this morning, although I appreciate that they may not be accepted by all hon. Members and that we shall doubtless return to the subject in greater detail in Committee.

With regard to legal retrospection, I draw a distinction between the suggestion by the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South, who wants complete legal retrospection, and the modification suggested by other hon. Members who have proposed an ex gratia fund for people whose cases arose before 8 December and who deserve financial advantage. I shall deal first with legal retrospection. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said on 8 December, there is a general principle that new legislation is for the future. Also, it would be wrong to impose retrospective liability on individual service men even if the Crown undertook to stand behind them.

The right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South said that if the Crown stands behind service men in future, by implication the Crown should stand behind service men who are sued retrospectively, so there would be no financial penalty or liability on them for acts committed in the past. With respect, that is not my point. My point is that it is wrong in principle to permit a service man injured in the past, before 8 December, to bring a law suit against another service man. That is the mechanics of how he would seek legal redress. He would have to bring a suit and name other service men. It would be wrong to impose that retrospective legal liability upon service men for acts committed in the past under a different legal regime.

Mr. Ashley: The Minister has acknowledged that the Ministry of Defence will pay for damages where negligence has been found. In the case of retrospection, I understand that a man found guilty of negligence will therefore suffer no personal penalty because that payment will be made. Perhaps the Minister's point is that the person concerned will suffer adverse publicity if he is found guilty of negligence. I ask the Minister to weigh that against the anguish of the disabled person who will get no redress. I do not want to go into detail now, and I recognise that we shall discuss this in Committee, but I should like the Minister to keep an open mind until we have discussed the matter in more detail in Committee.

Mr. Freeman: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for reminding me and the House of the importance of this issue. I draw a distinction between the argument that he has made for full legal retrospection and the arguments advanced by other hon. Members for an ex gratia payment. With regard to full legal retrospection, I stand four square behind my argument that it is wrong to impose retrospectively a liability upon an individual, or individuals, for acts committed in the past, irrespective of who will pay the damages. That is a fundamental principle of our parliamentary democracy and of the rule of law.

Some hon. Members suggested that there should be an ex gratia fund to deal with cases that arose before 8 December. I can find no logical dividing point between the cases that they believe are deserving and all the other cases. We already know that there is no time limit. Indeed, there is no logical cut-off point in time as far back as one can go beyond which justifiable cases could not be brought to the attention of the Ministry of Defence. Considerable injustice would be done if some cases could be brought to the attention of the Ministry of Defence or the Crown and argued coherently because witnesses and papers were available but others could not. In relation to the suggestion for an ex gratia fund, I am arguing that, sadly, there is no clear definition — certainly no one has advanced one—of the cases that could or should qualify for such treatment. However, we shall doubtless return to the matter in Committee when those who have been pressing the argument will do so again.

My hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) and the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) cited the example of the scheme operated by British Coal to assist victims of pneumoconiosis. I do not believe that that scheme is in any way relevant to the settlement of past section 10 cases. The British Coal scheme is very limited and covers just one specific disease to which coal miners are particularly prone. In such cases, the question of liability is not strictly relevant. Claims at present barred by section 10, however, arise over a vastly wider range of circumstances in which the issue of individual liability is highly relevant. I do not believe, therefore, that a scheme to compensate for the effects of an industrial disease can be compared with the rights of service men to sue for negligence. It is not a correct analogy or parallel.

We have made it clear that we shall operate special arrangements for claims which might result from incidents which occurred between the date when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced our wish to repeal section 10 and the date of enactment of the new legislation. Assuming that they met the necessary criteria, such claims for compensation would be dealt with on an ex gratia basis. However, I should add that, while these claims will be considered during the interim period prior to enactment of the new legislation, settlement will be deferred until after enactment as it would be improper to anticipate or pre-empt Parliament's consideration of the Bill.

I want to consider two or three related issues that have been raised during the debate. First, I want to consider the sad case of Sapper Anderson raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme. Both father and mother were given a summary of the board of inquiry report, as is normal practice. The coroner's inquest returned a verdict of accidental death. There was no evidence of negligence on the Army 's part and the coroner did not apportion any blame or criticism. None the less, I must tell the House that I have taken steps to change procedures and to reinforce safety procedures during diving selection testing and, specifically, I have instructed that the so-called "mud run" for those undergoing diver training, which I suspended immediately on the sad occurrence of this case, will not be introduced. I have also introduced several other changes. I will write to my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme and others who have expressed an interest in the case to explain the steps that I have taken.

The right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South and the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North raised the question of the nuclear test veterans and I know that that issue concerns us and will doubtless concern us in future. Claims against the Ministry of Defence by nuclear test service men veterans will remain valid because they are related to incidents before the Government announced their intention to repeal section 10. In any case, the Government are confident that no one suffered as a result of exposure to ionising radiation from the United Kingdom nuclear tests, and no evidence has been produced to alter that view. However, as we are aware of

[Mr. Freeman]

public concern about this matter and the concern expressed clearly this morning, we have commissioned, as the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North knows, the National Radiological Protection Board to carry out an independent survey to ascertain whether there is a greater incidence of cancer-related deaths among participants in the tests than would otherwise be expected. The Government will review their position in the light of the NRPB's conclusions. I understand that the NRPB hopes to publish the results of its study later this year.

Mr. McNamara: Will the Minister tell us exactly what "later this year" means? There has been postponement after postponement in relation to that report, which was promised nearly two years ago.

Mr. Freeman: I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern. That anxiety is mirrored entirely by the Government's determination to have the report produced and considered as quickly as possible. I assure the hon. Gentleman that the time scale to which I have referred —"later this year"—will be adhered to. My ministerial colleagues and I are as anxious as the hon. Gentleman to see the results of the survey. However, it has taken some considerable time and I am sure that he will agree that it is correct that the results of the survey should be presented coherently and comprehensively and studied by the Government. However, I am sure that the House will return to that issue.

My hon. Friends the Members for Nuneaton (Mr. Stevens) and for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) asked about information given to next-of-kin in the event of injury or death. My Department provides detailed accounts of the circumstances of death to those next-of-kin who request them. Some, however, do not do so and we do not volunteer the information so as to avoid causing needless additional distress. I always examine cases carefully when hon. Members make representations to me and I always take particular care to ensure that the proper procedures are followed.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North referred to claims for property damage and suggested that they will still be barred under the Bill. Section 10 covers only personal injury cases, illness or death but service men, like civilians, have been able to sue the Crown for damage to property since the 1947 Act was passed and they will continue to be able to do so. They can also make claims against the Ministry of Defence in accordance with service regulations. I hope that that sets the hon. Gentleman's mind at rest.

Mr. McNamara: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman about the case that I have in mind.

Mr. Freeman: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman.

Finally, perhaps I might be permitted to make some observations on the costs and manpower implications of the proposals in the Bill. That matter was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme, by the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) and by my hon. Friends the Members for Nuneaton, for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter) and for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway). As the explanatory and financial memorandum states, the key point is that it is difficult to make any reliable estimate of the cost of repeal because we cannot know what the level and incidence of claims will be. I expect the overall cost to build up over a period of time, but the assumptions upon which our estimates are based are necessarily highly speculative because we have no claims experience in this area. However, I hope that the steady state costs identified in the memorandum represent the "worst case". I shall deal briefly with the suggestion by my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme, but I must tell my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North that I do not hold out much hope of pursuing his suggestion for an alternative approach through adjudication. It is central to proposals in the Bill that service men should have the right of access to the courts, which involves the legal process. That seems right and proper. I hope that we shall be able to consider in due course the option of contracting out to the commercial insurance market this area of the Ministry of Defence employer's liability, although we shall obviously have to establish several years claims experience before we can start to discuss with the market how that might be achieved.

With regard to the figures on costs in the final paragraph of the explanatory and financial memorandum. I draw the attention of the House to the estimate of £10·4 million per annum, which we forecast for the "worst case" scenario and which will be paid out in the steady state situation in about 10 years' time. The estimated cost of settlement is calculated on the basis of assumptions about the number, incidence and size of claims, taking into account the annual figures for service deaths and injuries and our experience of claims from our civilian employees. I emphasise that the estimates are necessarily speculative because we cannot forecast with precision the level and incidence of claims. Another complication is that many service men accept the hazards of service life as part and parcel of their job and might not pursue a claim through the courts. Indeed, one hopes and expects that the courts will take into account the hazardous nature of service life when awarding what they consider to be fair and just damages.

The £6·6 million per annum shown as the estimated steady state sum for legal and other costs in the Treasury Solicitor's department represents the payment of two sums. First, the £5 million per annum represents the payment of claimants' or their solicitors' legal costs and charges once a claim is settled. That is nothing to do with the Ministry of Defence but represents the legal charges and costs of the successful claimant. The further £1·6 million per annum is the cost of the Treasury Solicitor's department counsels' fees, agents' fees and other experts' fees and expenses. Similarly, the estimated cost of employing up to 15 additional Ministry of Defence staff and up to 52 Treasury Solicitor's staff is based upon salaries plus all the associated costs of employing people, such as employers' national insurance contributions, pension costs, accommodation and office services costs.

However, I acknowledge the concern expressed by several hon. Members about the number of staff that the Treasury Solicitor's department, in particular, proposes to employ. I am happy to give on behalf of the Government to hon. Members who expressed concern an undertaking that we shall study again the estimates made of the number of people to be employed. I shall return to this issue either in Committee or in direct response to the hon. Gentleman who raised it and I undertake to look again at those assumptions.

With regard to the concern expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme and by the hon. Member for Woolwich, my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme suggested that available savings by reducing the number of lawyers and staff, particularly in the Treasury Solicitor's department, might be recycled and used to settle cases more speedily and perhaps more generously. The hon. Member for Woolwich argued that if economies could be made in the numbers of staff employed, settlements might be more generous and potential claimants might be bolder in their determination to pursue claims.

Mr. Cartwright: I suggested a rather simpler point. The proportion of the available funds that will go towards compensation and the proportion that will go towards the legal staff and administration suggest that a great deal of attention will be given to disputing and defending claims. It was that relationship which concerned me.

Mr. Freeman: I give the hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme two assurances on this point, in addition to the one that I have already given about the number of staff that the Treasury Solicitor's department will employ. First, claims submitted by service men through their legal advisers will be pursued diligently and quickly. We shall not attempt to stifle or delay any legitimate claims. Secondly, we shall, where necessary, pursue out-of-court settlements. We shall have no desire to take cases through the courts. If an out-of-court settlement can be reached, it is in the interests of everyone that that should be done.

The change in the law which the Bill seeks to bring about will be welcomed by the House as a remedy to a situation which keeps our service men and service women, in peacetime, at a disadvantage when compared with their fellow citizens. The careful and objective review that the Government have had carried out into the workings of section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act 1947 has highlighted anomalies which must be tackled. Credit is due to the Government, who have grasped the problems involved and have concluded that repeal of section 10 is the only satisfactory way of overcoming them. The measures sought by the Bill are good for the armed forces as a whole and will be welcomed by them and by the country at large. I recommend to the House that we give the Bill a Second Reading.

12.54 pm

Mr. Churchill: With the leave of the House, I shall respond briefly to a few of the points that have been made. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary has dealt comprehensively with what has been said so far. I thank him for his various undertakings, which the House, and I in particular, appreciate. I am delighted to learn that the form of training that led to the death of Sapper Anderson was immediately discontinued and that it is not intended to reintroduce it.

Above all, I am grateful for the various undertakings that the Government are willing to look again at some form of enhanced compensation for former victims of section 10, if I understood my hon. Friend correctly. I am glad that the Government will consider pursuing settlements out of court in future claims of negligence by making generous compensation, rather than by resisting by means of what the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) described as a Ministry of Defence fund.

Mr. Freeman: For the sake of clarity, I emphasise that I gave no undertaking that we would look at the feasibility of introducing an ex gratia scheme for service men who were injured, possibly through acts of negligence, before 8 December. I said that no persuasive argument had been made this morning for defining the category or group of individuals who should be so treated.

Mr. Churchill: I am sorry that I misunderstood my hon. Friend. None the less, I am grateful for what he said about future provision and the way that that is to be handled, and for his undertaking that the large numbers of additional staff proposed to be taken on in the Treasury Solicitor's Department will be reconsidered.

It is clear that the key issue bothering hon. Members on both sides of the House is retrospection, and rightly so. The right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) made a moving contribution and was clearly speaking from the heart. While he recognised some of the difficulties associated with retrospection, he believed that it must be our task to find a way around these difficulties. I agree with his purpose in seeking to secure better provision for what we might call the section 10 victims. He mistakes me if he believes that I am opposed to making such provision.

It would not be right or realistic to make individuals retrospectively liable in law, even with the Crown standing behind them, for actions of negligence, or alleged negligence, for which they may be responsible for many years. That is not to say that retrospective provision should not be made for the section 10 victims. I believe that it must be made. The Ministry of Defence, having acknowledged the injustice perpetrated by section 10, now has an obligation to do more for the section 10 victims on an ex gratia basis. I hope that in Committee my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary and the Government will consider this.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) suggested, something could be done along the lines of the compensation scheme for victims of pneumoconiosis set out in the Coal Industry Act 1975. That Act made up to £100 million available from Government funds to support the victims of pneumoconiosis. A gesture on those lines at an appropriate figure would not go amiss.

The right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South spoke about the nuclear victims. It is an appalling fact that 20,000 British service men were involved in the British nuclear tests in Australia and the Pacific in the 1950s and 1960s, and undoubtedly large numbers were exposed to radiation. Indeed, the right hon. Gentleman quoted part of a classified Ministry of Defence document of 1953 that appears to suggest that some service men were deliberately to be used as human guinea pigs to establish the effects of radiation on human beings. If that is true, it was a most terrible thing for any British Government to have done. It defies belief especially when those tests took place so many years after the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs had been dropped with the horrendous consequences for those populations.

We have all seen the newsreel footage of some of those tests and have seen service men standing above ground

[Mr. Churchill]

with no protective clothing. They were ordered to turn away from the flash. At that blinding flash there was a massive discharge of gamma radiation and this was followed by the mushroom cloud billowing up.

Successive Governments have refused to acknowledge that anyone involved in those tests suffered adverse health or premature death as a result of that exposure. However, the Government have slipped up and that is made clear in the excellent brief provided by Dr. Poole of the Library regarding the case of ex-Royal Marine George Pollard who died in 1978. That brief states:

"The operation of section 10 is typical of the labyrinthine complexity of Whitehall's bureaucracy, which effectively prevents compensation. Today if a service man, or his widow, declares an intention to sue the Government for damages, a 'Certificate of Attributability' is issued automatically by the Ministry responsible for claims, the Department of Health and Social Security, under section 10. This certificate admits that the condition suffered could be considered due to service but blocks any action in the Courts. The irony of the position is shown by the certificate issued in 1980 to a widow of an ex-serviceman who worked on a nuclear test site which, in order to avoid an action for damages, declares that the serviceman's death resulted from service on Christmas Island. Yet the Government's Official policy is to deny that any of the servicemen suffered because of those tests."

I am delighted that the Nuclear Radiological Protection Board is undertaking a detailed inquiry into this matter.

I cannot stress too strongly the urgency of that, for many have already died and many more are critically ill. I think that most of us in this House strongly suspect that there is a link between the service men's sufferings and the unwarranted exposure to which they were subjected during the nuclear testing. I believe that those service men are entitled to justice just as future generations are being provided for in the scope of this legislation.

I am the first to acknowledge that that compensation cannot be provided for in this Bill. But I trust that the Government will ensure that the right thing is done for those who serve their country so loyally and who have suffered in consequence.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee. pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills.)

Housing (Houses in Multiple Occupation) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

1.3 pm

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

We have just spent over three and a half hours debating a Bill that is in the form of a private Member's Bill, but I am sure that the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) will readily acknowledge that it is, in fact, a Government Bill. It is consensual and there is no serious opposition to the broad principles contained in it. However, as a result it may talk out what is an all-party private Member's Bill that enjoys considerable support in the House and certainly has the support of those affected outside.

I begin with a challenge to the Minister. If, in the light of the revelations of the Department's report of 23 January and of all-party support for this much needed Bill, he will allow it through to Committee, I will sit down now so that we can discuss any points of detail that will arise in Committee.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): I should like to echo what my hon. Friend has just said. Opposition Members restricted themselves to 52 minutes of speeches on the previous Bill because it is agreed, but Conservative Members spoke for 156 minutes—about three times as long. The Opposition believe that the Bill is important to some of the most needy people in Britain. If the Minister says that he will give it a fair wind, we undertake to give it a rapid Second Reading and to do everything in our power to expedite its proceedings through Committee. I hope that the Minister will respond charitably in view of the severe problems that are faced by many people.

Mr. Anderson: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that most helpful intervention and renew my challenge to the Minister.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Richard Tracey): I am afraid that I cannot say that I am prepared to be so sweepingly charitable. The Government want to hear a considerable amount of detail from the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson). We want to pursue this debate.

Mr. Anderson: The details can be dealt with in Committee. The facts are amply known in all their misery —if the Department has eyes to see and ears to hear what its own reports have revealed. I can only conclude that, by a cynical manipulation of parliamentary procedure, the Treasury Bench wants to kill the Bill and do nothing about the misery that is revealed in its departmental reports.

Three weeks ago, on 23 January, the Department of the Environment issued a most frightening and damning report on housing. It is frightening because it says that more than 2 million people now live in multi-occupied accommodation at risk to their lives because their homes lack satisfactory means of escape from fire. The report is damning because it states unequivocally that conditions in such properties are

"an indictment of national and local government housing policy over many years."

Those are not my words, but what "The 1985 Physical and Social Survey of Houses in Multiple Occupation in

England and Wales" says. I am therefore amazed at the Minister's response to my challenge. If my Bill has one overriding objective, it is to give tenants in bedsits, hostels and bed-and-breakfast accommodation the right to live in decent, safe homes.

The Bill would provide the basis for local housing authorities to give tenants the protection that they deserve, which they are manifestly not given at the moment.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): I am not one of those who are amenable to cynical exploitation of parliamentary procedures, but I am genuinely interested in the hon. Gentleman's argument. It seems that local authorities already have considerable powers to deal with many of the hon. Gentleman's complaints. It appears that local authorities do not make as much use as they might of powers under section 11 of the Housing Act 1985. They certainly have power under the appropriate fire regulations to do much of what the hon. Gentleman is talking about.

I have read this extraordinarily lengthy, complicated and detailed Bill, and it seems that if enacted its provisions would be extremely expensive if they were to be implemented by local authorities. Why cannot local authorities be encouraged by central Government to make use of the powers that are already available to them?

Mr. Anderson: I can give a fuller answer to the hon. Gentleman's question as I proceed with my speech, but I shall respond immediately to his suggestion that there are adequate means available to local authorities to deal with fire hazards. It was suggested in a May 1986 postal survey that probably 38 per cent. of houses in multiple occupation have inadequate means of fire escape, and the report that was published on 23 January revealed that over 81 per cent. of houses in multiple occupation have inadequate means of fire escape. It is estimated that only 8 per cent. of properties are covered by existing legislation. The figures show that there is a yawning gap between the powers that are available to local authorities and the necessary provisions that are contained in the Bill.

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): Is it not a fact that most local authorities throughout the country support the Bill, and that the Environmental Health Officers' Association at national level is supporting it as well? The association believes that the relevant powers should be strengthened and that resources should be made available to enable it to exercise the powers that now exist.

Mr. Anderson: Indeed. I have been encouraged by the overwhelming support for the Bill from professional bodies such as the Institution of Environmental Health Officers, from the Fire Brigades Union, from local authorities, including many that are Conservative controlled, and from the Association of District Councils and the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, whose housing and works committee resolved unanimously to support the Bill. There has been support from all the relevent national voluntary agencies, including tenant groups, law centres and churches throughout the country. The response has been overwhelming and most encouraging. By reading the list of sponsors the Government will see that there is a genuine all-party support. A number of Conservative Members have shown their support and I commend to the Minister the remarkable speech that was made on Tuesday by the hon. Member for Croydon, North-west (Mr. Malins), who set out the problem as he has seen it at first hand. If the Government fail to respond to what is clearly an all-party Bill, they will stand condemned throughout the country.

A Bill similar to mine received a Second Reading in 1983. Unfortunately, it died because of the general election. The result of a number of factors is that the problem has become much worse since then. Research shows that 2·6 million people live in houses in multiple occupation in England and Wales. The term "houses in multiple occupation" is derived from the Housing Act 1969. It is defined in section 345 of the Housing Act 1985 as a

"house which is occupied by persons who do not form a single household."

The House will be aware of the range of HMOs, which includes bed-and-breakfast accommodation, bedsits, flats with shared provision, hostels and boarding houses. Research shows also that 81 per cent. of those living in HMOs are single, that 35 per cent. are women and that 65 per cent. of the HMO population are aged 35 years or under. However, 12 per cent. are retirement pensioners.

My concern arises from being the chairman of the parliamentary Campaign for the Homeless and Rootless, a vice-president of the Institution of Environmental Health Officers and, at local level, the president of the Swansea accommodation for the single homeless organisation. As the president of that Swansea organisation, I see with my right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) the problems which arise even outside major conurbations.

Recent Government research, which was published on 23 January, not only confirms, but goes further than the results of the earlier postal surveys. The reports of May 1986 and January 1987 show that there is a nationwide housing problem and that the housing and safety conditions of more than 2 million of our fellow citizens are nothing short of a national scandal. They also show that the existing legislative framework is manifestly inadequate because it fails to guarantee decent and safe homes for those needy people. It is on that basis that I put the case for my Bill.

HMOs are to be found in all parts of the country. The postal survey showed that 43 per cent. of them are in Greater London, 41 per cent. in the non-metropolitan districts, and 16 per cent. in the metropolitan districts outside London. Therefore, it is a national problem which exists in the nicer cathedral cities as much as in the hard-pressed conurbations. I understand that the low standards of lodging houses in Lincoln, especially for tenants in receipt of supplementary benefit, caused such a scandal that last year the district council commissioned a report, which showed that up to 2,000 people in Lincoln were living in HMOs, many of which were substandard.

The really frightening element that emerges from those two reports is that, all over the country, people are living in properties that are a risk to their lives. I shall not bore the House with the statistics that are set out in the reports, but I commend perusal of them. As I mentioned in response to the hon. Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter), 81 per cent., or four out of five, of all HMOs lack a satisfactory means of escape from fire, and 80 per cent. are unsatisfactory on the grounds of lack of amenities, overcrowding or the standards of management.

Taken together, those two departmental reports completely demolish the argument that the existing

[Mr. Anderson]

legislation is adequate and that all would be well if all local authorities did no more than carry out and enforce the legislative powers that are available to them. The reports stated that if local authorities continued to use their powers to enforce safe standards at the rate they were doing when the survey was conducted, it would take between 70 and 85 years to make all HMOs safe. It is patently obvious that the present legislation is not being enforced.

The Department of Environment report in January stated:

"It is clear that local authorities have failed to enforce existing standards".

However, in a press release which accompanied the publication of the report the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction said only:

"Local authorities already have duties and extensive powers to take action to improve standards in appropriate cases. But the research suggests that practice is patchy".

That must be one of the housing understatements of the year.

There are two main reasons why the present legislative framework is inadequate to transform people's living conditions. First, it is overwhelmingly discretionary. I have already referred to the problem of fire escapes. Research shows that the relevant statutory instrument No. 1981/1576 applies to only 8 per cent. of HMOs nationally, but that 81 per cent. of HMOs are unsafe. Secondly, the present framework gives HMO tenants virtually no rights to initiate action, or to expect and receive action.

It is well known to those who are active in this sphere that the great majority of HMO tenants are unlikely to complain about their lot for fear of harassment or eviction. Yet one of the most shocking facts revealed in the Department's postal survey was that 86 per cent. of all local authorities said that their policies for dealing with HMO conditions were based on reacting to individual complaints. By definition, a large proportion of tenants are unlikely to initiate such complaints because of fear.

Clause 2 places a firm duty on landlords of HMOs to provide and maintain standards for fire safety, facilities, space and management. It makes it clear that owners of property in multiple occupation must maintain their houses in such a way as to protect the health, safety and welfare of their tenants. Clause 3 places local housing authorities under a duty to inspect their areas to locate all HMOs and to ensure that all such houses meet the requirements set out in the Bill.

It is clear from the Department's research that authorities do not carry out their present general duties systematically. Indeed, last month's report stated:

"There is a need for local authorities to inform themselves about the scale, distribution, condition and function of HMOs in their area; to take appropriate action to enforce standards; and to monitor change through a programme of cyclical inspections."

In other words, the Department's research supports the principle of clause 3.

The clause provides that authorities must inspect their areas to locate HMOs once every two years. For authorities which have an exceptionally large number of such properties in their area, clause 3 (2) enables them to apply to the Secretary of State for a further period of one year in which to carry out a full area inspection. I must stress that the principle of the clause is widely supported by the professional bodies concerned, not only the Institution of Environmental Health Officers, but the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, whose members in London and the metropolitan areas have the greatest concentration of HMOs.

Clause 4 requires local housing authorities to keep an open register of HMOs in their area. I included the clause essentially to ensure that HMO tenants have open access to information about who their landlord is and what steps their local council is taking to ensure that their home is safe. Clause 5 needs to be read with schedules 1 and 3. Together they provide for minimum housing and fire safety standards for houses in multiple occupation.

The management requirements, which date back to 1962 and which are now issued by the Secretary of State under section 369 of the Housing Act 1985, do not apply automatically to HMOs. That is a vital point. The position on fire safety standards, with well-publicised fires over the years at Clanricarde gardens and Pontypridd last year, shows the extent of the national scandal in respect of fire safety.

For over 25 years Greater London has had a code of practice for means of escape in case of fire, which provides guidance to all London boroughs and enables them to use the code to enforce standards. Outside London, no such code exists. It is left to each local authority to consult the local fire authority about fire safety requirements. In practice this often means individual consultation on each and every separate property. As the Department's research survey said:

"There is a need for a nationally agreed standard on means of escape and for this standard to be enforced effectively."

I am sure that all hon. Members will be shocked to learn that the Government have known for over six years that such a standard is needed, but so far have failed to provide one.

As long ago as December 1980 Lord Whitelaw, the then Home Secretary, told the House that he appreciated the need for a code and would consult relevant local authority associations and others to produce one. A year ago, in February 1986, the long-awaited draft of such a code was issued by the Home Office for consultation. In my judgment, the House will be deeply concerned that the draft merely proposed to lay down standards for HMOs covered by authorities' limited duty to require means of escape. Only 8 per cent. of HMOs are covered by such duty.

Clause 5 will replace the present dangerous chaos and provide clear fire standards for all aspects of HMO management.

Clause 7 is the heart of the Bill. It requires local housing authorities to enforce the standards provided for and provides a streamlined procedure for enforcement. At present, local authorities must serve a variety of notices or orders when they use their powers to enforce standards. Therefore, clause 7 will enable authorities to serve only one notice for any or all aspects of the relevant standards. Tenant safety cannot and must no longer be left to the chance of discretionary powers.

Clause 8 largely re-enacts section 368 of the Housing Act 1985 and enables authorities to close part of a house for fire safety reasons. Clause 9 gives them power to take urgent action to put right a defect in an HMO if they consider conditions to be dangerous to tenants. Clause 10

provides a new procedure for dealing with properties that are not capable, at reasonable expense, of reaching the Bill's standards.

Hon. Members will wish to know that clause 33 defines reasonable expense in such a way as to take into account any grants that improvements in an HMO might attract. The number of houses that are incapable of being brought reasonably up to standard is likely to be small. If a property is large and accommodates many people, the authority can apply to the Secretary of State for a longer period of up to three years. When such a course must be taken, the housing authority must secure decent alternative housing accommodation for those who would be made homeless. Under clause 12, tenants will also be given the right to secure decent, safe alternative homes if they are made homeless as a result of the authority's use of its power to reduce overcrowding, or, under clause 8, to close part of an unsafe HMO.

Hon. Members will agree that nobody should have to continue to live in overcrowded or dangerous conditions and that it is absolutely right that the alternative must not be for them to be made homeless. Hon. Members will be reassured by the findings of the Department of Environment research that, in the view of surveyors of HMOs, if standards were enforced nationally, the amount of accommodation lost would be small—that is, 76 per cent. of HMOs would lose no households and only 5 per cent. would lose more than one.

Clause 11 provides grants for improvements. I have already referred to clause 12, which deals with the prevention and reduction of overcrowding. Clauses 13 to 24 reform the powers and procedures by which local housing authorities may make control orders on HMOs to protect the safety, welfare or health of tenants. These clauses will replace the existing provisions in the Housing Act 1985,.

Clause 25 will enable authorities to follow up a control order with a compulsory purchase order on grounds similar to those set out in section 243 of the Housing Act 1985 as if the HMO were located in a housing action area. Clause 2 will apply not only to privately owned HMOs but to local authority owned HMOs. Clause 34 relates to Crown properties. The remainder of the provisions are set out in part II, which deals with the financial provisions, and in part III, which deals with matters relating to power of entry, penalties, commencement and extent of the Bill and repeals—the more formal elements.

Sir Hugh Rossi (Hornsey and Wood Green): Is the hon. Gentleman able to help me about something that troubles me in this otherwise admirable Bill? It is high time that some form of registration, inspection and control was exercised over bed-and-breakfast hotels, common lodging houses and the rest. The definition of multi-occupation seems to me to be much wider than is necessary to protect those categories.

In my borough there have been problems when the landlord, the owner of the house, lives in it and lets one or two rooms. The tenants could be older children who occupy a bedroom with, possibly, separate cooking facilities, but because they are not members of the landlord's family the fire officer asks for several thousand pounds to be spent on blocking off staircases and fireproofing doors. That would not be necessary if the house was occupied by a large family, and it is a particular burden for elderly couples who want help with the rates. I am worried that the Bill may be drawn so wide that it will discourage such people from letting in an area where there is a great need for private rented accommodation.

Mr. Anderson: I understand the hon. Gentleman's anxiety and I commend his concern and long term activity in his own constituency, where there is a substantial housing problem. The definition that I have adopted is to be found in section 345 of the Housing Act 1985. The hon. Gentleman has made a serious point. Everybody wishes to encourage the maximum use of properties. His point could properly be dealt with in Committee if he could convince the Treasury Bench that the problem is so serious that the Bill deserves to reach its Committee stage.

I have now dealt with the more formal parts of the Bill. It does not extend to Scotland or Northern Ireland, although it enjoys the support of many voluntary organisations in both places and there is an urgent need for similar legislation to be introduced there. I have already mentioned the substantial support that the Bill enjoys, not only from hon. Members who see the problems at first hand in their constituencies, but from organisations that are seeking to do something about a national scandal. All those bodies and hon. Members are in step. Why is it that only this Government are out of step?

1.33 pm

Mr. Timothy Wood (Stevenage): I commend the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) for introducing the Bill. I accept that there are vast problems connected with houses in multiple occupation. One of the problems is that all too often the various fire and other safety standards are not properly adhered to and that all too often too little is done by local authorities that, given their present powers, could do much more. I dearly hope that the result of the debate will be that local authorities will much more energetically pursue the various wrongs that are to be found in houses in multiple occupation.

Although I commend the spirit and principle of the Bill, I have major reservations about the multiplicity of its details. There comes a time when one examines a piece of legislation and says, "Well, all right, I agree with those objectives, but to what extent will they be carried out effectively by a Bill in this form?"

My worries come in a variety of forms. I have looked through some of the details of and schedules to the Bill. In the past I have occupied flats and other places in houses of multiple occupation, to use the jargon phrase, that certainly did not conform to the constraints urged in the Bill. To be blunt, the places that I occupied were perfectly satisfactory to me at that time. Furthermore, in many instances, they would have been extremely difficult to adapt to meet some of the requirements imposed by the Bill.

I certainly would not wish, in supporting such legislation, that, as a result, a whole variety of perfectly satisfactory homes was put out of use and the amount of flats and flatlets and other accommodation was reduced. I am concerned that the Bill, as drafted at present, would have that effect. That would be an unfortunate effect.

As has been said, the other related concern is that local authorities have often been slack in pursuing and dealing with such matters under their present powers. Even if many more duties are put on local authorities, it will take years rather than months to deal with many of the potential problems that are identified in the Bill.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Is the hon. Gentleman not arguing that more resources should be given to local authorities so that they can get on with the task of registration and inspection and instituting court proceedings?

Mr. Wood: There are mechanisms within the rate support grant system which ensure that areas which have poor accommodation and poor housing receive greater amounts of rate support grant.

I hope that, within the present rate support grant system, local authorities will carry out their various duties more effectively and pursue matters under the existing powers. The resources available to local authorities is a much wider argument. Many local authorities are extremely wasteful of some of their present resources. However, I do not wish to divert the debate down that line for too long because my worry, like that of the promoter of the Bill, is to sort out some of the real problems that he identified.

I am concerned that the Bill, far from simplifying the position, complicates it. A mass of detail on potential room sizes, the covering on kitchen work tops and a multitude of other things is covered in the schedules to the Bill. Many of those things are not essential for providing decent accommodation for many people to live in, especially, in many instances, for young people for relatively short periods. It is wholly misguided to identify such items in extreme detail in a schedule to such a Bill.

Although it may be argued that there are matters of detail which can all be discussed in Committee, it worries me that the nature of the Bill is such that it implies a wish to go into inappropriate detail. Perhaps further powers and duties for local authorities should be introduced, but if one wishes to do that one should avoid some of the detail in the primary legislation. It is a wholly mistaken approach. That saddens me because I believe that there are major problems, particularly in cities such as London, where a multitude of people are disadvantaged in the accommodation in which they live and where things need to be done to resolve their problems.

I want to see some relatively simple legislation that may aid local authorities in their work and, indeed, urge them to pursue their efforts more effectively. I may be persuaded as the debate proceeds, but as things stand I have real doubts about whether the legislation in its present form will meet those needs.

1.40 pm

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): I shall speak as briefly as I can for two reasons. The first is that I want it to become apparent that there is support for the Bill on both sides of the House, and it should have its Second Reading today. Secondly, it is important that we allow time for the Government to respond to the offer by my hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) that if the Bill has its Second Reading there will be no obstruction. We shall be as co-operative as possible in making sure that it becomes an Act of Parliament. I hope that we shall have a response in the same spirit from the Minister.

The Government should be grateful for that offer because it is they who should be introducing the Bill; they should not simply leave it to my hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East. The evidence for the need for the Bill has come from a Government Department. We are grateful for the briefing and assistance that we have had from the Houses in Multiple Occupation Group.

We are talking about 2.6 million people who live in almost one third of a million houses in multiple occupation. Ten per cent. of those homes are unfit for human habitation, 81 per cent. are possible fire traps because they do not possess satisfactory means of escape in the event of fire, and many others, possibly four fifths of them, are deficient in one respect or another. So the Government should be pushing the Bill forward, not resisting or delaying it, because they have the evidence in their own hands.

Secondly, the Government should be introducing the Bill because of the way in which the Department of Health and Social Security treats young people, forcing them into worse and more squalid accommodation as a result of the iniquitous bed and breakfast allowances that it introduced. The Government should be pushing for higher standards because it was the Secretary of State for the Environment who told us, in response to criticisms of the highest ever number of homeless families, that he regarded hostels and bed-and-breakfast accommodation as part of the answer to homelessness. If he is putting his money on hostels, he should put his support behind the Bill, which can control the conditions in those hostels.

The Government should agree that a duty should be placed on local authorities, which is an essential feature of the Bill. At the moment local authorities in urban areas —the vast majority of houses in multiple occupation are in urban areas — find themselves under extraordinary stress because of the operation of the rate support grant. Many local authorities find that if they add resources for dealing with homes in multiple occupation, they suffer a penalty.

The figures provided by the Government are adequate evidence of the need to act quickly in relation to homes in multiple occupation. Other evidence is legion. I asked questions last year about the number of fires and the number of people who died in fires in hotels, bed-and-breakfast accommodation and houses in multiple occupation. The figures are, frankly, frightening. There has been some adjustment in the way in which the figures are collected, but it is not unusual to find that more than 100 people have died in fires in detached and semi-detached houses in multiple occupation. Although the figures vary from year to year, sometimes 10 or more people die in hotels, hostels and similar institutions. Every professional body that considers these matters supports the Bill. The Institution of Environmental Health Officers, through its representative Mr. Battersby, has stated that the risk of a fire in a house in multiple occupation is eight or 10 times the risk in a single occupied house, and we know from other evidence of the problems of disease, vermin and even death.

The case for action in these matters is overwhelming. It is Labour party policy to deal with these matters when the Labour party forms the Government. We have stated our policy in the housing document "Homes for the Future". In that document we state that we will introduce urgent legislation

"to protect people in dangerous, unhealthy and overcrowded temporary accommodation; we will give priority to placing a mandatory duty on councils to enforce standards of fire safety, space, repairs, amenities and management in all multi-occupied bed-sits, hostels and bed and breakfast hostels."

The document draws attention to the problems faced by inner city authorities in dealing with the problems of homelessness. There is a very strong link between

homelessness and the need to act on houses in multiple occupation. From the last figures that I have received from Shelter, 12,000 households were awaiting housing from temporary accommodation in London and that is likely to be in multiple occupation property. There are also 2,000 families in hostels, 4,000 families in short-life accommodation and more than 6,000 families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. The need is massive.

What is a house in multiple occupation? My hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East has defined that in the Bill. However, the Bill is long and he could not go into detail. However, one way to define a home in multiple occupation would be to describe it as a house which is not a home. It is a place where a person shuts the door at the end of the day but still does not have a place to call his own. That is the real essence of multiple occupation. Many of us representing urban constituencies know of places which not only carry the risk of fire, overcrowding, disease and death, but which create tension and destroy the lives of those living in such houses, particularly the children.

When I was first elected to this House, there were appalling homes in multiple occupation in my constituency. These homes were loved by the sociologists but hated by the occupants. They were in Somerleyton road and Geneva road in Brixton. Thank goodness that, through public intervention, we were able to end the scandal of those homes.

After the riots in 1981 and later, I had to try to explain to the Scarman inquiry what I believed to be the causes of the riots. My mind went back to what occurred 18 years or 20 years ago in those streets of houses which existed in the most appalling and squalid conditions. The main cause of tension and concern then was that people had to share kitchens, bathrooms and other facilities. The children grew up in the most appalling and insecure circumstances.

If we wanted to breed children for riot or social instability — although I do not mean to suggest for a moment that everyone who lived in those houses became rioters or criminals, far from it; people struggled to make their lives decent and struggled against their surroundings —we could not have done it better than in such homes where the conditions were so appalling. The conditions of multiple occupation created the risk of breeding children for riot, instability and insurrection. Ever since I experienced those matters, I have dedicated myself to preventing those conditions from occurring. However, the truth is that, overall, the number of homes in multiple occupation has been growing. The solution is adequate legislation. We must place a duty, not an option, upon local authorities to deal with the problem. Such homes should be registered so that they can be identified.

We have a massive code for dealing with motor vehicles. We subject vehicles to a yearly test. We do not insist upon that for homes. We insist that those who drive vehicles take a test to assess their driving ability. We do not do that for the owners of homes in multiple occupation. We say that all those who own a vehicle must register with a Government Department. We would regard as unthinkable any suggestion that we set aside such regulations. It is unthinkable that the House should not press forward as quickly as possible to establish a registration system and control to improve the living conditions of over 2 million people.

1.50 pm

Mr. John Powley (Norwich, South): It is a strange coincidence that I have a particular interest in two Bills that we are considering today. I hope that the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson), who ably introduced the Bill, was not suggesting that we should not have had a proper and adequate discussion on the measure which preceded his Bill. Although there is wide agreement on that Bill, it is an extremely important measure which deserves the fullest consideration. I had an interest in that Bill, and I have a long-standing interest in housing. I have spoken about housing and local government in many debates.

When I first entered local government in 1967 I made a bee line for the housing committee. I have retained that interest and that is why I am pleased to make a contribution to this debate.

I have no wish to kill the Bill.

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Fulham): Then sit down.

Mr. Powley: The hon. Member may say that, but if I did sit down the House would not be giving adequate consideration to this important measure. With the hon. Gentleman's wide experience of housing matters, I hope that he appreciates that any legislation of this kind deserves the fullest consideration by all hon. Members, whatever their opinion. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will not wish to deny the opportunity for that consideration.

I have a great deal of sympathy for many parts of the Bill. I hope that no one will disagree that we should attempt to improve accommodation standards. We should improve local authority houses, owner-occupied houses and privately rented houses.

We must consider the practical effect of the proposals. The Bill is extremely complicated. There is no doubt about that. The hon. Member for Swansea, East introduced the Bill succinctly, but it contains 37 clauses and 6 schedules, most of which have considerable implications. Even with the hon. Gentleman's expertise in the House, he did not do justice to all the points in the Bill. With my modest experience, I am well aware that the longer a Bill is, the more complicated it becomes and the more implications there are were the Bill to become an Act.

Mr. Porter: It is a long and complicated Bill. One of the shorter clauses is clause 28, which says:

> *There shall be paid out of money provided by Parliament—*
>
> *(a) any expenses incurred by a local housing authority or by the Secretary of State in the exercise of their powers under this Act; and*
>
> *(b) any increase attributable to this Act in the sums payable out of such moneys under any other Act.*

In all my delvings into the Bill, I can find no sign of what it might cost the individual householder, the local authorities or the Secretary of State. More to the point, I cannot find any sign as to what effect it might have on the availability of such accommodation for those people who desperately need it, and, for those who are able to acquire it, what the effect will be on rents.

Mr. Powley: My hon. Friend is right to raise such an important question. I intended to pay attention to that matter, so perhaps I should refer to it now. Clause 28 is one of the briefest clauses in a complicated Bill, but it mentions very little indeed. There are severe financial

[Mr. Powley]

implications for local authorities, for the Government and for the owners of such property, but little or no mention is made of any of them.

There are considerable implications for the local authorities. Having been through the local government scene I recognise the financial constraints within local government. Indeed, I support constraints being put on local authorities because of their very nature and the effect that they could have within the general economic scene. I receive representations from my local authority. I disagree with Norwich city council on some things but on others I agree with it.

I receive representations from my local authority about the financial effects of legislation that Parliament is imposing on it. It makes representations about its financial obligations to the various component parts of my constituency. There is nothing in the Bill about the financial constraints that should be imposed on local government—how it would find the money or how it would compete with the other priorities within the local authority area. Local authorities have other priorities to consider. The Bill, were it to be enacted in this form, would have to take its place within the priorities that the local authorities determine for such legislation.

Mr. Humfrey Malins (Croydon, North-West): The payment for bed and breakfast accommodation comes from the DHSS, which is Government money. As the Government are paying the money out to the DHSS for bed and breakfast landlords, have they not a duty to ensure that the standards of that accommodation are adequate?

Mr. Powley: I made that point briefly earlier on when I said that we are all concerned about standards of accommodation, whether it be bed and breakfast, bedsit, or any dwelling.

As I understand it, allowances are not paid by the DHSS to landlords. The DHSS makes the payment to the tenant of the accommodation and the tenant then transfers the amount to the landlord. I am sure that in the majority of cases that is what happens.

In Norwich there are houses in multiple occupation. Landlords complain to me that some tenants—only a small minority—do not transmit the money that they receive from the DHSS to the landlord to whom they should pay rent. As a result, a number of landlords in Norwich have been denied the money rightly and properly paid by the DHSS to tenants for the accommodation. That is another part of the financial problem to which my hon. Friend the Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter) referred.

Mr. Laurie Pavitt (Brent, South): The hon. Gentleman referred to the differences between claims to the DHSS and rents. He is right to draw attention to clause 28. In my constituency, the housing department in the local authority pays £4·5 million for 750 families to live in sleazy hotels. The weight of that does not fall only on the DHSS—it falls also on the ratepayers.

Mr. Powley: That is a valid point. I have often referred to the rate implications for the local authorities. I agree with the hon. Gentleman's point and I hope that he will agree with mine. There are financial implications for both the local authority and the owner of the property. Where a local authority or fire authority rightly and properly insists on certain work being done, that would impose a financial obligation on the owner of the property. Fire regulations should be applied. However, the practical effect of imposing so many could be that there would be no accommodation, because the owner is in no position to afford the cost of the improvement in standards and fire precautions, and as a result has to take the accommodation off the market.

I am not suggesting that any landlord should allow accommodation to be occupied when it is in a slum condition, or when safety standards and cleanliness are ignored and facilities are not provided. However, the financial effect on the landlord could be an inhibiting factor in the provision of the accommodation.

Mr. Porter: Is not the whole point that the Bill lacks financial information? Any responsible housing authority knows now where its rotten houses in multiple occupation are, or at least it should. However, we do not know what it would cost to put houses in order, what work would have to be done, how much would have to be paid or what conditions would have to be met and so on. If we did, I would have some sympathy with what the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) is proposing. However, we do not know, and it would be an unwise virgin who would go into such a forest without having such information available.

Mr. Powley: I agree with my hon. Friend. I have said that, while the hon. Member for Swansea, East was succinct in introducing his Bill, he did not explain properly the point that my hon. Friend makes.

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): This is a Second Reading debate.

Mr. Powley: I think that it is important, even on Second Reading, that the financial effect of any legislation is spelt out to the House. In that way we can judge the merits or otherwise of proposed legislation. It is irresponsible if the financial effects on the Government, local authorities or individuals are not explained. I believe that any legislation should have a financial tag. I am not saying that just in relation to this Bill because I said that the financial consequences of the preceding Bill should be more fully explained.

Because I am pointing out the difficulties associated with the legislation, for which I have a great deal of sympathy, I hope that no one believes that I am condemning the legislation. I welcome the legislation, but it must be explained and the details examined as closely as possible.

As the House is aware, I have had my problems with Norwich city council, but I commend it for the action of which I was advised in a letter written to me on 5 February by the chief executive of Norwich city council. It states:

"The last six monthly progress report to the Housing Committee showed there to be 325 registered H.M.O's within the City."—

For the benefit of the House I should explain that my constituency covers only three quarters of the city, but I am talking about the city of Norwich, and hon. Members will have to make their judgment on the figures. The letter continued:

"Over the last 18 months, the Housing Committee has been developing a more positive policy towards dealing with

this type of property and have included provision of £50,000 in next year's Housing Investment Programme to help grant aid improvements to such properties. The Environmental Health Department also have two members of staff with specific responsibility for H.M.O's."

I commend the action that my local authority has taken. It shares my concern to raise the standard of houses in multiple occupation. It is for the local authority to determine whether the provision of £50,000 is too high or too low. I do not know how many properties will be improved as a result of that £50,000. That brings me back to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Wirral, South when he said that such expenditure must take its place within the priorities determined by the local authority, based on the competing claims for available resources.

There is no doubt that there are problems within my constituency. The local newspaper has reported that in one of the pleasant roads of Norwich, Unthank road, in my constituency, a number of residents are rightly concerned about the state of some of the properties in multiple occupation. The gardens have become unkempt and some of the houses have taken on an air of disreputability. The other residents are commenting not on the internal standards within the houses, but on the outside of those properties which leaves a lot to be desired and is lowering the standard of some of them.

I have covered only a few difficulties associated with the Bill. I repeat again, for the benefit of the House, that I do not condemn anyone who seeks to improve the standard of housing accommodation. I share the view that it is right and proper to try to improve standards and I support any measure to raise those standards. However, I draw the attention of the House to the legislation's complexity and the number of clauses and schedules contained within it.I draw attention to the implications of some clauses in a constructive spirit so that we understand fully what is under consideration before we commit ourselves.

2.9 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Richard Tracey): It is clear that hon. Members have diverse views about the Bill, its complexity and its purpose, and it may be for the convenience of the House if I say something about the Government's view of the Bill.

I commend and congratulate the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) on bringing this matter forward for us to debate and on what he said about improving the lot of people who live in houses in multiple occupation. Hon. Members are aware that the Government have taken steps to improve knowledge of the subject by commissioning research, which has been mentioned several times today.

The Government, following the results of the postal survey published last year and the findings of the physical and social survey published last month, are also concerned about the conditions in what is a considerably neglected element of the housing sector. Standards are lower than they should be, as the research has made clear. There are widespread needs for repair and for better management.

In addition to having sponsored research and consolidated legislation on this subject into a single Act and an advisory circular, the Government have their own views on how to bring about an upgrading of standards in this area. Much of what the hon. Member's Bill proposes already exists in current legislation, albeit in discretionary form. It is not, in the Government's view, the existing legislation that is at fault. It is wide ranging and capable in one form or another of meeting most situations, if not every situation. The powers are there for local authorities to use.

Our research has shown that the application of current legislation varies widely. Some authorities have been successful and effective within existing powers and available resources, others, unfortunately, have proved less active. In the Government's view, the approach should be to concentrate effort on encouraging the wider application and knowledge of existing powers, not just among local authorities, but among landlords and tenants, many of whom remain unaware of their individual rights. In the Government's view, local authorities remain best placed to consider the use of discretionary powers in the context of their knowledge of the housing situation in their areas. We intend to assist and advise them further when doing that.

My Department has written to a number of local authorities and similar organisations with the intention of seconding, for up to two years, an environmental health officer. His job will be to disseminate examples of good practice, to help design HMO guidance for authorities, to liaise with authorities over particular problems and to consider what extra discretionary powers local authorities might need.

The Government are particularly concerned to achieve greater consistency of approach to HMOs. One means of doing that will be to reconsider, in consultation with the local authority associations — which are important in this process — and other interested parties, the present definition, which is:

"A house which is occupied by persons who do not form a single household".

This is capable, as our research has shown, of wide interpretation. If a consistent understanding of the term can be achieved, with clear boundaries as to application, the more effective will existing legislation be. By doing that, and combining it with other measures, such as asking local authorities to include HMOs as one of their target groups for grants and perhaps the preparation of a code of practice regarding the placing of homeless people in HMOs, the Government hope to improve the manner in which the existing legislation will operate.

On more detailed matters, as I have said, much of the Bill is not new; it is very similar to a Bill introduced in 1983 and in parts to other previous private Members' Bills. The Government remain committed to the principle of improving conditions in HMOs. As in previous private Members' Bills, however, the resource implications and impracticabilities must be to the fore. These have been singularly pointed out by my hon. Friends. Increasing the frequency of inspections and the conversion of discretionary powers into duties still remain a matter with substantial resource implications for local authorities.

I do not know what estimate the hon. Member for Swansea, East has made of the costs of this measure. He certainly did not tell us. There is the question of the thin dividing line between the provision of cheap rentable accommodation and any proposals which might deter prospective landlords from providing it. That must be considered too. The Government believe that the imposition of rigid standards such as those in the schedules are too detailed to be practicable and might serve only to

[Mr. Richard Tracey]

produce the deterrent effect to which I have referred. There are existing provisions for the application of management codes, where necessary, to ensure proper state of repair, clean condition and general good order. Local authorities can establish at their discretion what standards to apply where overcrowding in an HMO exists.

Mr. Malins: The problem with bed-and-breakfast accommodation—it is surely a scandal—is that there are only powers and no duties to enforce. What is more, most local authorities say that their powers are not adequate to rid us of the overcrowding scandals that are so damaging to children, to which the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) referred.

Mr. Tracey: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his intervention. I have already said that we believe after considerable study that the discretionary powers are adequate. The trouble is that there is inconsistency in operation. That is why we intend to second an environmental health officer to study these matters and to tell local authorities how they can best perform their discretionary duties.

A most important aspect of HMOs is the problem of fire. At present, local authorities possess a duty, through a statutory instrument, to provide means of escape in respect of those HMOs with at least three storeys, excluding basements, and where the combined floor area exceeds 500 square metres. An informal investigation was undertaken by the Department of the Environment late last year concerning the practicalities of extending the scope of the duty to all those properties of three storeys or more with a combined floor area of 250 square metres. Unfortunately, this again proved impracticable on resource grounds because the fire authorities indicated they were having difficulty inspecting all the premises falling within the current duty.

The Government therefore propose to concentrate on the encouragement of local authorities to meet their existing duties, and the effective use of discretionary powers with regard to fire, on which it is known that activity has been low in the past. In the meantime, the Home Office is producing a guide for certain types of HMO which, it is estimated, will apply to about 60 per cent. of affected properties.

I note that the intentions of the hon. Member for Swansea, East are to update, strengthen and simplify procedures with regard to HMOs. As I have said, the Government are not convinced that strengthening is required in the manner suggested. Nor do we agree that the details provided by the Bill necessarily simplify matters. The Government have never said that they would be averse to updating legislation where this is considered necessary—the consolidated Housing Acts are a good example of that. In the case of the HMO legislation, however, the line that must be adhered to is that the wide array of powers and duties already available are sufficient. Nonetheless, the Government intend to take the steps that I spelt out earlier to ensure that application becomes more effective. This, after all, is the same intention as the Bill.

Let us not forget that in many cases HMOs provide homes for those in the more vulnerable categories of society or who simply cannot afford better. The Government's aim is to upgrade standards and improve management. That is a substantial challenge and one which, given time, we hope will be successful in counteracting the problems that are associated with such accommodation.

Although I congratulate the hon. Member for Swansea, East on bringing this matter before the House, I must advise him that, unfortunately, the Government cannot support the Bill as it stands.

2.20 pm

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Fulham): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) on introducing this extremely important Bill, which seeks to tackle one of the most serious housing crises of our time. I should equally like to congratulate all those voluntary organisations which are concerned with the homeless and which have worked with enormous persistence over many years to try to get action taken to remedy this problem.

I do not add my congratulations to Her Majesty's Government, because during the past seven years they have prevaricated and put obstacles in the way of all those who have attempted to tackle the problem. I find it remarkable—I do not blame the Under-Secretary of State who is present—that the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction has not thought it appropriate to be here today to deal with an issue which one of his predecessors described as the central challenge to housing. It is significant that the Minister does not treat this matter as being worthy of his presence today.

The Government's record is matched only by the records of some, but not all, Conservative Members who have spoken at great length, but to little effect, about many matters, including some who have contributed to both debates this morning and made it difficult for the Bill to proceed, by allowing it insufficient time.

Mr. Stuart Holland: While he is discussing double standards, may I ask whether my hon. Friend agrees that that is illustrated at local authority level? In my constituency there are Access hotels on Clapham common for 147 Vietnamese persons that are overcrowded, where fire regulations are not properly regarded and where the leader of the Tory group on Lambeth council has been the legal adviser to the company that is exploiting those people.

Mr. Raynsford: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for highlighting that disgraceful fact. Those Conservative Members who spoke at length this morning, and who may have prejudiced the prospects of the Bill receiving its Second Reading, would do well to ponder, when the next serious fire takes place, as it will, in a multi-occupied house, whether the loss of life or the injuries that were suffered by the people involved might have been prevented if they had allowed the Bill to have a greater debate today.

Mr. Malins: Will the hon. Gentleman, with his experience in housing matters, accept that many of my hon. Friends would have loved to see the Bill go forward and that we are very disappointed?

Mr. Raynsford: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his persistent and continuous support for the Bill and wish that other Conservative Members had shown similar concern.

The objections that have been raised to the Bill can be summarised under three headings. First, the Bill is too complex. Frankly, any hon. Member who visits a house in multiple occupation will be only too well aware of the need

for standards to be clearly defined. Those hon. Members will have seen the squalor, appalling sanitary conditions, disgusting kitchens, broken banisters and the hazards that risk lives in those houses. They will also have seen the inadequacy of the fire protection in so many of those properties. That was confirmed by the Government's own research, which showed that four out of five houses in multi-occupation are not adequately protected against fire. Having seen that, one can understand only too clearly the need for proper regulations. As my hon. Friend the Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) so rightly stressed, if there are detailed regulations to cover safety in cars, similar regulations should be introduced for housing.

The second objecton relates to the financial effects of the Bill on local authorities and, perhaps, the Government. Do those who talk about the possible extra cost consider the cost of the loss of human life, the damage to property, the human misery, the injuries and the disease suffered by those who live in such houses? Have they considered the subsequent cost to the NHS? All that must be taken into account.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Raynsford: Time is short.

Do those hon. Gentlemen not consider the gross waste of resources through the DHSS subsidising hoteliers who keep people in squalor but charge them a fortune? Do they not accept that we can use our resources far better by imposing decent standards and ensuring that people are not exploited by unscrupulous hoteliers who rake in huge profits?

Mr. Tracey *rose*——

Mr. Raynsford: I shall not give way to the Minister; he was not prepared to give way to the Opposition when he spoke.

Thirdly, Conservative Members object because they say that the Bill will dry up the supply of houses. They should recognise that the Government have been responsible for the largest ever loss of rented acommodation in our history. During the past seven years 900,000 homes have been lost to renting. That is the Conservative party's responsibility and hon. Members should recognise that before they talk about the Bill drying up the supply.

The Government's record is abominable. We need more decent homes to rent and proper controls on the death traps that exist in multi-occupied houses. The objections are not sound and there is an overwhelming case for giving the Bill a Second Reading today. It is particularly appropriate that we should debate it in the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. I only wish that the Government's reaction to that opportunity was more positive than it has been to date. When the eyes of the world are looking to see what can be done to help homeless people worldwide, we are seeing indifference, apathy and positive neglect from the Government. It is a disgrace, and the Bill would do a great deal to remedy that.

2.26 pm

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): I am grateful for this opportunity to make a brief comment on the Bill. I have already made some interventions about clause 28, which deals with finance.

The hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) prayed in aid in great detail the Department of the Environment report of January 1987 on houses in multiple occupation. He was selective in his quotations and did not quote its conclusion. It is proper, sensible and correct that the House should be aware of that conclusion, which underlines my mistrust of the Bill. Indeed, "mistrust" is the very word used in the conclusion. It states that such a catalogue of suspicion, mistrust, poor returns, and unacceptable housing conditions might seem to argue for the eradication of HMOs. On the face of it that appears to be true. There is certainly much which is intrinsically satisfactory about the nature of the tenure, but to be a tenant in someone else's house is a formula for conflict.

However great the shortcomings of the sector, HMOs continue to meet a housing need that is not being met elsewhere. There remains a demand for furnished accommodation, for houses that can be rented and shared on a short-term basis, and for accommodation that is cheap and provides only the minimum facilities.

Mr. Anderson *rose in his place, and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put; *but* MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *withheld his assent and declined then to put that question.*

Mr. Porter: I am obliged, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Until that need can be met through affordable, accessible self-contained accommodation, shared housing will continue to play an important role at the bottom end of the housing market. The challenge is to upgrade standards and improve management without reducing what the tenants see as the positive benefits of the sector —the lack of restriction and the relatively low cost.

With the greatest respect to Opposition Members, whose views and knowledge on housing matters I respect, not one hon. Gentleman, including the hon. Member for Swansea, East, addressed himself to the conclusion of the Department's report and the relatively low cost of multiple housing. If the Bill were given a Second Reading and became law, it would have many effects. It would employ many inspectors and it would provide office accommodation and officers to local authorities. However, it would not maintain a flow of relatively low-cost, non-restrictive housing. Until the House is satisfied that the——

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Do the hon. Gentleman's constituents know about this?

Mr. Porter: They will know, because I shall tell them. Of course my constituents will know. If the hon. Gentleman does not stop abusing me from a sedentary position, I shall seek your protection, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If anybody had made the slightest attempt during the debate to state the cost to the public purse—both central and local—to landlords, present tenants and incoming tenants, I should have had a great deal more sympathy——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed on Friday 20 February.

Mr. Anderson: On a point or order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I know that you and your fellow occupants of the distinguished Chair seek to protect the interests of Back Benchers. As you know, over the years the power of the Executive has been allowed to grow at the expense of Back Benchers and those who do not sit on the Treasury Bench. This has occurred particularly with private Members' Bills. Today we debated a Bill which, although in the form of a private Member's Bill, was in effect a Government

[Mr. Anderson]

Bill. The Bill was a consensual measure, supported and drafted by the Government, and the discussion of it had the effect of pushing out a Bill that has the support of many hon. Members.

It is a matter of protecting what has traditionally been the right of private Members to introduce private Members' Bills, and the erosion of that right as against the increase in power of the Executive. I ask you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to examine the situation in which private Members' rights are increasingly obliterated in respect of private Members' Bills. By their action today the Treasury Bench may have killed the Bill, but the problem will not go away without immediate action.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. As the hon. Gentleman and the whole House know, it is the job of the Chair to ensure that the rules of the House are observed. The rules have been observed. If the hon. Gentleman is dissatisfied with the present rules, he may consult the Select Committee on Procedure. I suggest that he make his comments to that Committee and asks whether it is prepared to consider the points that he made.

Mr. Pavitt: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) made a differentiation. You quite rightly ruled that this is the kind of issue—you are still within the rules of the House—that must be considered by the Committee that deals with such matters. My hon. Friend raised the important point that you are aware of the difference between private Members' Bills that have the support of the Government and those that have not. If this matter goes before the Committee, will it be possible for the occupants of the Chair to give evidence about the way in which the rules operate in connection with a Bill to which the Government have given the green light and a Bill that the Government are determined shall not pass?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman will realise that it would be highly dangerous if the Chair were to make any value judgments about any matter before it. If the Select Committee decides to consider this matter, and if it wishes to have the views of Mr. Speaker before coming to any conclusion, I am sure that Mr. Speaker will carefully consider such a request.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. What guarantees do we have in respect of the hon. Members who represent the Treasury Bench on the Procedure Committee? What sympathy will there be from those who are already in multiple occupation—for example, from the Prime Minister? She has Downing street, that flat down in Kent, subsidised by the National Trust, a £500,000 house in Dulwich and another one at Chequers. She really knows about multiple occupation. My hon. Friend's Bill is being frustrated by those who, representing the Prime Minister, are filibustering on the Conservative Back Benches. What chance is there that Conservative Members of the Select Committee on Procedure will by sympathetic towards something like this?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is a great pity that the hon. Gentleman is casting aspersions on a Committee of the House.

Mr. Skinner: You bet I am.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I cannot take the matter any further now.

Mr. Wareing: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Without wanting to put the onus on you or any other occupant of the Chair, is there not an element of discretion in matters such as this? Is it not rather odd that a debate on an order relating to the prevention of terrorism should be followed by a vote after an hour and a half on a matter that affects a small number of people, but that my hon. Friend's Bill, which affects a large number of people, including people on Merseyside, should be talked out? They will be astounded to find that the hon. Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter) was instrumental in talking out the Bill. As the Bill has been discussed for nearly an hour and a half, surely there ought to be a vote on it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This happens regularly on Friday. Sometimes the hon. Member who feels that he has a grievance sits on one side of the House, and sometimes it is an hon. Member who sits on the other side. The remedy is in the hands of the House. If it wishes the procedure to be changed, that is not a matter for the Chair. The job of the Chair is to administer the rules and regulations that we have at any one time. The remedy lies in the hands of hon. Members. If they are dissatisfied with the present procedure, they can put their points to the Select Committee on Procedure.

Mr. Lawrence: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have been in the House for nearly 13 years, and I wonder whether you can help me. Did we hear any of this hypocritical claptrap when the Opposition were in power?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not think that we can take this matter any further now.

SOUTH WEST (ENGLAND) DEVELOPMENT AGENCY BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member's Bill was referred to the Examiners on 22 January and their report has not yet been received. The Second Reading of the Bill cannot be moved until that occurs. Second Reading what day?

Second Reading deferred till Friday 27 February.

HEARING AID COUNCIL ACT 1968 (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 8 May.

TOBACCO SMOKING (PUBLIC PLACES) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 8 May.

LICENSING (RESTAURANT MEALS) BILL

[LORDS]

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 27 February.

POLICE COMPLAINTS AUTHORITY (INFORMATION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 20 February.

Council of Europe and Western European Union

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

2.38 pm

Mr. Laurie Pavitt (Brent, South): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. The Question has been put, and I must remind the hon. Member that he is taking time out of the half-hour Adjournment debate. I hope that he will not do that.

Mr. Christopher Murphy (Welwyn Hatfield): I am well aware that an element of luck is required in ensuring success in gaining an Adjournment debate. To achieve that on Friday the 13th is also to demonstrate a touching faith in good fortune. Before the House adjourns, I wish to consider Government policy towards the Council of Europe and the Western European Union. In doing so my purpose is to emphasise the need for publicity to be given to the support for these organisations displayed by the Government, as well as to the achievements of both Assemblies in terms of the benefits to European citizens, not least those in our own country.

Throughout this Parliament I have had the privilege of being a United Kingdom delegate to the Council of Europe and the Western European Union. Since that appointment by my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, I have gained an insight into their work, and I hope that I have, at least in some small measure, contributed to their progress.

On a previous occasion I have alluded to George Bernard Shaw, who lived in Mid-Hertfordshire. He once declared:

> "He knows nothing, and he thinks he knows everything. That points clearly to a political career."

As Shaw pre-dates my representation of the area, that cannot be said to have been directed at me, unless prophecy was intended. However, I now know something about the Council of Europe and the Western European Union — as indeed I know something about this honourable House and my constituency — although I realise that I cannot know quite everything. Perhaps I should leave unspoken what that means about a political career.

I made clear in my maiden speech and on subsequent occasions my commitment to freedom and democracy. Thus, to be a member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has given me an opportunity to broaden that commitment, as has being a member of the Assembly of Western European Union. The Council of Europe's statute declares that each state must accept the principle of the rule of law, and guarantee its citizens the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms. I believe that I echo the attitudes of the vast majority of my constituents when I subscribe to that in debates in the Parliamentary Assembly.

The Western European Union, with its basis in the Brussels treaty, aims to preserve the principles of democracy, personal freedom and political liberty. Once again, I believe that I portray the overwhelming view of Welwyn Hatfield when I subscribe to that in debates in the Assembly.

[Mr. Christopher Murphy]

The impact of the Council of Europe has been considerable, ranging from conventions on human rights to the fight against terrorism, from the protection of the architectural heritage to the creation of a social charter, and in many other ways.

Although the Western European Union has a more limited mandate, being concerned with defence and security issues, it, too, has provided substantial benefits in terms of helping to ensure peace and co-operation.

I have been particularly fortunate in that, having had involvement with Artistic Heritage through the Council of Europe, a report that I prepared on private sponsorship of the arts was accepted by the Parliamentary Assembly and, later, largely endorsed by the Council of Ministers.

At present, with a number of colleagues representing the 21 member countries, I am exercised by the fight against drugs, believing that, for the sake of today's youth, we must never be soft on soft drugs and never be other than hard on the use of hard ones.

But, whatever the results of the deliberations of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe or the Assembly of the Western European Union, however relevant the reports may be to the lives of ordinary people, whatever the decisions made by the two Councils of Ministers, the fact remains that little in the way of reference is made to them and consequently little in the way of knowledge is gained by the public.

One suggestion, at least to enable hon. Members to be better informed, was that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs should arrange for a Government statement on the work of the Western European Union and of the Council of Europe to be presented to Parliament annually.

In consequence of questions that I tabled a year ago my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, who I am pleased to see on the Treasury Bench, was kind enough to agree to provide this with respect to the Western European Union but, regrettably, not for the Council of Europe. While expressing my gratitude for the former, may I urge him to reconsider the latter. It seems somewhat illogical to give that prominence to the one and not to the other.

During a period of reactivation of the Western European Union, which it is intended will ensure that it becomes the European pillar of the NATO Alliance, the need for the Government to initiate opportunities to draw attention to the activities of the Western European Union is manifestly apparent. At the same time, the value of the Council of Europe, which brings together a wider grouping of nations than can be achieved by the EEC, and which the Government recognise via activities such as the Pompidou Group on drug abuse and illicit trafficking, requires a similar approach.

In putting forward my case relating to Government policy towards the Council of Europe and the Western European Union, I have endeavoured to be brief so that I might hold to an old proverb, "Nature gives us two ears and one tongue, so that we ought to listen twice as much as we talk". However, given the number of times that I have addressed this honourable House and the two European Assemblies, perhaps the only true redress now is silence.

2.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Eggar): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Murphy) for raising this important topic. It is sad that too little attention is paid by the public to the valuable work that is done in the Council of Europe and the WEU by many hon. Members on both sides of the House.

My hon. Friend spoke eloquently of his concerns about the Council of Europe and the WEU. We recognise fully the significant role that he has played in both those organisations over the past three or four years. It is important that we bring to public attention the work done by both those organisations, and, in particular, the importance of their roles in the process of European integration. By a quirk of the modified Brussels treaty of 1954, which founded the WEU, the same national representatives are members of both Parliamentary Assemblies, but the issues debated in the Assembly and other institutions of each organisation are different, as is their internal structure and recent history. I shall therefore seek to deal with both separately.

Membership of the Council of Europe is an important element of our policy towards western Europe as a whole. We were founder members of the organisation. Our commitment to its ideals remains as strong now as then. We see the Council of Europe as a focus for the unity of democratic Europe and as a forum in which like-minded European democracies can work for improvements in the condition of life, the development of human values and the maintenance of human rights. The Council provides a valuable framework for intergovernmental activities in areas where the widest possible co-operation between western European Governments is desirable. Its Parliamentary Assembly offers a unique meeting place where elected representatives of the 21 member states can discuss matters of mutual concern and make recommendations for action by Governments. It is satisfying that the British delegation to that Assembly, including my hon. Friend, plays a prominent part in debates in the Assembly, on its Committees and in its political groups.

My hon. Friend referred to reports or statements on the work of the Council of Europe. He has pressed me on that matter over some months. The full reports of the debates in the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly and the reports to the Parliamentary Assembly by the Chairman of the Committee of Ministers, which are available in the Library of the House, give a full account of the work of the Council of Europe. In view of the availability of those reports and, of course, the pressure on parliamentary time, we do not believe that an annual report or statement in Parliament on the work of the Council of Europe is necessary.

The activities of the Council of Europe are wide ranging. They cover culture, education, sport, health, social questions, crime and drug prevention, legal affairs, local and regional authorities, youth affairs and the improvement of the environment. I pay tribute to the work that my hon. Friend has done in the arts. The United Kingdom participates actively in all of them.

We believe that the conventions, of which there are more than 120, are of particular value. These conventions have been negotiated by the member states of the Council. Perhaps foremost among these conventions is the European convention on the protection of human rights

and fundamental freedoms, which was opened for signature in 1950. The United Kingdom was the first country to ratify that convention. The human rights convention is a touchstone for the democratic freedoms that we enjoy in western Europe. More than a list of fundamental rights, the convention provides arrangements whereby individuals and states can seek redress against alleged violations of those rights through reference to the European Commission and the European Court of Human Rights set up under the convention. The United Kingdom's decision last year to renew the right of individual petition to the Commission and our recognition of the compulsory jurisdiction of the court are evidence of our support for the system of protection guaranteed by the convention on human rights.

An important contribution to the promotion of discussion and co-operation among the countries of western Europe is made by the periodic specialist conferences of Ministers held under Council of Europe auspices. There were seven such conferences last year, covering labour, equality betwen men and women, justice, sport, local government, mass media and terrorism. The conference on terrorism, which took place in November, was timely and offered a valuable opportunity for discussion on this important matter by the Council's 21 member Governments. As a result, Ministers agreed to improve co-operation in counter-terrorism.

An important feature of the Council of Europe, which has assumed special significance with the enlargement of the European Community, is the opportunity that the Council offers for consultation between the 12 and the non-Community Members of the Council. We attach particular importance to such dialogue. At a meeting of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers held in November last year, my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary presented a report on developments within the Community during the period of the British presidency. He was also able to exchange views informally on important international questions with his Council of Europe colleagues, and to attend a colloquy between Council of Europe Ministers and representatives of the Council's Parliamentary Assembly.

It is important that the work of the Council of Europe and that of the Community are effectively co-ordinated so that the Council can concentrate on those areas to which its membership is most suited, and duplication of effort is avoided. The relationship between the Council and the European Community was the subject of a report produced last year by a commission of eminent European personalities chaired by Signor Colombo. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Rippon) represented the United Kingdom. The report's proposals are currently being considered by the Committee of Ministers. We shall examine its conclusions.

I should like to say a word about the financing of the Council of Europe. The United Kingdom is one of the four major contributors to the Council of Europe's budget. In the financial year 1985-86 the Foreign and Commonwealth Office contribution was £5,580,000. We have adopted in relation to the budgets of all international organisations a policy of zero real growth. We have no wish to curtail the valuable activities of the Council—quite the contrary. However, we believe that it is important to encourage international organisations to be selective in determining their work programmes, according the highest priority to those activities which are likely to produce the greatest benefits, and hope that the Council will approach its programme in this way, looking critically at each proposed activity with a view to ensuring that the resources available are allocated in the most cost-effective way.

The essence of the WEU is the commitment in article 5 of the revised Brussels treaty whereby all seven signatories undertake to provide assistance in the event of an attack on any one of them. This commitment to common defence is stronger and more binding than the commitment in the comparable article of the NATO treaty, a fact that is often overlooked. The Brussels treaty also obliges the British Government to maintain an army and an air force on the continent of Europe in peacetime. This was a unique obligation on our part—something that we had never in our history previously contemplated. The WEU thus embodies our, and our partners', fundamental commitment to collective security. This commitment is set firmly within the framework of the Atlantic Alliance. The WEU is the means whereby the

"European pillar of the Alliance",

to use President Kennedy's phrase, can be effectively strengthened.

In its activities, the WEU does not therefore seek to duplicate work done in NATO, but rather to reinforce it by ensuring that the European input is co-ordinated and coherent. It is the only European forum in which both Foreign and Defence Ministers can meet for joint consultations on security. Their discussions are prepared by regular exchanges at official level. The fact that discussion of security questions among all 12 members of the European community within the framework of European political co-operation is limited in scope reinforces the importance of the WEU. Its membership consists of countries which take their defence obligations seriously. It includes the two European nuclear powers and all five of the INF-basing countries—that is to say, the countries on whose territory the United States systems introduced into Europe under the terms of the 1979 dual-track decision are deployed.

The WEU Council of Foreign and Defence Ministers has met at approximately six-monthly intervals since reactivation, exchanging views on a wide range of substantive security issues. British Ministers have played a leading role in those discussions. The most recent meeting at Luxembourg last November was particularly significant in providing the opportunity to consider the implications for Europe of the outcome of the Reykjavik meeting in October. Our WEU partners later welcomed the Prime Minister's understanding with President Reagan, reached at Camp David just a day after the Luxembourg WEU meeting, as being in the interests of Europe as a whole.

The Government attach considerable importance to the role of parliamentarians in the WEU. The Council's recognition of the Assembly's work was amply demonstrated in Paris in December last year when the French Prime Minister and five other Ministers from different WEU countries, including my noble Friend the Minister for Defence Procurement, addressed the Assembly at its part-session. I know that this record turn-out did not please everyone. Some regard it as a burden which interfered unduly with the Assembly's debates, and Governments must clearly take account of these concerns in planning their future representation. At the same time, however, the significance for the WEU of this ministerial

[Mr. Tim Eggar]

interest should not be forgotten. If the organisation is to take its place in Europe, and if the Assembly is to play its part, there will inevitably be a renewed impetus to the dialogue between Governments and the Assembly. That so many Ministers wished to speak at the session last December is testimony to those developments.

My noble Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, who has addressed the WEU Assembly in Paris on many occasions, has frequently made clear in her speeches the significant public role which the Government see for the WEU Assembly. It is the only European body specifically empowered by treaty to debate security and defence questions, and has unique possibilities to generate better public understanding of the issues involved. The dissemination of the Assembly's reports can be of assistance in this area and it is important that, through dialogue with the Assembly, Governments' views can become more widely known and form an essential element of the debate.

The Government attach significance to the provision to both the Assembly and other WEU bodies of adequate resources to carry out their work. It has not been easy to establish the appropriate level of financing in view of the great changes which the WEU has undergone in the past two years and in which my hon. Friend has been involved, but the organisation has experienced real budgetary growth in both 1985 and 1986 and is likely also to do so for 1987. When set against the Government's policy of restricting the budgets of international organisations to zero real growth, this indicates that the WEU has in recent years benefited beyond the norm, partly as a tribute from Governments to the WEU during its reactivation. British Ministers have supported the need to ensure adequate financing of the WEU and will continue to do so.

Ministers have agreed that the WEU institutional changes resulting from reactivation should run unhindered until the end of this year. They will then undertake a review of the performance of the new arrangements, which will help to signpost the way ahead. Our aim is to get the WEU established as the focal point of the European defence identity and to ensure that its working methods are soundly based for this purpose. Once the review is complete, we shall be able to turn our full attention to the question of the possible future enlargement of the organisation. In doing so, we shall have to reflect carefully on the serious treaty obligations to which potential new members must commit themselves and to ask whether these could be undertaken. But that is for the future—we must first be certain that the WEU is heading in the right direction and is sure of its future role. Until then, it would be premature to examine the important question of enlargement in detail.

I think that it will be clear from what I have said that we are committed to both the Council of Europe and the WEU. We recognise the important work that they do and the contribution that they make in their different fields to co-operation in western Europe.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 16 February 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

ENERGY

Electricity Demand

1. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what was the peak demand for electricity met by the Central Electricity Generating Board during the recent cold weather.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Alastair Goodlad): The most severe weather lasted from 12 January to 19 January. During that time a record peak demand of 47,926 MW was met at 5.30 pm on Monday 12 January. This is an integrated half-hourly figure, and the spot peak reached during the previous 30 minutes was in fact 48,290 MW.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Does my hon. Friend agree that the record demand increases the case for early orders to be made for power stations? Against the background of deciding which type of power station should be built, does my hon. Friend agree that cheap electricity is of overriding national interest, alongside safety requirements? Does he accept Sir Frank Layfield's comments that nuclear energy will almost certainly be cheaper than energy provided by coal-fired stations?

Mr. Goodlad: The declared net capability of generating plant on the CEGB's system at 31 March last year was 52,101 MW. My hon. Friend may draw his own conclusions from that. In view of my right hon. Friend's quasi-judicial position, my hon. Friend will understand that I cannot comment on the Sizewell inquiry.

Mr. Powley: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is fair to say that without the 16 or 18 per cent. of our electricity that is supplied by nuclear energy the extraordinarily high demand over the recent winter would not have been met and could have led to either a reduction in the power of electricity or, indeed, a cut?

Mr. Goodlad: My hon. Friend is quite right. Nuclear power stations made an important contribution towards meeting the demand. I congratulate the CEGB's staff on their excellent performance in the face of the severe weather and the record demand. I congratulate also the area board staff who worked in terrible conditions to maintain supplies and overcome the few distribution failures that occurred.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Although I recognise that the Minister wishes to pursue a policy of fulfilling energy demand, I put it to him that if the Government go down the Sizewell route those of us who have always supported nuclear power will part company on that issue, because the public have no confidence, and the whole future——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This question would be better related to a later question.

Coal-Fired Power Stations

2. **Mr. Orme** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to meet the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board to discuss the ordering of new coal-fired stations.

19. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what additional coal-fired generating capacity will be ordered during the next three years.

The Minister of State, Department of Energy (Mr. Alick Buchanan-Smith): My right hon. Friend meets the chairman regularly. Applications for consent to the construction of power stations are a matter for the CEGB, and my right hon. Friend has received no applications for a coal-fired station. If he did, he would give them immediate consideration.

Mr. Orme: The Minister must be aware that informed press reports state that the CEGB urgently needs two coal-fired stations to be ordered at once because of the increasing demand for power. What is the Government's reaction to that? If such stations are ordered, where will they be sited?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The right hon. Gentleman is correct. There have been various reports in the press and elsewhere about proposals from the CEGB. Obviously, my right hon. Friend will have to wait until he receives applications before he can consider them. As I stated in my original answer, he will certainly endeavour to deal with them as expeditiously as possible.

Mr. Hardy: If an order is to be placed, does the Minister of State accept that it should be placed now, in order to sustain the relevant sectors of British industry? Will he give an assurance that should an application for coal-fired power stations be granted, the coal that will be burnt in them will not be bought from South Africa?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: So long as the CEGB makes an application, the other factors can flow from it, but until an application is made to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy it is not, of course, possible to comment.

Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, in view of the disturbingly high level of industrial disputes still current in the coal industry and the worrying political uncertainties facing many overseas oil producers, it would be prudent to place orders for dual-fired stations, certainly for those in the south of England, built near to large oil refineries?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I note what my hon. Friend has said, but, as I am sure he realises and acknowledges, we in the United Kingdom are blessed with a wide variety of different sources of energy and it is important that we should make the best use of them. As for coal, of particular significance over the past year has been the enormous improvement in productivity, and that has to be considered as well.

Mr. Forth: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the known death rate from producing energy from such sources as coal and oil is vastly higher than it is from nuclear energy? Does this not point in the direction of relying more on nuclear energy in the future? In addition, is not the reliability of supplies from nuclear sources much greater? Those who are employed in the nuclear power industry do not often go on strike. Does that not also strengthen the argument for much greater reliance on nuclear sources than on other sources in the future?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: My hon. Friend knows that we are shortly to have a debate on the Sizewell report. Thereafter my right hon. Friend will be taking a decision on these very important matters.

Mr. Allen McKay: Does the Minister of State not accept that the CEGB will need about 12,500 MW of additional capacity by the end of the decade? Taking into consideration the planning time and the outcry regarding Sizewell, is it not correct that we should need not two coal-fired power stations but four?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The industry makes its own forecasts and a number of them are discussed publicly and otherwise, but I return to what I said earlier, that if the CEGB wished to go ahead with some of the proposals that it has been discussing it would have to make an application to my right hon. Friend, who would consider it as soon as possible after he received it.

Power Stations (Coal Burn)

3. **Mr. Douglas** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the prospects for the expansion of coal burn in power stations in Britain.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: In England and Wales the agreement with British Coal announced last June underlined the CEGB's strong commitment to the use of coal, combined with its aim of buying supplies at internationally competitive prices. Responsibility for the Scottish electricity boards rests with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. The best prospects for the expansion of coal burn lie in production by the British coal industry at competitive prices.

Mr. Douglas: Does the Minister accept that the agreement to which he referred is of very short-term duration? Do the Minister and his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland know that in my constituency there is an under-utilised coal-fired power station at Kincardine-on-Forth that could be utilised quickly, primarily if the transmission links between the various parts of the United Kingdom were strengthened? Will the Minister give urgent attention to these matters?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I certainly take note of what the hon. Gentleman has said. I know of his interest in these matters and I shall draw them to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Mr. Michael Morris: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the problems with the CEGB seem to be, first, the decision that there should be increased capacity in the south of England and, secondly, the desire to find an almost perfect answer to coal burn? Should not my right hon. Friend be putting pressure on the CEGB for an early decision on future stations in the south of England?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The CEGB has mentioned a number of different sites, which are known, but, as far as I know, no decision has been taken in relation to any particular site. Once the CEGB has taken a decision, no doubt it will make an application to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Benn: Will the Minister assure the House that no South African coal will be used in power stations, in view of the reports of its importation and burning in this country?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The right hon. Gentleman keeps referring to this issue, but I am not aware of the CEGB importing any coal from South Africa.

Mr. Watts: Will my right hon. Friend look at any proposals for increasing coal burn with great care and just a little scepticism as it has yet to be established that British Coal can produce coal at a low and economic world price in the longer term, and that long-term commitments of investment to increase coal burn, when British Coal has not established that it can produce low-cost coal consistently, should be avoided?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: It is significant that since 1983-84 the output per manshift has risen from 2·43 tonnes to more than 3·5 tonnes. That is a considerable achievement. Obviously, such an achievement helps to make coal a much more competitive fuel for electricity generation. I have no doubt that the electricity industry and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will take that into account in due course. However, of course I hope that that improvement is maintained.

Mr. Eadie: Does the Minister agree that the question posed by my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) about increased coal burn was made on two accounts: first, because there has been record productivity in the mining industry; and secondly, because it is well known that if we were to pursue a policy of renewing power station plant it would be good both for the mining industry and power station manufacturers. At present those industries are hungry for jobs. Does the Minister agree that that is the quickest and most expeditious way of providing jobs and more coal burn?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I hope the hon. Gentleman realises that it is only since the disruption of the coal industry that this great achievement in productivity has been made. We hope that it is maintained. It is in the best interests of the miners.—I congratulate them on what they have achieved recently — to maintain that productivity and demonstrate that it will continue. That is the best way of ensuring that the electricity industry pays full attention to coal as a source of power generation.

Severn Barrage

4. **Mr. Stern** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to complete and place in the Library the list of organisations and individuals to be consulted in connection with studies into the proposed Severn barrage.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. David Hunt): I have today placed copies of the proposed work programme, including the consultation arrangements, in the Libraries of both Houses.

Mr. Stern: I thank my hon. Friend and congratulate him on that excellent reply. In advance of our studying the

documents concerned, will my hon. Friend say whether they show how long the proposed studies will take, given the extent of interest in the Severnside area and the fact that, on the one hand, people are fearful of the decision that will be taken, but, on the other, they would like to know fairly soon what it will be?

Mr. Hunt: I pay tribute to my hon. Friend's tireless campaign on behalf of his constituents and the campaign of other right hon. and hon. Friends in pressing for the fullest possible consultation. We are dealing with the first two years of a six-year programme, originally adduced by the Severn Tidal Power Group. We are contemplating studies that will last for 18 months, but the programme's objective is to reduce uncertainty about the scheme to the point where it will be possible to make decisions on whether to plan for construction.

Mr. Adley: Does my hon. Friend recall, from his days as chairman of Bristol Young Conservatives, when I was a Member of Parliament for that great city, that this project was first raised in the House in 1971? That is now more than 15 years ago. Does he not think that that is long, enough for us to have been to be looking into this project? If his had been in France, the barrage would probably have been built and working 5 years ago.

Mr. Hunt: For many reasons, I have no wish to explore the past with my hon. Friend. What we have now is certainly one of the most extensive and detailed research programmes into tidal energy anywhere in the world. That shows that this Government mean business on the subject of tidal energy, which we believe to be one of the most promising of our renewable energy resources.

Electricity (Nuclear Generation)

5. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what proportion of electricity supply in 1986 came from nuclear power.

Mr. Goodlad: Based on provisional figures, some 20 per cent. of the electricity available from the United Kingdom public supply system was provided by nuclear power in 1986.

Mr. Chapman: Will my hon. Friend confirm that that is a relatively small proportion compared with many other countries, including Japan, West Germany and France? Will he further confirm that 26 countries now have significant civil nuclear power programmes? In any debate on Sizewell, should not an important point be that the independent Nuclear Installations Inspectorate has a good track record of ensuring and insisting upon the highest safety standards in British nuclear power stations?

Mr. Goodlad: My hon. Friend is correct in the first part of his question. He is absolutely right in saying that the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate does a good job.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Does the Minister accept that to proceed with Sizewell risks fracturing the strong public majority support in favour of nuclear power? Is it worth the risk of upsetting that lobby? Is there not a danger that if there were even a minor incident in a PWR station a strong majority against nuclear power may develop, when we are trying to avoid that?

Mr. Goodlad: I note what the hon. Gentleman said. He will appreciate that because of the quasi-judicial position of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State I cannot anticipate his decision on Sizewell.

Mr. Hannam: Will my hon. Friend take the opportunity to refute the allegation that the Government are holding up the report on the linkage of leukaemia with nuclear power stations? Will he also confirm that coal-fired power stations produce more than double the radiation emissions of nuclear stations?

Mr. Goodlad: My hon. Friend is right. The Government would certainly not wish to intervene to hold back the report, which has been sent to the printers. I understand that it took longer than expected because the authors took longer than expected to assemble the material.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services has today given a full description of the report, in answer to a question from the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher). I understand that a summary of the findings prepared by one of the authors shows that in the CEGB nuclear power stations, taken as a group, no indication of an abnormal pattern for leukaemia was found. On the second part of the question, my hon. Friend is right in saying that in coal-fired power stations the collective committed dose equivalent is about 5 manSieverts per GW year of electricity generated and that for nuclear stations it is less than 2 manSieverts. There is, of course, much more coal-fired electricity.

The important point is that the overall dose from either source is very small indeed compared with the dose to the population from natural background radiation.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Is it not a significant coincidence that the best estimate for the amount of energy that could be saved by conservation is about 20 per cent. — the same as the amount of energy currently produced by nuclear power stations?

Mr. Goodlad: The hon. Gentleman produces a very interesting statistic.

Sir Trevor Skeet: Does my hon. Friend agree that the public are at greater risk from radon gas and the common X-ray than from nuclear power stations? Does he also agree that if the Labour party proposals were implemented it would take nothing short of 20 years to phase out nuclear power stations in the United Kingdom?

Mr. Goodlad: My hon. Friend is correct in saying that the dose to the population from the nuclear industry is very small indeed compared with that from naturally occurring sources. I am happy to say that I am not responsible for Labour party policy on nuclear power, but I agree with my hon. Friend that it is preposterous.

Mr. Benn: Has the Minister consulted the American Government, who will explain to him very clearly the massive popular opposition in the United States to the pressurised water reactor, which explains why the Americans have not ordered one for 10 years? Is the Minister aware that, without ordering such a reactor for 10 years' the Americans, who have fewer other fuel resources than we have, have been able to manage perfectly well?

Mr. Goodlad: For reasons that the right hon. Gentleman will appreciate, I do not wish to comment on matters that were the subject of the Sizewell inquiry.

Mr. Waller: Is my hon. Friend aware of the complaints that hon. Members persistently receive from companies in their constituencies about the access to cheap energy enjoyed by their French competitors? Is it not a fact that even if we have relatively low economic growth in the future there will be a disproportionate increase in our demand for energy which can be met effectively and economically only by our relying to a considerable extent on nuclear generation?

Mr. Goodlad: My hon. Friend is correct in what he says about the French. On the question of nuclear generation, I should prefer to rely on what I have already said.

Sizewell B

7. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received concerning the implications for energy policy of the report of the Layfield committee into the proposed Sizewell B pressurised water reactor.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: My right hon. Friend has received a number of letters about Sir Frank Layfield's report.

Mr. Hughes: I am grateful to the Minister for his staightforward answer. May I pursue a matter already touched on by the hon. Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam)? Will it be possible to have the OPCS and medical review on the leukaemia link before our debate next Monday? The Minister knows that there is pressure for that, despite the answer about the precis given by the Secretary of State for Social Services. Would it be possible to obtain information about the post-Chernobyl review, about which I expect the Minister has received certain representations, before the debate next Monday? The House will want to be as fully informed as possible, and it would be helpful for hon. Members to have the full information before we debate Sizewell.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: We have briefly discussed the report this afternoon, but it is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services. I note what the hon. Gentleman said on the other matter. I assure him that my right hon. Friend will consider these important issues before he comes to a decision.

Mr. Leigh: Further to the question by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), do not the residents of Aberdeen receive more radiation from the granite out of which their houses are made than the residents of Sizewell receive from the power station?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: My constituency covers part of Aberdeen and a large area of the Cairngorms, where the predominant rock is granite. I have not, so far as I am aware, been badly affected yet.

Mr. Haynes: Is the Minister aware that I have had plenty of representations about nuclear power in my constituency, bearing in mind that it is a mining constituency? The Minister stands there speaking with a forked tongue, because he says one thing at the Dispatch Box but other things when he is in the Department. Why does he not come clean and give the people, rather than the individual hon. Member, the opportunity to decide? His Government have a majority of over 100 and can totally ignore me.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I assure the hon. Gentleman that I would never dream of speaking to him with a forked tongue. I am sure that when we debate these matters the hon. Gentleman will be ready to make his own contribution.

Mr. Adley: Would it not be helpful if members of the Liberal party were a little more careful with their language? When the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) refers to the leukaemia link, he presumably means the alleged leukaemia link, which in my right hon. Friend's answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) was clearly shown not to be a link at all in terms of harmful health problems. Will my right hon. Friend therefore encourage people to be aware that CND and others are constantly trying to denigrate the civil nuclear power industry through this alleged link between leukaemia and nuclear power stations, which is patent nonsense?

Mr. Buchannan-Smith: I am sympathetic to what my hon. Friend has said and I could not agree more. It pays, when reports are complex and important, to read and analyse them properly and not to come to instant conclusions.

Mr. Orme: Has Sir Frank Layfield written to the Secretary of State to raise the matter of the Chernobyl disaster, which was not covered in the Layfield report, and will we have a statement before the debate next Monday?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be speaking in the debate next Monday, when the right hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity to put his point.

Energy Efficiency

8. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what further plans he has to improve energy efficiency in 1987.

Mr. David Hunt: We intend to build upon the success of Energy Efficiency Year by developing the 14-point programme of action that I outlined on 26 January 1986.

Mrs. Bottomley: Does my hon. Friend agree that, although great progress has been made in alerting the nation to the benefits of energy efficiency — especially during a successful Energy Efficiency Year — there are still hundreds of millions of pounds to be saved by energy efficiency in the home and work place? Will he particularly encourage public bodies to look at the example set recently, by Surrey county council which signed an agreement to extend its contract energy management to several other sites in Surrey?

Mr. Hunt: I had the opportunity of congratulating Surrey county council personally at the national energy management conference. My hon. Friend is right to point to a number of initiatives that are under way among local authorities and to say that there is still considerable waste, which we estimate at £7 billion a year. Although some progress has been made, there is still much to do.

Mr. Raynsford: Will the Minister recognise that, according to the latest figures that his Department has provided, 12·5 million homes in Britain are inadequately insulated against the cold? A large number of those homes are occupied by poorer people who cannot afford the cost

of insulation. Will he ensure that more funds are made available to expand the neighbourhood energy action initiatives? Will the Minister ensure that the keep warm project in my constituency receives adequate funding to enable it to carry out its much-needed work?

Mr. Hunt: When the Government came into office there were six neighbourhood energy action schemes. Currently there are 360, with a further 180 planned. The hon. Gentleman is right to pay tribute to the Government's efforts in that respect. I shall check the availability of finance for the hon. Gentleman's local project.

Mr. Rathbone: I applaud the Government's activity in this sector. However, will my hon. Friend have talks with my hon. Friend the Minister in the Northern Ireland Office responsible for energy conservation, to see whether some of the more extensive plans applied to Northern Ireland could be applied to the rest of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Hunt: Yes, of course I will.

Mr. Rowlands: Will the Minister confirm the following facts at the end of Energy Efficiency Year: only 37 per cent. of all households have loft insulation to current adequate standards, the budget for the programme has been cut from £24·5 million to £13 million and the Government propose to withdraw grants for millions of householders if the Secretary of State for the Environment has his way?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman has a tremendous capacity for getting the facts wrong. He should be aware that 89 per cent. of lofts are insulated, and the Government have already put an extra—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Gentleman would listen, he would hear the facts. The Government have already put an extra £1·5 million into the homes insulation scheme this winter, and under the new scheme, which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will lay before Parliament in due course, the number of people who can benefit from 90 per cent. grants will increase by about 70 per cent.

Power Stations

9. **Mr. Kenneth Carlisle** asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has received any applications from the Central Electricity Generating Board for a new power station other than that relating to Sizewell.

14. **Mr. Eadie** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he proposes to meet the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board in the month of February to discuss power station orders.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: My right hon. Friend meets the chairman regularly. The only application which he has for consent to construct a power station is that for Sizewell B.

Mr. Carlisle: Do not the suppliers of electricity generating plant urgently need new orders if they are to avoid redundancies and keep their skilled teams intact? Because of this, and in view of the possible shortage of electricity in 10 years' time, will my right hon. Friend take urgent steps to support a programme of ordering new power stations?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I am aware that some manufacturers of power plant equipment and those who work in the industry are concerned about this. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has before him just the one application. However, as I said earlier, if he receives such applications he will endeavour to deal with them as quickly as he can.

Mr. Eadie: The right hon. Gentleman has confirmed what he said earlier, that if applications were made for two new coal-fired power stations he would not discourage them. Is he aware that if consideration was being given to strengthening the south-east electricity grid link, Scotland could import two power stations because of the surplus capacity, and we would not need Sizewell?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: As the hon. Gentleman knows, we shall have an opportunity to debate this matter next week and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will consider all the evidence presented to him. I am sure the hon. Gentleman will agree that it is right that my right hon. Friend should await the results of the debate before he comes to a decision. The debate will give an opportunity for these issues to be raised.

Mr. Eastham: Is the Minister aware that there is great suspicion in the engineering industry that the CEGB is holding back on placing orders for coal-fired stations until the Government decide about Sizewell? While this is going on the engineering industry is in a desperate state as it waits for orders, and month after month hundreds of workers are losing their jobs. In the end, we may no longer have the engineering capacity to manufacture the turbines and other equipment needed to carry out the orders.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: As the hon. Gentleman knows, particularly from the exchanges this afternoon, my right hon. Friend has an application before him for a power station. No doubt the hon. Gentleman will bear in mind what he said about that.

Alternative Energy Sources

11. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he next proposes to have discussions with the European Commission about alternative sources of energy.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: At the Council of Energy Ministers, which is planned for 31 March. I am pleased that during the British presidency it was agreed that more Community collaboration should be organised in this sphere.

Mr. Knox: Is the balance between United Kingdom national research and Community research into alternative sources of energy about right? Has the meeting of Community scientists about alternative sources of energy, announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 27 November last year, taken place, and if so, what was the outcome?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I believe that there is a place both for Community-sponsored research and for research sponsored by national Governments, as the needs of national Governments are quite often different. Many projects have been supported by Community funds and I hope that that will continue. On my hon. Friend's second question, the chief scientists have still to meet, but I understand that that meeting will take place shortly.

Conservation

12. **Mr. Adley** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what lessons his Department has drawn from the recent cold spell about energy conservation.

Mr. David Hunt: The recent cold weather confirms the importance of my right hon. Friend's campaign for energy efficiency in every sector, particularly with regard to roof and wall insulation.

Mr. Adley: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer and congratulate him on the success of the Government's community insulation projects. However, does he agree that we still have centrally heated gardens and warm streets resulting from heat emanating from homes, in which that heat should remain?

In my hon. Friend's discussions with the Scottish Office and the Department of the Environment, will he consider some means whereby rebates on rates or the community charge may be made available to individuals and local authorities to ensure that housing insulation satisfies certain requirements, something with which other countries cope far better than us?

Mr. Hunt: We shall certainly consider my hon. Friend's points. It is right to pay particular tribute to neighbourhood energy action for its tremendous achievement in organising so many people to help those who could not afford insulation. By the end of this year the Government's insulation projects will have helped 450,000 homes. My hon. Friend is right to point out that many people who could take action do not do so.

Mr. Rowlands: Can the Minister confirm that only 37 per cent. of households have adequate loft insulation in line with Government standards?

Mr. Hunt: I have tried to point out to the hon. Gentleman that currently almost 90 per cent. of lofts have insulation, although most of that is inadequate. Surely it is right to focus the greatest help on those less able to help themselves. That is why, in 1980, the Government introduced a 90 per cent. grant under the home insulation scheme. So far that has helped about 500,000 elderly and disabled householders on low incomes to insulate their lofts. We are determined that there should be more progress under this important scheme.

British Coal Enterprise Ltd.

15. **Sir Kenneth Lewis** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about the activities of British Coal Enterprise Ltd.

Mr. David Hunt: I am pleased to report that British Coal Enterprise has just approved its 1,000th project. At the end of January the company had committed £22·1 million and had helped to create nearly 14,000 new job opportunities.

Sir Kenneth Lewis: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his answer. When I first entered the House 30 years ago it was the aim of most people to get as many underground workers as possible out of the mines because it was such a rough, dirty and nasty job. It is rather nice to know that British Coal Enterprise is proving that it can provide alternative jobs. Will my hon. Friend keep up the good work?

Mr. Hunt: I shall certainly pass my hon. Friend's generous comments to the management of British Coal Enterprise. I stress once again that the Government are committed to the success of that company.

British Coal (Capital Investment)

17. **Mr. Gerald Howarth** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what was the value of capital investment made by British Coal in 1986; and how much of that was devoted to the western area.

Mr. David Hunt: The western area of British Coal received £69 million of the £660 million invested in the industry during 1985-86.

Mr. Howarth: May I congratulate my hon. Friend on the efforts made by British Coal to invest in the western area? That is excellent news for the coal miners in my constituency. Is my hon. Friend aware that for three weeks running the miners at Littleton and Lea Hall collieries have produced record outputs per man shift? Littleton colliery is producing 30,000 tons weekly, which is a record.

Mr. Hunt: British Coal is currently investing almost £2 million a day in the coal industry. So far, the Government have invested £5 billion in the coal industry since they came to power in 1979 — far more than the Labour Government. I congratulate my hon. Friend's constituents on the response that we have received from the men and management of the industry. Those record productivity figures offer the best news to the industry that it could ever have.

North Sea Oil and Gas

22. **Mr. Rowlands** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is his current estimate of the number of people employed directly and indirectly in the development of North sea oil and gas.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The Department of Employment estimates that 26,400 persons were employed in the oil and gas extraction industry as at September 1986. Figures for employment in the supply industry in the United Kingdom as a whole are not available.

Mr. Rowlands: Is the Minister aware that the Scottish Development Agency and other agencies forecast losses of up to 30,000 jobs in the industry in the next two years unless there is an increase in activity? Has the Minister any proposals to put to the House for the development of the 90 discoveries within 20 miles of existing installations to encourage activity and to save us from a rapid decline in self-sufficiency?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: There is concern about jobs, but I hope that the hon. Gentleman is encouraged by the fact that last year we approved new developments worth over £2 billion, which will generate work. As recently as a couple of weeks ago I approved the Audrey gas development, worth over £80 million. Work is continuing. In addition, the early repayment of petroleum revenue tax has improved the industry's cash flow by £300 million. I understand the problems. We are watching what is happening in the offshore industry closely because it is important to our economy.

THE ARTS

Employment

37. **Mr. Caborn** asked the Minister for the Arts whether he will undertake a study of the impact of the arts on employment.

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Richard Luce): Two studies are currently under way. I am participating in the funding of one of them, and I await the results with interest.

Mr. Caborn: I thank the Minister for that reply. I hope that the criteria adopted for the study will not mean robbing Peter to pay Paul. Will the Minister consider developments in Sheffield which have created employment, particularly at the Leadmill centre, with its new recording studio? The constraints on that project are now only financial. Will the Minister have a word with the Secretary of State for the Environment and ask him to stop running round the country like a philistine taking a crack at every local authority, especially in Sheffield, where he condemned the new recording studio which has given new vision to many young people in Sheffield?

Mr. Luce: I welcome the fact that the hon. Gentleman has tabled his first question to me on the arts, and that at least 47 other questions have been tabled by Opposition Members. I welcome the Opposition's new-found interest in the arts. More questions have been tabled today than at any other time since I have been responsible for the arts. I welcome that warmly.

The two studies are important because they will give us information about the impact of the arts on the economy. That information will be helpful to us in assessing the value of the arts in both the public and private sectors.

I look forward to my visit to Sheffield next week. I have great admiration for the work at the Crucible theatre and for other arts activities in that area.

Mr. Jessel: As Britain is flourishing as one of the arts capitals of the world, and as our theatres, concerts, operas, ballet, art galleries and museums — our heritage generally, not excluding military bands — attract foreigners whose spending generates employment and income, will the Government continue to build on that strength?

Mr. Luce: I agree that we have a remarkable record, which is illustrated by the large numbers of overseas tourists who enjoy our arts activities. If every hon. Member in the House supported our overall encouragement for increased resources for the arts, including those from the private sector, the arts would have even better prospects.

Sherman Theatre, Cardiff

38. **Mr. Gareth Wardell** asked the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received about the future of the Sherman theatre, Cardiff.

Mr. Luce: I have received three representations. The university college, Cardiff is in touch with the Welsh Arts Council and the local authorities concerned about the future of the theatre.

Mr. Wardell: Will the Minister make urgent representations to his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales about the desperate plight of this theatre? It is an important theatre, especially in terms of Welsh language productions. There have been precedents whereby the Welsh Office has given one-off payments, such as in May 1979, when a £750,000 trust was set up. The income from that led to the installation of a professor of geriatric medicine in the National School of Medicine in Cardiff. I shall be grateful to the Minister if he will make such representations.

Mr. Luce: Both my right hon. Friend and I know the importance of the Sherman theatre to Cardiff and, indeed, to Wales. I observe that the University college has decided to give a tiding-over sum running into early 1988. This will give time for the theatre to look for other sources of funds. The Welsh Arts Council already gives considerable sums and it is reasonable to look to local authorities to play their part too. The South Glamorgan county council plays its part, and other local authorities should look upon the Sherman theatre as a good investment for their areas.

Mr. Grist: Does my right hon. Friend accept that Cardiff city council already gives generously to one theatre in Cardiff and to the finest concert hall in Britain? The county council should certainly give more support, but there is room for central Government short-term financing which will, unfortunately, be necessary over and above anything that the university will give. The university funding is ceasing at short notice.

Mr. Luce: I know the importance that my hon. Friend attaches to this theatre. The Welsh Arts Council receives money direct from the Arts Council of Great Britain — taxpayers' money. It gives a sizeable sum and is taking a keen interest in the whole question of the future financing of this theatre.

Mr. Freud: Does the Minister not feel that the Government have some responsibility for the continued existence and wellbeing of university theatres in general? When UGC funding dries up, is it not important for the Government to provide interim finance so that the wellbeing not only of the theatre in Wales but of those in Exeter and Oxford can be preserved?

Mr. Luce: I must reiterate the point that I have already made, that the Government through the Welsh Arts Council, are already giving considerable support. For this financial year the Welsh Arts Council is giving £250,000 to the theatre. This shows the importance that it attaches to it. With all these theatres, it is partnership and the variety of sources of finance that are important. That is why it is right to look to local authorities to play their part.

Royal Opera House

40. **Mr. Fisher** asked the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received about the development and extension of the Royal Opera House.

Mr. Luce: I have discussed the development plans with the Royal Opera House and have met representatives of the Covent Garden Community Association.

Mr. Fisher: Will the Minister practise a little open government here and allow the public to know what is going on in this matter, which is of some significance to the arts and to public expenditure? Will he do two things? First, will he publish the 1975 trust deed so that the public can see the terms and conditions on which the land for the

development of the opera house was granted? Secondly, could he explain what is the interest, if any, of the Royal Opera House in the Lyceum and how the financial involvement of the London Residuary Body might be concerned in this project? Unless he gives some more information to the public on these important matters, people will feel that public expenditure and the future of the Royal Opera House are not in safe hands.

Mr. Luce: I am quite happy to give as much information on this as I can. The Royal Opera House came forward with an imaginative plan for its long-term development. As the hon. Gentleman probably knows, the plan involves raising about £55 million, and the opera house proposes that at least a substantial proportion of that, about £30 million, should come from commercial development. It is important that the opera house should be able to prove that it can raise this money from the private sector. That is its objective. I shall look at the question of the publication of the deeds and whether that is possible. In the meantime, I can tell the hon. Gentleman that the long-term proposals, which are subject to planning approval and to approval by me, are imaginative and should be carefully considered.

Mr. Cormack: Is my right hon. Friend aware that just before Christmas the all-party arts and heritage group examined the plans and proposals and found them exciting, imaginative and entirely realistic? Like me, does my right hon. Friend wish the Royal Opera House every success?

Mr. Luce: I am pleased that the Royal Opera House has put forward imaginative plans. Clearly, it is important to realise that they have to go through certain stages, which includes planning approval from Westminster city council. After that I shall have to consider, as the trustee under the deed of covenant, whether I can allow this to go through. Like my hon. Friend, I broadly praise the long-term objectives.

Public Library Service

41. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Minister for the Arts when he last met with the Association of County Councils to discuss the future of the Public Library Service.

Mr. Luce: The Association of County Councils has not sought a meeting to discuss this matter with me, but I shall be happy to see the association if it does.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is the Minister aware that there have been 200 library closures since 1979, a 34 per cent. cut in book funding per head of population since 1979 and a 20 per cent. cut in the same figure for the county of Cumbria? Are the Government simply anti-culture?

Mr. Luce: The hon. Gentleman will correct me if I am wrong, but I think that this is the first time that he has put an oral question to me——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: No. Withdraw.

Mr. Luce: If that is not true, I am happy to withdraw it. I very much welcome the hon. Gentleman's interest in the subject of arts and libraries. I hope, therefore, that he will welcome the fact that the amount of money allocated to local authority libraries and museums will increase in the coming financial year by 15 per cent. I hope he will also welcome the fact that, compared with a decade ago, when the Socialists were last in power, there are more books in libraries.

CIVIL SERVICE

Staff Reporting and Appraisal

84. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Minister for the Civil Service what action he is taking to improve staff reporting and appraisal throughout the Civil Service.

The Minister of State, Privy Council Office (Mr. Richard Luce): All Departments are introducing new appraisal systems to cover staff in non-industrial grades. The new systems must focus on results achieved in relation to planned objectives. Early evidence shows they are being well received.

Mr. Greenway: I welcome the openness of the system that my right hon. Friend has just described. It compares well with the snoops being appointed by many Labour local authorities to push people in local authority employment in places such as Ealing and Brent.

Mr. Luce: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his question. I am grateful also for the increasing openness in the Civil Service, especially on appraisals. There is an increasing move in the Civil Service to relate pay to performance, which is also resulting in higher productivity.

Mr. Robert Sheldon: Will the Minister accept the gratitude of the House for any part that he played in getting the Prime Minister to accept the loyalty and dedication of the Civil Service and to show her admiration for it — elements that were lacking over the previous seven years? Will the right hon. Gentleman now go on to ensure that many of those civil servants who are leaving the Civil Service are encouraged to remain in it?

Mr. Luce: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. I should like to take advantage of his question to say that recently the Management and Personnel Office tabled an annual report for the first time, copies of which are in the Library. This gives a clear message from my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister about the importance of the Civil Service and its dedication and loyalty. That is true of the vast bulk of the Civil Service.

Mr. Stokes: Returning to the subject of staff appraisal, is my right hon. Friend aware that in my experience, which goes back a long time, the Civil Service and the armed forces are very much better at staff appraisal than are a great deal of industry and commerce, which is a shame for industry and commerce?

Mr. Luce: There may be a considerable amount of truth in that. The modern methods used by today's Civil Service are as good as anything in the private sector.

Dr. McDonald: Is the Minister aware that the research commissioned by the MPO shows that women are consistently marked down in terms of promotability? What steps will he take to reverse that trend?

Mr. Luce: There is an Equal Opportunities Office and, as employers, we are totally pledged to equal opportunities within the Civil Service. In the service as a whole at least half of the Civil Service comprises women, but they are employed principally in junior positions. Obviously, our

interest is to persuade more women to serve in senior positions, in long-term careers, and to do our best in that direction.

Productivity

86. **Mr. Gerald Bowden** asked the Minister for the Civil Service what is his estimate of improvements in productivity in the Civil Service as a result of management reform and other changes since 1979.

Mr. Luce: About 90,000 Civil Service posts were saved between April 1979 and April 1986 by general streamlining and greater efficiency. That is an improvement of well over 10 per cent. of the size of the Civil Service in 1979 and a major contribution to the overall reduction of 19 per cent.

Mr. Bowden: I am encouraged by my right hon. Friend's reply. Does he agree that one of the management objectives of any enterprise must be value for money? Does he consider that cost efficiency might be achieved by contracting out some of the ancillary services within the Civil Service, such as catering?

Mr. Luce: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising that point. Clearly, the objective of the Civil Service is to get the best possible value for money for the taxpayer. The evidence of the past few years shows that our achievement is solid. We have saved just under £1 billion of taxpayers money by improvements in productivity as a whole and reductions in the size of the Civil Service, and we have been able to improve services as well. I shall bear in mind my hon. Friend's points.

Mr. Heffer: While the Minister is considering improvements in productivity, surely he will not accept the nonsense that we saw in the press over the weekend about members of the Civil Service who are supporters of the Militant Tendency. Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that we shall not follow the ideas of McCarthy in the United States of America and extend the concept so that people must take a loyalty test before they can be members of the Civil Service?

Mr. Luce: I have not, as yet, had any evidence of that drawn to my attention. However, a question on that subject has been tabled for me for tomorrow. As the hon. Gentleman may know, long-standing arrangements have been designed to prevent extremists gaining access to highly classified Government information. Political affiliation is not a factor in recruitment to the public service. The Civil Service has a long tradition of political impartiality. The only requirement is that civil servants should serve the democratically elected Government of the day with loyalty and integrity. The vast majority of the Civil Service do so.

Secondments

87. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Minister for the Civil Service what recent initiatives he has taken to encourage exchanges between civil servants and industrialists, other than full-time secondments.

Mr. Luce: We have introduced the Whitehall and industry scheme, under which young civil servants can spend short periods on attachment to business organisations. Under another scheme, civil servants can be attached, on an unpaid basis, to the boards of private sector companies.

Mr. Chapman: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his reply. Does he agree that there are practical difficulties in encouraging full-time secondments? However, I welcome the increase in them in recent years. Does my right hon. Friend agree that many more initiatives could be taken to encourage part-time secondments between industry and the Civil Service, and vice versa, which would be beneficial to both sides? Will he consider ways in which more civil servants could be appointed to non-executive, albeit unpaid, posts on public and private industry boards?

Mr. Luce: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's continuing interest in the problem. It is singularly important that there should be the greatest degree of interchange between the Civil Service, other parts of the public sector, and, principally, the private sector. As he knows, I am trying to persuade other Departments to increase the number of secondments from the private sector and the number of inward secondments from the private sector to the Civil Service. I am looking at ways of doing that, including non-executive and unpaid directors, short courses with businesses and our training courses, to seek a greater interchange between the two.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: Does the Minister agree that the numbers involved are still pitifully small and that his remarks are, therefore, very welcome. I, too, acknowledge that there is a great deal for people from the private sector to learn by working in the public sector, in which the constraints and the whole way of life is entirely different from that in the private sector.

Mr. Luce: The hon. Gentleman is right and I am certainly doing my best to encourage that. It is not, as was said earlier, an easy process to arrange, but, as the hon. Gentleman may know, several important posts in the Civil Service are being filled by outside people for short periods.

Management and Personnel Office

88. **Mr. Rowe** asked the Minister for the Civil Service whether he will provide more information on the work and achievements of the Management and Personnel Office.

Mr. Luce: Information on aspects of the work of the Management and Personnel Office is published frequently. On 28 January, for the first time, a report on the work of the MPO as a whole was published. Copies have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses of Parliament. I shall consider producing a similar publication in future years.

Mr. Rowe: Does my right hon. Friend accept that those of us who have had the opportunity to meet members of that Office are grateful for the chance to learn more about its work? Does he also accept that progress towards eliminating discrimination against people with non-white skins is moving much more slowly than some of us would like? Can he assure us that that will be a priority within that Office?

Mr. Luce: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who takes a close interest in this subject, and I am certainly anxious for hon. Members on both sides of the House to have a chance to learn more about the workings of the Civil Service. On his last point, it is very much our policy as employers to pursue the principle of equal opportunities for all. My hon. Friend may know that several studies are taking place about the ethnic origins of people recruited

to the service. I hope that this will help us in our overall campaign to encourage the maximum number of ethnic minorities to join.

Mr. Winnick: Is the Minister aware that many of us will not be happy with the inadequate reply that he gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer)? Whatever answer he may give tomorrow——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We are discussing question 88.

Mr. Winnick: I am dealing with the management of personnel in the Civil Service, Mr. Speaker. Many of us believe that there must be the widest possible opposition to any sort of McCarthyism. If the Minister is worried about extremists, he should be worrying about the Cabinet.

Mr. Luce: The hon. Gentleman is talking nonsense. No one has ever suggested that there is any sort of McCarthyism. We have well laid-down procedures for dealing with any problems in the Civil Service, and the vast bulk of civil servants are loyal and impartial and do their job properly.

Later——

Mr. Fisher: On a point of order arising from Question Time, Mr. Speaker. You may have noticed the enthusiasm of the Minister for the Arts for the number of questions tabled by my hon. Friends in an attempt to scrutinise the Government's appalling record on the arts. At an appropriate moment in the parliamentary year will you consider granting more time to this matter so that my hon. Friends can explore fully the Government's bad record?

Mr. Jessel *rose——*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is it on the same matter?

Mr. Jessel: It is related, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Let me deal with one matter at a time. First, the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) knows that it is not for me to decide which questions to take on which day. That is for the usual channels. Nevertheless, I share the hon. Gentleman's enthusiasm, because I wish to see the Chamber as full as possible all the time. Forty-seven questions to the Minister for the Arts is extremely good.

Mr. Jessel: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. As Arts Question Time for 10 minutes every three weeks is greatly valued by hon. Members who care about the arts, is it not an abuse for Opposition Members, who, by and large, are not philistines, suddenly to table 47 questions in one day so as to——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is certainly not an abuse. It is good news that there is such a great interest in the arts.

Several Hon. Members *rose——*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Hon. Members must be seeking to raise a matter on which I can rule. I shall take points of order now because, as I said on Thursday, there is no statement today.

Mr. Greenway: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it not expected that, if hon. Members table questions, they should turn up to ask them? That has not happened today in the case of many of the 47 Opposition Members who tabled questions to the Minister for the Arts. That is a gross discourtesy to him and the House.

Several Hon. Members *rose——*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Only the hon. Member for Bolton, South-East (Mr. Young) was not present for Arts Questions today.

Mr. Tony Banks: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Did you notice that my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) exited stage left in high dudgeon because he was unable to get in at Arts Question Time? If we were given more time, perhaps he would not have to leave so abruptly.

Mr. Speaker: I have no idea why the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) left the Chamber.

Mr. Freud: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. It must be admitted that 10 of the 47 questions were not tabled by the Labour party. May I suggest that the chances of hijacking an Arts Question Time by tabling so many questions make it extraordinarily difficult to question the Minister in respect of his prime responsibility to the arts. Would it not be possible to have one open question per session?

Several hon. Members *rose——*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This process only delays us. I am sure that the whole House wants to see Question Time taken seriously. From the Chair, I welcome the fact that hon. Members take such an interest in Question Time. I would like to see the Chamber full all the time.

Mr. Williams: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Do you agree that the fact that the Liberal Members were not able to ask the questions that they felt they wanted to ask is nothing to do with your control of the Chamber, but with their dilatoriness in tabling questions?

Mr. Alan Howarth: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. When you consider the request put to you by the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) that Arts Question Time might be extended, will you bear in mind that it is estimated that it costs an average of £70 to answer a parliamentary question? There is a view that the £2,520 of public money that it will have cost to answer the 36 questions tabled so energetically by the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent Central would perhaps have been better used towards action on the arts.

Mr. Winnick: On a new point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I shall deal with one thing at a time. I should say to the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) that the timing of questions is not a matter for me. I have already said that.

Mr. Winnick: On a new point of order, Mr. Speaker. Could consideration be given to looking at our procedures enabling us to raise matters of great importance? As I understand it, you are not in favour of the abuse of Standing Order No. 20. You may know that on Thursday, during business questions, I raised the acute plight of the Palestinians who are facing starvation in the Lebanon. The situation has hardly changed. It may be argued that we have an opportunity of asking the Foreign Secretary oral questions every five or six weeks. I took the opportunity today to look at the questions that are on the agenda for Wednesday. I found that there is one question, No. 12, which may be reached and which you may allow to be extended to include the topic I have chosen. The other question is No. 22, which it is likely will not be reached.

I ask you to bear in mind, Mr. Speaker, that in the country at large—however important arts questions and the rest of today's business is — there is acute anxiety as to whether Britain, through the international agencies, could play some part in trying to bring relief to people facing starvation. Is there no way, on a day such as this when there is not too much business, for such matters to be raised?

Mr. Speaker: If by chance today's business were to conclude earlier than anticipated, there may be other opportunities.

Mr. Boyes: Further to an earlier point of order, Mr. Speaker. You may have noticed that I rose in my place briefly but was not called and did not exit left in a hurry. However, you give preference to people wanting to make maiden speeches. You may not have been aware that I was trying to ask my maiden question to the Minister for the Arts. I hope that you will take that into consideration next time.

Nuclear Waste (Debate)

3.30 pm

The Minister for Environment, Countryside and Planning (Mr. Waldegrave): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In a debate on nuclear waste disposal last Monday I paid tribute to what I believed to be the courage of the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) for saying that, if the geology and other conditions were right, he would not necessarily object to the disposal of nuclear waste in his constituency. By a slip of the tongue I referred to him as the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) and this was recorded in *Hansard*. This has understandably embarrassed the hon. Member for Midlothian. I should like both to put the record straight and to apologise to him.

Orders of the Day

Broadcasting Bill *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.

3.38 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

This is not a massive Bill and may not, at first blush, seem an exciting Bill. However, it is an essential part of the change coming over British broadcasting which is both massive and exciting. Professor Peacock did not, contrary to some reports, invent the idea of change; change will come about because of the way in which technology will increase choice. However, he and his colleagues did set the agenda for change, as the House recognised when it debated his report before Christmas.

It is noticeable that the days have gone when those who supposed themselves to be in the know in these matters sniggered and sneered at the Peacock report. There is no doubt that it will have a striking influence on the way in which we move from a highly regulated duopoly towards a more open broadcasting system that is founded on the choice of the viewer and the listener. I do not contend that the Peacock committee produced all the right answers, but it set the agenda. We in government are going steadily through the items on the agenda and announcing decisions as they are necessary. A recent example is the indexation of the BBC licence fee. We shall be listening to views—for example, on radio—after we publish our Green Paper later this month.

The Bill deals with the ITV part of broadcasting. Its main provision is designed to give the Government enough time to consider whether there should be changes in the way in which ITV terrestrial contracts are let. The ITV system has many achievements to its credit since it came into being and both the companies and the IBA deserve credit for them. It is my experience that most minds within the ITV system are lively ones that accept the need for further change. After all, some of them began as radicals thrusting forward to find their place in the sun when the BBC had the monopoly. I do not believe that they or their successors want to end up as slightly overweight giants trying to keep newcomers out of the kingdom in which they themselves were newcomers not long ago.

I think that it is accepted by everyone that there must be further change. I believe that the arrival of British direct broadcasting by satellite will in itself be a powerful agent of change.

The first proposal in the Bill is to ensure that the new DBS—direct broadcasting by satellite—services have a chance to prove themselves. Provision for DBS was made in the Cable and Broadcasting Act 1984. I do not need to go through the slightly painful history of the project, but in 1985 we invited the IBA to assess the prospects of a British DBS service to be provided by independent commercial interests. The IBA told us after it had made its assessment that interest in the venture was such that the relevant provisions of the 1984 Act should be brought into operation.

The IBA went on to advertise a contract for a DBS service and announced in December 1986 that it had

decided to give a contract to British Satellite Broadcasting Ltd. There is now the prospect of the British DBS service providing three national television channels and becoming available by the end of the decade. This will be a great step towards broadening consumer choice in a way that Professor Peacock anticipated and as we would like to see.

The financial investment that is required to establish a DBS runs to hundreds of millions of pounds. A highly specialised sort of satellite has to be built to carry the high-powered transmitters that are needed for DBS. Programmes have to be bought and schedules devised, and all of this must be done before the service begins. Finally, the satellite has to be launched. There cannot be certainty of success. There is no doubt that it is an expensive and risky business. Responsibility for making all the financial arrangements rests entirely with the contractor.

Even if preparations go reasonably well and the service is launched, it will be some time before the contractor begins to see a return on his investment. The number of households able to receive the service will build up fairly slowly, and in the early years it will not be large enough to cover his costs. To provide a reasonable balance between the risks and the likely return, we believe that a longer contract period is needed than is necessary normally for a terrestrial television contract.

In the 1984 Act, some allowance was made by providing for DBS contracts to last for a maximum of 12 years compared with eight years for the terrestrial ITV contracts. It became clear after that, in discussions with the IBA, that 12 years would still not be enough to provide would-be investors with a reasonable expectation of return. I therefore announced last year, before the DBS contract was advertised, that the Government would see an opportunity to change the law to extend the contract period from 12 years to 15 years. There is nothing magical in the period of 15 years, but, having looked carefully at the business projections, we believe that it provides a fairer balance between risks and returns. Hence, clause 1(2) gives effect to the undertaking that I have given.

As the lifetime of the IBA expires on 31 December 1996 —some years before the expiry of the 15-year period that I am talking about—we also intend in the near future to bring into force section 45 of the 1984 Act. This provides for the extension of the lifetime of the authority and will pave the way for the authority to award a DBS contract for the full 15-year period.

The second purpose of the Bill is to keep open the options for change in the terrestrial independent television system. The Peacock committee made a number of specific proposals in this regard. The majority recommended that ITV contracts should be put out to competitive tender. There is also a proposal in the report that Channel 4 should be, not compelled, but given the option of selling its own advertising time rather than being financed by subscription from the ITV companies. The committee also reflected on the possibility that some or all IBA services might be encoded alongside BBC services if subscription were introduced in place of the television licence fee. From what I said in the general debate, the House will know that the Government have commissioned consultants to carry out a study of the technical and economic aspects of subscription, and we expect that report before too long.

The Peacock committee is not the only body that has made proposals for changing the system under which ITV contracts are let. I find that, even among the beneficiaries of the existing system, for several years there has been a certain restlessness about the way in which the matter is managed, and the IBA has put forward proposals, in what it describes as "A Better Way", for awarding ITV contracts. The IBA has proposed new arrangements which include the possibility of a longer contract period and provision for a formal review of a company's performance at specified intervals.

We are considering different ideas from different stables for change in the way in which ITV contracts are awarded. Obviously, they are important decisions, and we have not yet come to firm conclusions on them. We want to listen to and take proper account of the views not only of interested parties but of the public as a whole. Therefore, we believe that a period is needed in which we can assess the changes in the system, which will be sensible against the background of developments scanned by the Peacock committee.

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): The point that my right hon. Friend made is absolutely crucial to the assessment of the present performance of ITV contractors. Will he assure the House that we shall have a chance to debate any proposed new system before it is introduced?

Mr. Hurd: That is inevitable. Any change of any substance would need legislation. Therefore, I do not think that it can be much of a secret that we would intend to produce early in the next Parliament a substantial broadcasting Bill covering this and, no doubt, other matters. We have not taken decisions of policy. There should be time for hon. Members and interested parties to express their views not only on the Peacock proposals—that is, those of the majority and of the minority—but on the IBA proposals and on what the ITV companies may think. Under the present system and timings, there is not the necessary room for manoeuvre—the necessary time for the kind of process that my hon. Friend wishes to see.

The ITV contracts now in force expire on 31 December 1989. Unless some action is taken, the IBA will advertise during the course of this year new contracts for a maximum of eight years, to run from the beginning of 1990 until the end of 1997. This would mean that there would be no opportunity for changes to the contracts system itself, or for other changes that might closely affect new contracts, before 1998.

We have discussed this problem with the IBA and as a result have come to the conclusion that the best course would be to provide in the Bill for a three-year extension of the existing contracts. I say "in the Bill." I mean, in effect, because anybody who has studied the Bill will see that, on the face of it, it is a more complicated procedure. However, the effect is to provide for a three-year extension of existing contracts.

That is achieved in two ways. First, provision is made in the Bill for the next round of ITV contracts. They will run from 1 January 1990 and will last for only three years. Clause 1(3) therefore amends the relevant provisions of the Broadcasting Act 1981 to provide that the contracts that commence on 1 January 1990 should expire no later than 31 December 1992. That would include the next breakfast television contract, which is due to begin on 1 February 1991. If, therefore, the Government come to the conclusion, after reflection and after having listened to views, that changes in the contract system are necessary, they can be introduced in time for the contracts running from 1 January 1993.

[Mr. Hurd]

On the other hand, if the Government decide to make no substantive changes, the Bill also provides for the IBA to award contracts under the existing system from 1993 onwards.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Suggestions have been made, which are causing concern in the county of Cumbria, that a decision is likely to be made in favour of a reduction in the number of contractors to 10. Effectively that would wipe out a number of smaller, regional television stations. Will the right hon. Gentleman make sure that that does not happen and that it is ruled off the agenda? Some parts of the country, such as mine, which enjoys Border Television, would be very angry if once again a decision of this nature were to be taken, as was taken by the BBC, against the interests of the county as a whole.

Mr. Hurd: I know of the hon. Gentleman's concern about the BBC, because I think he wrote to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister about it. I have no power, nor does my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister — nor would the House wish us to have the power — to intervene in the way in which the BBC organises these matters. Any change of that kind would not flow from the Bill, and I know of no such change in prospect. As the hon. Gentleman rightly says, it would be a very serious matter, and I have no news that that is in prospect or under consideration.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): The right hon. Gentleman said that the Prime Minister especially had no interest or concern and would not involve herself in this matter. Will he assure us that when it comes to the appointment of the new director-general of the BBC she will not again use those words, "Is he one of us?"

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. The hon. Gentleman is straying far from the terms of the Bill.

Mr. Hurd: Far from the terms of the Bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and far from the terms of reality. The Prime Minister entered the discussion simply because the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) sought to invoke her, rather exaggerating the powers that she has over the regulation of the BBC.

The second step that the Government propose to take, if Parliament agrees to the Bill, is to bring into force section 46 of the Cable and Broadcasting Act 1984. The effect would be to relieve the IBA of the obligation to advertise the shortened round of contracts. Section 46 was originally drawn up to encourage ITV companies to join in the so-called "joint venture" DBS project. That venture did not proceed, as the House knows. Therefore, section 46 was not implemented. However, a similar provision is needed now to extend existing terrestrial contracts. This Bill provides the opportunity for Parliament to consider the provision in the 1984 Act in its new context.

The provisions of section 46 will have effect for one contract round only. In other words, after the shortened round of contracts to run from 1 January 1990, the IBA will, unless there is fresh legislative provision, be required to advertise succeeding contracts in the normal way.

To sum up, this part of the Bill keeps open the options for change. It does not propose substantive changes to our broadcasting system, or commit the House to such changes. As I have already said, any such changes would require further changes in the law in due course.

It is no secret that, day by day, we edge nearer to the date of a general election. The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) thinks that the Labour party will win and I think that the Conservative party will win. I do not know what obscure ambitions may be swirling about in the mind of the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud), but, whoever is right in those assumptions, no one would wish to have a position in which, although everyone has been discussing change in this area for a long time, change would not be possible because of action which the IBA had already set in hand, under the existing procedures, to advertise new contracts.

Broadcasting, especially at this time, should not be the prisoner of its own procedures. If we are to make intelligent use of the opportunities now opening up, we need legislative room for manoeuvre.

3.57 pm

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): I can open on a note of profound consensus. All of us on both sides of the House will agree that, day by day, we are getting nearer to the future. The Home Secretary was accurate on that matter.

I start by making an apology to the House. A commitment relating to tomorrow's Committee sittings of the Criminal Justice Bill will take me out of the Chamber just before 6 o'clock. I hope that that will not prevent me from returning to hear the winding-up speeches.

Although this is a small Bill, with limited objectives, its implications are important and could be disturbing. One disturbing aspect is the piecemeal way in which the Government enunciate their policy on broadcasting. The Bill deals with the Government's policy and the Home Secretary says that the Government are going through the Peacock recommendations one by one. At the same time he promises us that, within the next couple of weeks, the long-awaited Green Paper on radio broadcasting policy will be published. It is unsatisfactory to be given pieces of a jigsaw which we then have to try to fit together without seeing the whole picture.

The extension of franchise periods for DBS stems from the knowledge — about which the Home Secretary has been frank this afternoon — that DBS, far from being an instant gold mine for investors, requires a huge and hazardous investment that cannot rely on an early return.

Already the original timetable for DBS has slipped by a couple of years and Ministers have been careful not to promise that a 1990 start is assured. Already we are catering for franchises that will stretch into the 21st century. Those delays follow an uncertain start. I remember taking part in the Second Reading debate on the Cable and Broadcasting Bill with the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan). I remember those heady days of certainty, symbolised by the brave prophecy of the Home Secretary's predecessor. That is nearly three years ago. I remember listening to the right hon. and learned Gentleman saying:

> "I believe that the consortium approach offers the most realistic chance of getting the British DBS service into action within the next three or four years."—[*Official Report*, 8 May 1984; Vol. 59, c. 757.]

That prophecy, like many others in broadcasting policy, has fallen by the wayside. Those disappointments have led

the Government, regrettably in our view, to take the completely commercial route with such brave participants as Granada, Anglia and, among others, Mr. Richard Branson. By the way, whatever happened to his Litter Clean Up campaign? I hope that his participation in satellite broadcasting will be a little more clear cut and reliable than that.

It is impossible to calculate the likely effect of successful DBS on television programming. Increased choice for the viewer is greatly to be welcomed and is inevitable. There will be much more of it as time goes by, but no one knows to what extent the viewer will take advantage of even the limited extra choice that will come when DBS arrives. We must bear in mind the extra and, at first, quite substantial costs of adapting sets and obtaining other equipment and the need, which has so far scuppered cable, to pay subscriptions to receive some of the new DBS channels.

Current ITV franchise holders will be watching the extent to which they may need to go down market to compete for revenue and the possible effect on their finances if DBS grabs a sizeable part of advertising revenue. Independent local radio will also be watching fearfully, bearing in mind the precarious finances of a number of stations. It will be interesting to see next week or the week after how the Government intend to assist the prospects of such local radio stations if, as we hope, community radio is at long last to be brought into being.

Of course, the real impact on ITV will come from any decision to adopt the Peacock recommendation of auctioning off the ITV franchises. That is the real reason for the extension in the Bill of the existing franchises. The Home Secretary was at his blandest when he said during our debate on the Peacock report:

"One of the most significant recommendations was the proposal that in future ITV contracts should be put out to competitive tender. On 3 July I made it clear in my statement that the option for carrying out this recommendation, or indeed any changes in the system, including changes which the IBA has suggested, would be closed off for the next 10 years if the IBA were to proceed under the timetable in the present legislation to award the next round of ITV contracts to take effect from the beginning of 1990."

The Home Secretary, referring to this Bill, said:

"That Bill has not been brought forward because we have already decided on the changes that should be made. We simply do not want to foreclose the options." — [*Official Report*, 20 November 1986; Vol. 105, c. 717-8.]

The right hon. Gentleman repeated that sentiment today when he said that he wanted to keep open the options for change. That means that if the Government were returned to office at the forthcoming general election there would be a danger that the foolish and damaging Peacock recommendation that ITV franchises should be auctioned off would be implemented.

Selling television channels to the highest bidder would mean an inevitable degradation of the standards of programme content. Peacock makes it clear that the highest bidders would be expected to win and that explanations would be required if they did not; Peacock had in mind the crudest kind of commercial tendering. That would mean that money, not standards, would be the deciding factor in who runs ITV in the next decade and would set the pattern for the round of franchises after that. That would leave the field clear for the wealthiest multinationals, with the crassest standards.

The misgivings of my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) about the future of such estimable small companies as Border Television would be more than justified. Anybody who has seen that company in operation knows that it is an admirable example of how a small, local television station can cater to a small area with a recognisable identity. The idea that a company such as Border could be bought out by a multinational bidder or even a bidder within this country is unacceptable.

Let us be clear that any company that paid huge sums for a franchise—or sums that were huge in proportion to the area and population covered by the franchise—would be looking to get back its outlay as quickly as possible, which would mean maximising revenue through maximising audiences. The generally high standards of ITV would go. Any chance of increased access to independents—which, incidentally, was another Peacock recommendation — would also go. Visual musak and worse would be the order of the day.

The Opposition believe that there is much to be said for examining the possibility of increasing access to independents, but that must not be made an excuse for casualising employment in ITV and the BBC, with the inevitable harmful effects on pay, conditions and employment prospects for those working in the industry.

The Home Secretary spoke in November about the Bill facilitating "any changes" to the system, and any changes could mean the adoption of the Peacock recommendation to enable a change in the present system of supporting Channel 4. Such a change, leaving Channel 4 to cast around for its own advertising revenue, would not only lead to higher costs for Channel 4 in setting up machinery for obtaining such revenue, but would mean that Channel 4 would not have a guaranteed income, with all the uncertainties that that would produce. Channel 4 would be thrown directly into the market place and such a change would risk throwing away the reputation that Channel 4 has achieved as perhaps the most brilliantly successful television channel in the world.

Such changes in ITV would inevitably have a harmful effect on BBC1 and BBC2. A national ITV network sold off to the highest bidders would force the BBC down market to compete, and a commercially avaricious Channel 4 would have an equally inevitable effect on its public sector counterpart, BBC2.

In such an environment the position of the director-general of the BBC would become impossible. Already, following the deplorable Government and Tory party pressures on the BBC, the calibre of the new director-general will be of paramount importance in defending and enhancing the independence and standards of both BBC television and radio. The choice of director-general, which is to be made by the BBC board of governors during the next few days, will be a crucial test of the courage and integrity of that body. Its members will be failing in their duty if they simply go for a safe man or woman whose appointment will pacify the Prime Minister or the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

The new director-general——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman knows that the Bill is in no way related to BBC matters.

Mr. Kaufman: As I have sought to explain, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Bill is related to the BBC, because if the ITV franchises are auctioned off that will degrade the standards of ITV and the competition in the market place

[Mr. Kaufman]

will inevitably drag down the standards of the BBC. In that context the ability, integrity and calibre of the director-general of the BBC will be of crucial importance.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman is being very fair. I understand the general principle, but he must not go into details about the director-general, and so on.

Mr. Kaufman: What I am saying relates directly to one of the clauses of the Bill which would affect the way in which ITV franchises are disposed of, and that would have a direct effect on the programming, quality, independence and integrity of the BBC. It is for that reason, which is directly related to the content of the Bill, that I say that the new director-general of the BBC will have to be a tough and independent person, with sufficient self-confidence to stand up not only to political pressure from any political party, but, if necessary, to the very governors who make the appointment. The future of an indispensable national institution rests on that decision, and the board of governors must not fall short of what the occasion demands.

Let me make it clear that the Labour party wants a BBC which is dedicated and committed to independence and high standards and two ITV channels which will seek to maintain comparable standards. That is why a Labour Government will ensure protection of the present structure of Channel 4. A Labour Government will have nothing to do with any proposals to auction off the ITV franchises. We reject such a proposal totally and outright.

However, we believe that improvements can and should be made in the present method of allocating ITV franchises. We believe that the process should be more open and more accountable. Applicants should know more precisely what is expected of them, and if they fail they should know more clearly why that is so. Therefore, we shall consult the unions in the industry, the IBA and all the others who have helpful proposals to make to ensure that this highly important process of allocation of franchises is more appropriate to a democratic society, in which freedom of information should extend to the activities of public bodies.

The Bill could be dangerous as an Act in the hands of a Conservative Government. However, it will be of great importance in enabling a Labour Government to assist in making possible a television structure for the next decade and beyond which will maintain high standards and enhance democracy and freedom of expression in Britain. For that reason, we shall not oppose it.

4.11 pm

Mr. Julian Critchley (Aldershot): I appreciate that there is a fine line in this debate between the problems of the IBA and of the BBC. I hope that you will be kind to me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I take a leaf out of the Secretary of State's book. He began by saying that he has indexed the licence fee of the BBC. Handsome though that may be, it is not handsome enough, because it means that in real terms, over the years, the BBC will suffer from a diminishing income, and with that will be less able to compete with the IBA.

The second point that the Secretary of State made was about the Peacock committee recommendation that in future the contracts for the independent programme companies should be put out to competition. Many Conservative Members feel that that would be a retrograde step, and that it could lead only to the expansion of the media empires of people like Murdoch, who would be able to range from the printed word into television and purchase it. That would not be of universal advantage.

Mr. Clement Freud (Cambridgeshire, North-East): Will the hon. Gentleman quantify "people like Murdoch"? Who else is there?

Mr. Critchley: There are one or two fellow Australians who might, at first glimpse, be indistinguishable from Mr. Murdoch.

It would be a grave error were our television companies to fall under the direct control of foreign-based companies in the way that many of our newspapers have in recent years. The Conservative party should look pretty severely at any of the conditions that may hedge round the ownership of massive media companies.

The Secretary of State mentioned, en passant, Channel 4.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): Before my hon. Friend passes from that important point, does he agree that it has implications not just for television, but far-reaching implications for the British film industry which is much patronised by Channel 4, for example?

Mr. Critchley: Over the years I have become something of a nationalist, in the French sense. I do not think that a French Government of any complexion would be prepared to look happily upon the ownership of the French media by Australian or American entrepreneurs. That may be a lesson which the United Kingdom Government, of whatever party, could happily absorb.

Channel 4 is a Conservative conception. The former Home Secretary, who now leads the House of Lords with such distinction, is the father of the fourth channel. Its success is something for which our great Government can claim credit, and, alarming though the fourth channel might be to Mrs. Whitehouse from time to time, it has greatly added to the cultural scene in the United Kingdom. Therefore, we must be careful not to muck about with its financial arrangements in a way that could conceivably be to its detriment.

Members of the IBA sometimes see in advance the programmes that are made by the independent programme companies. Should not the governors of the BBC make a habit of doing so? Rule by the stable door has not proved to be successful.

The setting up of commercial television nearly 30 years ago was one of the great achievements of the old Conservative party. The running battle which has been fought more recently between Conservative central office and the BBC cannot be so described. It has muddied the waters. We are in danger of not being able to distinguish between state and public service broadcasting. We have, alas, an Under-Secretary with responsibilities for sport —thank God we have not yet appointed a Minister for Information.

The role of the governors of the BBC, like that of the members of the IBA, should be to act as a shock absorber. Not only should they be shock absorbers between the BBC and the Government, but they should be encouraged to play a more active role within the BBC. The governors

must, from time to time, flex their muscles. They should make a habit of seeing some programmes in advance and not just react to events. The governors of the BBC need to regain control of the BBC, not only from the special branch, but from many of the programme producers.

The problem facing the BBC—this is different from the problem facing the independent companies and the IBA — is to resolve the difficulty of how to keep editorial control over so vast an output. There is a need to provide managerial and editorial control without excessive supervision. The problem is that there are part-time governors of the BBC who, with the help of executives working full-time, have to control a massive output.

The parliamentary Lobby, as is well known, meets most days in the Palace of Westminster in a room from which Members of Parliament are debarred. I have often wondered what might happen were I to turn up at the Lobby briefing early one morning. I am told that the Lobby, steered by No 10, claimed that all the 12 members of the board of governors of the BBC are "acceptable" to the Prime Minister and No. 10 Downing street. "Acceptable"? That is a strangely disturbing word to have used. All 12 members have been appointed by the Prime Minister. Should all 12 be equally acceptable to the leaders of the Opposition parties? Should Prime Ministers, of whatever persuasion, treat the BBC as if it were the United States supreme court, to be filled by presidential nominees? Is there no other way in which the governors of the BBC and IBA might be appointed, save from No. 10 Downing street directly? It is worth a thought.

To a politician, every broadcast is a party political broadcast. We have grown thin skinned in recent years. We have witnessed the growth of political intolerance as the gap between the Labour and Conservative parties has widened, the sad end to the old consensus, and the advent of three-party politics. At the same time, our great newspapers have fallen into the hands of opinionated and foreign owners.

The BBC is not the state broadcasting corporation. It does not exist to please either Conservative central office or Walworth road. If it offends, as it has in the past, one should only have to raise a telephone and speak to the chairman of the board of governors. Ultimately, independence is not a luxury to be offered to broadcasters but a necessity for our audiences and for democracy. The future of broadcasting is too important to be left to the chairman of our great party.

4.20 pm

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): As ever, the hon. Member for Aldershot (Mr. Critchley) aims his arrows deftly, and it is only later that one sees the full point of his remarks. I have appointed two governors of the BBC. One was suggested by the Foreign Secretary, so that there should be experience for the overseas services, and the other I determined myself. I cannot recall the Prime Minister playing any part in the choice. If ever I have the chance again—I doubt that I shall—when he is in his older and more mature years, I would look forward to appointing the hon. Member for Aldershot.

The hon. Gentleman made a remark about Channel 4 and Lord Whitelaw. I must admit to paternity of Channel 4, although the Annan report played a bigger part. Its sex, or structure, was determined by Lord Whitelaw, but it did not come just from one Government.

I agree with the hon. Gentleman about indexing the licence fee. The BBC asked for that in 1978, and we turned it down. I doubt whether it wants it now and it will not remove the problem of the licence fee in the years ahead.

It is right that there should be the delay set out in the Bill. It is probably inevitable. It is easier said than done, to move quickly in these matters, because profound technical changes are taking place. I hope that the Government are moving slowly because there will be a general election. Nobody knows what the result will be, but there will be a different political complexion and a different feel in the House. For that reason alone, it is right that there should be delay.

I have three questions. I am no longer involved in broadcasting on a day-to-day basis, and sometimes I read or listen to remarks made by the Home Secretary and his Ministers, or read about changes that have taken place and cannot be clear what they involve. What about the rolling review? I thought—I am obviously wrong—that this was to change profoundly the nature of the way that new contracts are awarded every 10 years. Are the rolling reviews that take place at the moment based on legislation, or are they administrative changes made by the IBA? Are the reports made about the various companies made public? I hear them discussed when I sometimes mix in television circles, and I hear that, as part of the rolling review, the IBA has called in a certain company and has made changes in what it is doing. How many changes have been made so far, who carries them out, and how do they fit into the way that new contracts are awarded?

My hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) made an interesting point. I can recall —my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) will remember this as he hails originally from Yorkshire and knows a great deal about that side of affairs in Yorkshire—that about five or six years ago Yorkshire Television and Tyne Tees were allied. However, the IBA stepped in and told them that the marriage, however tenuous on financial grounds, had to be broken up. There is talk about a major company taking over Border Television, but would this not require the approval of the IBA?

My second point is about competitive tendering. I am against it because it is one of the silliest and most worrying proposals in the Peacock report. It had a good agenda, but anyone who gives a minute's thought to the problems of broadcasting and the technical changes that are coming about can write an agenda. I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Gorton that competitive tendering is a sure way to debase the coinage of programmes.

My third point is about direct broadcasting by satellite. As I travel about the country, I see in the back gardens of houses dishes of quite a size. I have been thinking of having one on the roof of my house in Southwark, so I declare an interest. What does one have to do to get a satellite receiving dish in one's garden? If one wrote to one's local authority, would it know what one was talking about? Would it need planning permission? What are the rules about these installations? Would anyone stop me? Do I have to get approval? I would love to listen to the Irish satellite that will apparently be put up shortly.

This is a short but important Bill. In case any of my right hon. Friends on the Front Bench have any ideas about this, I look forward to reading the Committee reports.

4.26 pm

Mr. Tim Brinton (Gravesham): I remind hon. Members of my interest in these matters in that I work for the BBC and ITV. I am a member of the Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians and Equity. Therefore, I am up to my neck in it.

My predominant thought about the Bill is that, much though I support it, it seems to me that we are working from the wrong ball park for the future. Whenever I have spoken about broadcasting in the House, I have noticed that hon. Members tend to take the position as it is today. In 1977, there was no Channel 4, there was a hot debate about Annan, there were hardly any video recording machines in domestic households, local radio was only just beginning to develop in full, and the whole scene was different. To look on today's Bill, which adjusts the licences and the length of them, in the context that perhaps in 10 years' time we shall be looking at anything vaguely similar to today's broadcasting patterns of two BBC channels, two ITV channels, and so on, is not the right calculation to make. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has made it clear that the purpose of extending these contracts is to look at the position more closely, in more detail, and above all else—quite rightly—after a general election.

Over the years, the Home Office has developed a tradition on broadcasting policy. It brings it forward piecemeal, but, after the general election, when these matters are looked at in the context of what we shall do about the methods by which we award contracts to the terrestrial franchises of ITV, that Bill must incorporate everything else, or it will not work.

Some of the weightiest decisions since the foundation of the BBC in the 1920s must be made about what we want from public service broadcasting. My hon. Friend the Member for Aldershot (Mr. Critchley) made an interesting distinction between state broadcasting and public service broadcasting. That is a subject of great debate and, in some senses, it is responsible for some of the friction between broadcasters and politicians.

Recently I was at a broadcasting conference, as was the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan)—who is listening closely to this debate. I do not believe that he was present when I said that the first word of the initials BBC was British and there was a hiss from the back of the hall. Lord Annan referred to the problem of defining the role of the BBC. It must be independent. It must be free from all spheres of influence, particularly governmental, but it must, at the same time, reflect the state. In that sense I quarrel with the distinction between the two roles as put forward by my hon. Friend the Member for Aldershot. Public service broadcasting must not be a member of the Establishment nor party to it in any way, but generally it must reflect the state.

Mr. Critchley: Would my hon. Friend accept, as a compromise, that the BBC should reflect the liberal consensus and exclude extremes?

Mr. Brinton: My hon. Friend is trying to tempt me down the path of liberal consensus. One of the reasons that prompted me to enter this House 12 years ago was that I felt that the general consensus was not working and was not the way forward. I do not believe that the liberal consensus would be a true reflection of the wishes of all the British people. It is much more subtle, especially when applied to broadcasting. A broadcaster must present the news objectively and factually and his comments must clearly be shown to be comments only. He must present arguments fairly from all points of view, including, I hasten to add, the liberal consensus view. The broadcaster should not just be a guardian of the air, if I can use that simile, for that would ignore other important matters.

The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) earlier expressed his understandable anxiety about the smaller television stations such as Border Television. Once again, I should like to look at the crystal ball. I can understand his anxiety, but if we consider the pattern of progress in technology and electronics it is certain that, in the next 10 years, there will be a fragmentation in television in the same way as occurred in radio. There may be changes of all sorts which may affect Border Television, but I believe that local television, which I believe that the hon. Member for Workington wants, is something that will continue to develop and gain strength.

In the next 10 years, rather than four terrestrially transmitted channels there may be as many as 50 channels coming from satellites fed through increasingly popular cable services and competing directly with our public service broadcasting—and by that I mean both the BBC and ITV. The question to which we should address ourselves in this all too short a debate is whether we expect the BBC and ITV to compete directly for viewers with, in effect, no control.

The right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) said that he wants a satellite dish on the top of his house. That dish may receive programmes with all sorts of unrestricted commercials. For example, we may even have the ludicrous position of 50 minutes of commercials with 10-minute programmes in between. If that and other pap programmes became popular, how would ITV make a living? Any future Government must address that question in considerable detail.

There appear to be two ways forward. The first is that ITV should have unrestricted competition, and I would be very sorry if that happened. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Aldershot that there would be a considerable lowering of programme standards and we would lose Channel 4 and programmes such as "Brideshead Revisited". What would we do with the BBC? Would it sit on a little island making middle-class liberal consensus programmes and nothing else? We must recognise the limitations of public service broadcasting in the years ahead and plan accordingly.

If, in two or three years' time, Parliament felt strongly that it must protect the styles of ITV and the BBC to the full, with two channels, that will need considerable support. If there is to be a BBC licence fee, which can support one national BBC channel making general programmes of a popular as well as a less popular nature, with the other channel paid for through subscriptions, we might apply the same sort of answer to ITV—which is primarily what we are discussing today. It would not take much of a touch on the popularity switch for Channel 4 to be able to pay for itself.

One of the most interesting arguments to consider is if Channel 4 could up the rating, by five points or whatever may be involved, to make it pay for itself, would that destroy what I believe to be the most interesting television service in the world? I certainly watch it a great deal and I do not want to destroy it. I believe that we must work out ways to protect it. It may be that much of the main

channel ITV output is popular, and we may conclude that it should compete directly with the popular major channels that, in 10 years' time, will be coming in from the rest of the world as, I hope, we shall be sending out our programmes.

I welcome the emergence of Superchannel, which the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South will discover he can receive with a smaller dish. I also welcome the news that the BBC's external services are thinking about a satellite news service to the rest of the world. All those developments must be included in our deliberations.

Comments have been made about the governors of the BBC and the members of the IBA, especially to the effect that the governors of the BBC should study some of the programmes before they are transmitted. I wonder whether it is time for an even greater change than has been mentioned today—and it has been mentioned before—in that we should think of changing the structure of public service broadcasting so that, in the fullness of time, there is a television authority that regulates both the BBC and the ITV. Perhaps it could be made up of people similar to those who currently serve the BBC and IBA. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) suggested in a previous debate, perhaps the board of management of the BBC should include some non-executive directors who could be lay members. We would then achieve a regulating body that is remote from the day-to-day executive work of the board of management of the BBC, something perhaps that is desirable. Currently, many of the troubles of the BBC stem from the fact that the governors are neither with the board of management nor right outside it—they do not know where they lie. The same applies to the members of the IBA, especially with their connections with Channel 4.

I shall not delay the House any further. I think that this is an interesting first step and I hope that, while this legislation gives us time, that time will be used to the full to discuss all those wider questions.

4.39 pm

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): We tend to forget that this small Bill flows directly from the Peacock report. The Peacock committee was established not to prepare a blueprint for the future, although it did that, but to deal with funding and finance.

The Bill was introduced in another place by Lord Beaverbrook. It arises out of the Peacock committee, but not because of the changes which that committee advocated. The Bill deals with keeping open the options for change. It is a significant Bill, although it is small. It deals with the purpose of the Peacock committee and with what happened as a result of that committee's report.

I have argued on behalf of the Labour party that the Government have put the cart before the horse. The Government gave that committee the remit of considering how we should fund the BBC. Clearly, the Prime Minister — that great abstentionist who does not want to interfere with broadcasting — was thinking about introducing advertising to help fund the BBC. We argued that that was putting the cart before the horse. We feared that decisions about how to fund broadcasting would pre-empt decisions about the nature of future broadcasting. We argued that we should take a quick look at the changes in broadcasting before the problem of financing was tackled. That is what is now happening. The committee was asked to examine alternative financing methods, other than public, so it was pushed towards recommending private financing, whether by subscription or advertising. The pattern of thinking is now being established.

The great technological shift that will alter the pattern dramatically is broadcasting by satellite. Despite that, there is little discussion about how it should be used in public service broadcasting. It is already being considered in the allocation of franchises. Even in an apparently minor Bill such as this we should consider the nature of broadcasting for the future. A type of alliance exists among the more civilised hon. Members—some Tories and the entire membership of the Labour party — in relation to public service broadcasting.

I want to follow the arguments used by the hon. Members for Gravesham (Mr. Brinton) and for Aldershot (Mr. Critchley). I believe that there is a dichotomy between state broadcasting and public service broadcasting. The hon. Member for Gravesham said that there was some hissing at a broadcasting conference. I suspect that he was talking about one of the two conferences in Edinburgh, last year and the year before. I think that the hissing must have come from some Scottish nationalists at the back of the hall who were looking for a different solution for broadcasting.

There is a separation between broadcasting and the apparatus of the state. This Government are trying to narrow that gap by using extra-legal methods. They are trying, not to differentiate between public service broadcasting and the state, but to bring public service broadcasting under the effective control, if not the legal control, of the Government and particularly of the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. We saw that in relation to "Real Lives" two years ago. There is a distinction between what happened over that and what happened over the Zircon film.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am trying hard to relate what the hon. Gentleman is saying to the Bill's provisions, but I am finding it difficult. The hon. Gentleman must address himself to the Bill, which deals with the IBA and contracts.

Mr. Buchan: With respect — I mean that — Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Home Secretary said that the Bill would give us time to examine the options. We are now looking at the options. If we did not want to do that there would be no reason for the Bill. We are dealing with a crucial question. I was saying that two years ago it was necessary for the Home Secretary publicly to intervene and that the BBC had capitulated over Zircon. It applied a form of self-censorship — the most dangerous of all censorships.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Equally with great respect, I cannot see how interference with the BBC relates in any way to the Bill's provisions.

Mr. Buchan: I shall do my best to keep within the proper bounds of discussion, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

There are two questions to be asked about the options. The first is whether it is necessary to extend the time for consideration at all. I am not sure whether we need three years, but if we are to allow that extension we must use the time to examine the options.

For independent television the crucial element is direct broadcasting by satellite and in that connection the great problem is how to control it. We are told that the British

[Mr. Buchan]

external service is considering satellite broadcasting. Satellites from other countries are also being used. There is no doubt that three or four entrepreneurs will control the structure. It has been said that France would never tolerate interference from foreign broadcasting authorities, but not even the chauvinistic French are able to prevent that. Berlusconi is an obvious case in point, dictating as he does the future of French and Italian television.

Mr. Brinton: It has been said before, but is this not unlike the problem faced by the medieval monks who, 100 or 150 years after the printing press was invented and publishing became free to anyone who had the technology, tried to protect their vested interest?

Mr. Buchan: The same analogy was used by Professor Peacock in his report. He compared the opening up of freedom in broadcasting with the freedom of the press after 1694 and the Censorship Act. I know my history, even though I am a member of the Labour party.

Let us examine the freedoms which have been achieved. We have handed over 80 per cent. of the popular dissemination of news and information in this country to three people—Maxwell, Murdoch and Stevens. So much for the opening up of publishing and the monopoly of the monks. It has been the monopoly of the masters and is an even greater monopoly than that which occurred in medieval times.

The analogy is fatal because it says more than Peacock thought it would say. It says that the only way to prevent monopoly is to ensure that there is regulated broadcasting. It should be regulated in order to give freedom of access and diversity of programmes and to prevent monopoly. We are concerned with the freedom of the listener, but he is concerned with the freedom of the contractor. Freedom for the contractor means that he has an eventual monopoly. The 3 million or 4 million readers of *The Sun* matter more than the one Murdoch who sits in Wapping. That is the kind of freedom that we ought to seek.

The hon. Member for Gravesham is right; it is a fair analogy. We have seen what happened in the past and are determined that it shall not happen in the future through direct broadcasting by satellite. If it applied only to Britain we could deal with it, but it has an international aspect. How can we control that? I have seen direct broadcasting by satellite relayed by cable to some of the poorest countries in the world. Parents in those countries who have no running water in their huts have said to me, "My child wants a computer for Christmas." That is because they see the advertising of the consumer society, the aculturisation of people. Therefore, we must not only find a British method to deal with it but must rapidly develop an international method of dealing with it.

We in the Labour party have made a tiny start towards finding a solution. If we do not find a solution, then, just as our popular press is controlled by three people, the whole of broadcasting by satellite in western Europe will be controlled by five people — Maxwell, Murdoch, Stevens, Berlusconi and one other. That is what will happen. That is the sort of problem we are facing.

We have immediate options in relation to Channel 4. Perhaps this is the reason for the three-year postponement, but I hope not. I agree with those who say that the competition for advertising would be fatal. All the analyses that we have made and that others have made about the pool of broadcasting revenue suggest that the opening up of competition by Channel 4 would do two things: first, it would weaken the regional element of all our commercial broadcasting—and local broadcasting is more expensive than buying in programmes; secondly, it would force Channel 4 to compete for the greatest amount of advertising and, instead of Channel 4 providing a fraction of our television programmes, it would have to compete with the lowest common denominator.

The second reason for the delay is to allow time for the examination of the franchises. I question delay, because the whole purpose of the franchises was to analyse the work and the methods and the success or otherwise of the independent companies so that a franchise could be withdrawn if a company was not up to the mark. Once we begin to extend that, we remove the possibility of a rapid shift in some of the worst of the stations and encourage them to do what sometimes happened in the past in Scottish television—a period of mediocrity followed by a frenetic 18 months of promises about programmes and ideas for the future that are never implemented.

We ought not to be too happy about an extension. It is made necessary not because of that for which the Peacock committee was set up, but for that which the Peacock committee eventually encouraged the Government to go ahead with—a major change in the structures of broadcasting. All of those major changes are pulling us away from public service broadcasting.

Indexing will not be a stratification of the broadcasting open to the BBC because developing technology does not necessarily get any cheaper and indexing will mean that an inferior product will be forced upon the BBC. Most important, it will be unable to compete in new technology with commercial companies.

We are moving very rapidly. After the Peacock evidence I hoped that I might continue with this subject for a little longer than I have been allowed to do. I had hoped that by this time the Labour party would have established a forward thinking working party. I hope to get some assurance from my Front Bench about that.

Broadcasting has been in the forefront of political thought over the last few weeks. That is because of the events surrounding "The Secret Society" programmes and the conduct of the Government in relation to those programmes. If we are to defend and develop public service broadcasting, we must prevent the formation of a Ministry of Information. It would be right to remove broadcasting from the Home Office. We can no longer safely leave broadcasting in the hands of the Home Office, and that is the reason for my argument that it should be under a proper Ministry of the Arts. That could still happen. Sadly, the events of the last few weeks show that the quicker it happens the better for all of us.

4.56 pm

Mr. William Powell (Corby): This is the first time that I have had the privilege of being called to speak on the Second Reading of any Bill as early as 4.56 pm. Further, it is the first time, and it may be the only time, when I shall be called as the fifth person to speak from the Back Benches on Second Reading so early in the afternoon. That shows that the Bill is relatively uncontroversial. It is a modest measure, but being modest I welcome it. I wish

that we had more legislation that caused so little controversy. It is often the case that when a Bill tries to do too much it runs into difficulties.

All hon. Members will agree that there is absolutely no danger of this Bill attempting to do too much. I congratulate my right hon. Friend on bringing forward a measure of this nature. I welcome the Bill and hope that the House will give it an unopposed Second Reading. We have a procedure whereby relatively uncontroversial and modest measures can be referred to a Second Reading Committee upstairs. The decisions about whether Bills are referred to that Committee or are taken on the Floor of the House are, I imagine, taken through the usual channels. I hope that on reflection those responsible for timetabling this Bill to take up the time of the House will perhaps realise that it might have been more sensible to take it upstairs to a Second Reading Committee. That happens to some Bills and it is unfortunate that more Bills cannot be dealt with it in that way.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Is the hon. Gentleman seriously suggesting that a Bill which will fundamentally affect the whole of broadcasting should not be debated on the Floor of the House just because there appears to be no open desire to vote against it? I remind the hon. Gentleman that the Floor of the House is and ought to be and will remain the most important part of the Houses of Parliament.

Mr. Powell: I am grateful to the hon. Lady. No doubt the matters that she mentions were in the mind of the business managers when they decided that it was appropriate for this Bill to be dealt with on the Floor of the House. I have put the contrary argument and I hope that the procedure for Second Reading Committees upstairs can be used more widely than currently happens. That is my view but, of course, the hon. Lady is perfectly entitled to disagree. She may be right, but I suggest that this Bill could have been dealt with in the way that I have outlined.

This is a holding Bill because it provides more time to consider matters vital to the future of public service broadcasting than is allowed by current statutory arrangements. It is right and proper that that should happen. The Peacock report made it plain to those who are not specialists in broadcasting that the fundamental issues which will face public service broadcasting will have a much greater potential impact than any other matters have in the past generation.

Given the political timetable, with a general election likely to intervene in less than two years, it is only right and proper that whichever party forms the Government—naturally, I hope that it will be mine—has the proper time to consider these important matters.

Current ITV contracts are to be extended for three years. The Peacock committee made it plain that the Government and Parliament had to face serious and important issues in deciding how ITV franchises should be allocated. I welcome the fact that under the Bill it will be possible for that allocation to be considered at more leisure than they would have been under the very tight programme that would otherwise have existed.

I have considerable sympathy for many of the points raised by the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan). I wished—perhaps this is a salutary point for any politician—that he would develop some of his points at greater length. I for one would have been happy to listen to him uninterrupted for a longer period.

Direct service broadcasting offers enormous opportunities to the viewer. All those opportunities are subject to the type of consideration to which the hon. Member for Paisley, South referred. In general, I welcome the opportunity to have a much broader range of programmes. I am one of those who often bewails the absence of choice, even with four channels. I welcome the fact that this debate is likely to be shorter than many Second Reading debates because I hope that other right hon. and hon. Members and I will be able this evening to watch one of the outstanding programmes on television—"Rumpole of the Bailey". I hope that not only the existing channels but other companies will be able to establish a continuous series of "Rumpoles of the Bailey" or similar programmes. The Bill gives us an opportunity for more mature reflection on the issues which we must face. For those reasons, I hope that the House will give it an unopposed Second Reading.

5.4 pm

Mr. Clement Freud (Cambridgeshire, North-East): This is a very minor Bill. It is not one with which the alliance or anyone else disagrees. However, I deplore the fact that it is such a minor Bill and that it lacks courage, foresight and dynamism. As hon. Members have said, it is another example of piecemeal legislation. It asks us to wait and see. It allows the Government—I suppose that this is important to any Government before an election—to say, "Our hands are clean," even if they have to add, "We have not done anything."

I was disturbed by the Home Secretary's answer to an intervention by the hon. Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) when the right hon. Gentleman said that the Government proposed to introduce a comprehensive Broadcasting Bill early in the next Session. Is it Conservative policy to introduce some non-specific Bill? Since we have a Broadcasting Bill before us, it is the Home Secretary's duty to give us a little more information before he tries to put this piecemeal legislation on the statute book. The House deserves to know what the legislation will do to preserve the quality of television stations such as Border—small, excellent, vulnerable and open to predators. We deserve to know whether the forthcoming legislation will seek to sell off independent television companies and whether it will use money or standards as the criterion for sale.

It is terribly wrong to allow the Peacock recommendations to lie idle without any word from the Government other than, "We wish to hear the debate." All hon. Members want to know how the Government will react to the Peacock suggestions. Will the Government preserve the opportunities for independent television producers and for independent producers generally? A move within market place economics will not be encouraging in any way to those who make independent programmes.

Your predecessor in the Chair, Mr. Deputy Speaker, intervened to say that the Bill does not concern the BBC. I believe that any debate on broadcasting cannot isolate one form of broadcasting because one form reverberates substantially on all other forms. Hon. Members are disturbed by what is happening in the BBC and by the

[Mr. Clement Freud]

concept of "acceptability of BBC governors" without a move to bring in governors, as there are hon. Members whose job it is to probe what is happening.

I am concerned about the centralisation of television production in the south-east of England. We want to know what the Government will do about this. It is extraordinary that, in every facet of Government responsibility, people are being directed without much concern about where the expertise lies.

The whole nation is interested in community radio, and that includes even those people who did not want community broadcasting to come about — but it ill becomes the Government to make a promise, to allow people to spend substantial sums on research and development and then withdraw that promise and say, "There will not be any community radio for the time being; you must wait and see."

We are also concerned about subscription television because we fear that it could lead to an even more divided society. Some people might be unable to see "Rumpole of the Bailey" because they do not have the money to buy the programmes that their neighbours watch. It is essential that the concept of subscription television will be to top up, and not to take from people their right to view.

What they propose to do to Channel 4 is perhaps the most brilliant example of the Government's inability to leave good things alone. It is one of the most successful of broadcasting enterprises. Why do the Government not leave it to flourish instead of attempting to make it a commercial, avaricious begetter of its own advertising? That would not do any service whatsoever for Channel 4 but would jeopardise something of great and substantial quality.

Mr. Hurd: I have listened to the hon. Gentleman with great care. From what he has said, I derive that he would like us to rest absolutely on the status quo. I find that a dim and dismal outlook. If I had produced a set of detailed proposals on the matters that are before the House today, he knows that he would have been among the first to say "How monstrous of this dictatorship of a Government to ram all these proposals down our throats without giving us an opportunity to discuss them or to have any public debate." We are acting in the opposite way and in a liberal manner we are simply saying that, whatever the position immediately after the election, a Government will need time to prepare proposals and to think them through. The Bill enables that to happen. That is what it is about.

Mr. Freud: It is rewarding to hear a Conservative Home Secretary arguing for change. I said clearly that I wished the status quo to remain for Channel 4, which has quality and which, I believe, is brilliant.

My hon. Friends and I also wish to know what plans the Government have in respect of the proposals in the Peacock report. I do not agree that saying, "Wait and see" and, "We need more discussion" is remotely satisfying. If commercial criteria are used, we shall have "The Price is Right" from wall to wall. Conservative Members have suggested that we might get 50 minutes of commercials, followed by 10 minutes of programming. My great fear is that we shall go back to what happened when commercial television started and that there will be advertising magazines, in whatever disguise they may come.

The right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) intimated that he did not wish to serve on the Committee. I cannot imagine that that would be an onerous task or that the Committee will have many sittings because this is a holding Bill.

We accept that DBS needs more time to attract sufficient capital. If the carrot is not big enough, one must attempt to make it bigger by shovelling on the manure and then seeing whether somebody will grasp it.

It is absolutely right to extend the ITV franchises because there is no evidence of abuse by any contractor. They deserve nothing less than that three years' bonus, and that is what their putative successors will need to prepare their case.

My right hon. and hon. Friends and I support the Bill, but are sorry that it is not a more courageous or radical measure.

5.14 pm

Mr. John Powley (Norwich, South): It is a particular pleasure for me to have the opportunity to make a modest speech on this Bill. I crave the indulgence of the House for a moment because I suspect—I am open to correction from any hon. Member if I am not right—that I am the only qualified radio and television service engineer who is a Member of this House. I am not advertising any services in saying that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I have a personal interest in broadcasting which many other hon. Members may not share. I also suspect that I may be one of only a few hon. Members to have run a radio and television business, as I did for 24 years, before becoming a Member of the House. Therefore, I take pleasure in making a modest contribution to the debate.

When the House debated the Peacock report I was unable to speak because of the interests of other hon. and right hon. Members. I should now like to say a few words about the part of the Bill that relates to direct broadcasting by satellite. I welcome the measures to extend the period under discussion. There must be tremendous advantages from the extension of direct broadcasting for all those in the trade, for the manufacturers of the equipment and of the receivers that will be used when satellite broadcasting becomes more readily available, and, indeed, for the public. However, anybody with any experience will know that considerable technical problems remain to be resolved.

I should like to draw the attention of the House to the IBA members of the consortium which grants the franchise. My own local independent television station of Anglia is a member of that consortium. I am pleased to see that, because East Anglia is often regarded as the backwater of events. That is not the case and I am pleased that Anglia Television is involved in such an exciting concept.

When we get direct broadcasting by satellite the public will be able to enjoy a further additional service through the type of programme that they can watch. Indeed, from a professional point of view, although not from a financial, professional, point of view, I have long advocated the more extensive use of the television set in one's home as a means of communication. Direct broadcasting by satellite will mean that the type of programme, entertainment and information that is available on television will be greatly extended. I have no doubt that there are a great many other uses to which the television

set could be put, in addition to receiving direct broadcasting from satellites. Demand for television sets will increase in line with the increase in DBS.

About 98 per cent. of all the homes in the country have a television set of one sort or another, the overwhelming majority of which are colour television receivers. We know that the two-television set family is fairly commonplace today. I suppose that it is not uncommon for some homes to have three or four television receivers. Being in the position to which I referred earlier, I must confess that we have five sets in our home. Each of my three children has a television receiver in their bedroom, we have the main one in the lounge and another in the study. That is an example of the increasing use of the television set by individual members of the family. Television is not just for entertainment; it conveys knowledge. Broadcasters can widen the range of programmes available and DBS is just one means by which the volume of information available can be extended.

It follows that because of the amount of investment by the various companies in the DBS franchise, because there are considerable technical problems for the manufacturers of the equipment and because the DBS system needs greater public acceptance, we need extra time. The consortium needs to advertise the advantages of DBS. It is undoubtedly right for everyone to extend the period and I hope that that will not be a matter for dissent. I support all the other parts of the Bill and hope that it will receive a favourable passage through the House.

5.21 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): This is only a small Bill if one considers the foundations of a building to be unremarkable because they go in a small hole. However, I need to know much more about what will be built on it before I dismiss it as a modest measure.

The Bill is important. It gives the Home Secretary an opportunity to state in no uncertain terms how he sees the problems of the breathing space that the Bill provides. I would have liked him today to have said, "If we are to have DBS—there are already considerable difficulties because people are not prepared to invest millions in this sort of development without knowing what they will gain from it —I want to use this time to consider its political and financial implications. Then we shall have a clear view of where we shall go in the interim three years."

I am worried that today we have seen a little demonstration of the salami technique. The Government have said, "We haven't had time to hear the views of all the interested parties, so we shall extend the time to the companies concerned and ask everyone what they want to do. We shall then have an idea of their forward planning." That seems both sensible and civilised. The Home Secretary is a man of wit and culture which, luckily for his political career, he succeeds in hiding from the Prime Minister. Nevertheless, it is not good enough simply to say, "We shall have a major development, but the Government do not have a clear political line."

Once we have DBS, Parliament must have in place a series of simple but wide-reaching laws to control the way in which the signals are redirected into the United Kingdom. We must think seriously about controls for the public broadcasting system and the IBA. I do not want us under any circumstances to move towards open tender for commercial companies. I do not want to hear that suggestion either in the House or anywhere else. A danger of that is that as soon as the IBA is told to accept the largest tender, the reason for its existence is wiped out. Even a continuing rolling programme of extending contracts for commercial companies opens up considerable questions about the political and cultural controls that will operate on those companies for the franchise. That has not been fully discussed.

Above all, if the House has no control over DBS, Mrs. Whitehouse will not come to the House and witter on about the problems of obscenity because we shall have no control over the signals. Nor shall we have control over the news content. Hon. Members who have said today that they have seen the future and it looks like a dingo were not exaggerating. We must contend, not only with Mr. Murdoch, but with news centres rather like that run by Ted Turner of Atlanta. I have no desire to see the newscasting services of the television stations follow the line of our newspapers.

The reason why so few people take their news from the popular press is simply because it does not contain any news. No one would know from most of the tabloid newspapers that Parliament even existed until there is a screaming, immediate, social problem. The newspapers manage to wheel in rent-a-quotes from both sides of the Chamber which are a fortissimo expression of a minute, and usually superficial, nature. We have been able to deal with that deterioration in the news-gathering centres of the nation because most people still see the news on one of the television channels. They get their views and news largely from either the IBA or BBC news which still strive, no matter what the ruling party says, to maintain a reasonable balance on political, religious and delicate social problems.

What shall we do if DBS becomes a market place where those with money can move with no restraint on the content of their programmes? The Government have not made that clear. They have not said today, "We realise that this is an extremely limited measure, but we shall immediately set up a working party to consider all its implications." There has been no such suggestion. What will the Government do in relation to the IBA? If they are to change the way in which the franchises are extended or debated, let them set out those new changes so that the house can debate them openly. If they are to use this opportunity to change the financing of Channel 4, for example, let them come here and say so openly and let them give us the opportunity to say that Channel 4 should not compete with ITV for advertising revenue and that it should be given a specific mandate to involve itself in even more independent producers' work than at present. Channel 4 has done a remarkable job in opening up broadcasting to independent producers. The Bill provides the opportunity for us to say that we shall look actively at ways of widening opportunities for producers across the board.

I should like to see a Bill to guarantee a reasonable percentage — 25 per cent. or more, if necessary — of independent air time to producers in both services. The BBC is being dealt with in a hole-in-the-corner manner. Mr. Deputy Speaker has already pointed out that, although we see a clear link in the Government's attitudes to the BBC and ITV, now is not the time to discuss it. In reality, the Minister of State cares about the quality of broadcasting and telecasting in the United Kingdom. He, and certainly the Home Secretary, have a duty to set out how the Government see the future of broadcasting. They are not doing that. They are giving us the impression that

[Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody]

somewhere along the line they will squeeze the BBC's finances but open up the IBA's responsibilities in such a way that it will do away with any element of control and simply make it a market place transaction. That is extremely dangerous. I believe that one would get continuous broadcasting of a sort that most hon. Members would find fairly sleazy and unacceptable. If the Minister has any doubt, let him see what happened in Italy when Radio Audiovisione Italiana was forced to concede air time in a completely different way and there was a constant eruption of soft porn and semi-porn films running for 24 hours. That is the reality of broadcasting that is left to the market place.

The idea that more is better is disproved simply by looking at what happens in America. Anybody who has seen the hundreds of channels and the rubbish that is churned out hour after hour knows that choice is not necessarily a way of improving the quality of the production material. Quality depends on the money that is available and the expertise and it certainly depends, above all, on the restraints that Government put on the hours of broadcasting, the type of broadcasting and the responsibilities that we have always accepted were part of a public service effort in this country.

The BBC and IBA contribute to extremely high quality programme material because of the legislation which, over the years, has been discussed by the House. The two are inextricably linked. I see no reason now why, in a country that imports vast amounts of electronic hardware, we cannot be talking about putting extra taxes on some of those things to maintain the quality of our material. I see no reason why, in the next three years, we should not be energetically examining other ways of raising cash for independent producers and making sure that the work that comes forward is of a standard that we find acceptable.

I give the Minister one warning. I do not believe that the House will accept a Government diktat which hands over control of DBS to any system which cannot be controlled in some way by the House of Commons. I do not believe that public service broadcasting should ever be restricted on the basis of whichever political party is in charge. Indeed, if I bought only newspapers with which I agreed and which have not insulted me and watched only programmes with which I was in absolute agreement, I would have an extremely limited reading and viewing programme.

I believe that the Government have a responsibility over and above simply saying, "Look, we shall give them three more years and then decide what will happen." No one knows what electronic developments will be created between now and the end of the period of the franchise, but we should be debating the political implications here and now and we are not doing so. There may be a great future for someone who creates a marvellous way of blocking the broadcasting from DBS systems that put out the 50 minutes of advertisements with which we have been threatened. Who knows? However, until we sit down seriously and think about the implications, it is not good enough to say, "This is a modest measure. Let it go through because we are all in agreement and it does not upset anybody." It upsets me simply because it is so empty and poor and, if I may say, such a cop-out in relation to the responsibilities of broadcasting. The Minister ought to do better. He has the wit and the intelligence, and he should trust the House of Commons more.

5.34 pm

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): It is a great pleasure to follow the speech of the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody). She has brought to the debate some of the questions that I acknowledge we have to address and answer. I shall try to answer some of them. I do not suppose that my views will find favour necessarily with my hon. Friends on the Front Bench, and still less with Opposition Members. However, the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich is right to draw our attention to the fact that we will have to take some major and fundamental decisions.

In broadcasting debates in the House there are usually large numbers of right hon. and hon. Members wanting to take part and only those with an important or well-known interest seem to have been able to contribute in the past. This debate has afforded many of us, such as my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Powley), me and others, who have never before spoken in a debate on broadcasting, to contribute.

The scope of the Bill is limited, but it enables us to peer into the future. I welcome the Bill. It is right, to this extent, that the Government should come before the House and say that major decisions will have to be taken in the future and that they are not ready to take those decisions now. It is right and proper that they should extend the period for the individual television companies to be able to carry on for the time being. The proposal regarding DBS is sensible. However, I accept the injunction from the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich that there are some fundamental decisions that one day, during the course of the next two or three years, a Government will have to take. Therefore, I recognise that we cannot say that we all agree, let the Bill reach the statute book and then stand back and say that we have done our duty and that is the end of it.

The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich is right to say that technology is moving so fast that a variety of television stations will be available to the public. We have to address ourselves to the extent to which Government and Parliament are to play their part in setting up the framework for what will be inevitable. I welcome the fact that it is inevitable that the viewer, in not so many years to come, will have available to him or her a television set with a large number of selection controls, and will be able to view a wide variety of programmes. Some of those programmes, broadcast by the BBC, will be under the authority of the governors of the BBC. We cannot discuss those today, but they will continue to exist largely along present lines, perhaps with account taken of some of the recommendations of the Peacock committee. There will be the basic structure that we have now, perhaps amended to take account of the views of whichever Government are in power at the time and the individual television companies. We will also have the whole raft of programmes and technology available to people which will enable them to receive programmes from abroad without controls. People will have access to television stations and will be able to purchase programmes of which hon. Members might not approve. Therefore, when future technology offers us a

television screen with a wide variety of pre-selections, to what extent should we seek to control one area of television, the BBC, and, in the case of this Bill——

Mr. Powley: I am interested in my hon. Friend's remarks. Does he agree that we are moving into an era where the television set will be used not only for entertainment provided from this country and others, to which my hon. Friend has rightly referred, but for information technology that will be available in the home from a variety of sources? Ceefax and Oracle are available now and viewdata is available for a minority interest. In the future, there will be other developments that will enable information to be gleaned by the person in the home using a television receiver.

Mr. Brown: My hon. Friend is correct. Indeed, I have the good fortune to live in the Yorkshire Television area and, at night, when the formal broadcasting is finished, we have an example of what the future holds. When Yorkshire Television closes down about midnight, there is then a Yorkshire Television job-finder which flashes up on the screen all the jobs that have been notified to Yorkshire Television by individual companies and, I believe, by the Department of Employment. Yorkshire Television is providing a typical example of what we shall be able to achieve as a result of information technology.

A fundamental issue is the extent to which Parliament and Government are to control the future output of television. I take the opposite view to that which is held by the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody), but she is right to make the House face one of the crucial decisions that will have to be taken. I believe that in future it will be impossible for us to have a strong regulatory system to control the output of television. We shall have the BBC, the ITV companies under the authority of the IBA and a raft of television programmes, and this overall will be beyond the control of the Government or surrogate authorities.

I believe in freedom of choice but I acknowledge what the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich said about the Italian experience and I accept that programmes will be shown on some channels which none of us in this place would like to watch and which few of our constituents would wish to see. When there is a multiplicity of channels available, the viewer will have to be trusted, and I am left wondering whether it is right to maintain the IBA. The authority is designed rigorously to control the extent of advertising — the number of minutes of it in any one hour—and what is known as subliminal television. That means that there is control of game shows, for example. We might all loathe "The Price is Right", and many of us are suspicious that if there is too much freedom of choice there will be hours and hours of such programmes. We must recognise, however, that "The Price is Right" is an extremely popular programme. The public should have the right to see such a programme if that is their wish.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I accept that there is individuality of taste. I would not wish to watch "EastEnders" but I do not object to others doing so. That is entirely their problem. There is a difference between that programme and material that most people would find unacceptable. That is the difference between controlled broadcasting and that which is not.

Mr. Brown: We have a relatively narrow choice at present and it is probably generally unacceptable to the viewer that there should be some of the sleazy television that the hon. Lady has described. If there is a wide variety of choice, sleazy television will have to maintain a sufficient level of demand if it is to survive. If viewers turn off their television sets or change to another channel, it will not survive. I am sure that all of us in this place believe in the freedom of speech. On the whole, we believe in the freedom of the press and a wide variety of newspapers being available. Surely we should believe in the freedom of choice when it comes to television.

The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich talked about America, where there is a wide choice of television programmes. One of the benefits of the American system is that it finds room for a channel that broadcasts the Congress debates in their entirety. Anyone who lives on the east coast, at any rate—for example, in Washington or New York, or in any of the populous east coast states — can turn away from the tremendous amount of advertising that is shown on some channels and the sleazy television that is on others—American television is not all good by any means—and select a channel that is funded by companies and academic foundations and organisations. This channel broadcasts the debates of the House of Representatives from the moment that the House sits until it rises.

We all believe that it is right and proper that the British people should have access to events in the Houses of Paliament. At present there is only limited coverage of our proceedings—half an hour on the radio at night and 20 minutes the following morning with a few minutes devoted to our proceedings in some of the news clips. Of course, with only four channels available to the television companies it is impossible to broadcast the proceedings in this place from 2.30 in the afternoon to 2.30 the following morning. Freedom of choice and a multiplicity of channels would allow those who were interested to follow our proceedings. If market demand were sufficient, a small company would be able to present to the nation by means of the television screen our proceedings in this place.

I accept that there will be programmes that will suit only minorities that some of us may find distasteful. However, many minorities that are currently not served well by television could have programmes shown that would interest them. New technology will force the Government to embrace a multiplicity of channels and to recognise that they can control only to a certain extent. In that context, is it right to have many controls?

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): May I counsel the hon. Gentleman to be cautious? He should not suggest that something is praiseworthy because it is popular. Perhaps he will bear in mind the dreadful example of *The Sun*, a sewer newspaper.

Mr. Brown: I accept the hon. Gentleman's argument. I accept also that many of us in this place would turn up our noses at some of the programmes that our constituents watch in their droves. They may not necessarily be good programmes. Under the market system, however, our constituents will be supplied with the television programmes that they want, and the market will determine whether programmes are successful.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I think that we would all agree that if people want to watch a programme such as "The Price is Right", it should be available to them. Unfortunately, if nothing is available

[Mr. Chris Smith]

except programmes such as "The Price is Right", other programmes that people might want to watch will be driven out.

Mr. Brown: I do not believe that that would happen. There are some programmes that cause offence to some viewers, including Mrs. Mary Whitehouse, and under the system that I am advocating there would be freedom to broadcast that sort of programme. Mrs. Whitehouse, the House and the Government would have to acknowledge that the viewer should have the freedom to watch whatever he wants to see.

There are some television programmes that offend the viewer when they are shown on BBC 1. Offence is caused because the viewer has a one-in-four chance of seeing them. He is forced in many instances to watch such a programme or to turn off his television set if he does not like the other three options. I remember that there was a great furore last year over one of the programmes that was shown on Channel 4. It caused Mrs. Whitehouse and her colleagues great concern. She is concerned about the majority of television viewers being forced to watch programmes that they do not want and I know that hon. Members are concerned about the broadcasting of slushy programmes that people may not want to watch. Twelve channels would give viewers many choices. If people do not watch a programme, the programme company will go out of business.

There is no chance that any Government will consider my remarks. I am flying a kite. I am challenging the very existence of any form of control on broadcasting. I believe in the freedom of the BBC to be as biased as it likes one way or the other. With a multiplicity of choice, the viewer will sort out any bias. I do not want to see any controls on the BBC's output, from whatever source. I do not like the idea, apart from occasions on which matters of national security arise, of BBC governors controlling the BBC or the IBA controlling individual television companies. I do not like the idea of controls on television. At the end of the day, the biggest control on television is the viewer. The viewer can change channels and can always turn off. The viewer should decide for himself or herself what controls there will be on television, and the viewer can do that much better than Parliament or Government can.

5.51 pm

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I cannot accept the argument put forward by the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown). He has a naive belief that the market mechanism will always operate in a virtuous fashion. That is nonsense. It is a point that will always divide all hon. Members.

I must declare an interest. I have a close connection with the Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians and have been grateful for the discussions that I have had with it in preparation for the debate.

I have no objection to the Bill. The extension of the existing ITV franchises is quite sensible. The current eight-year franchise period may be too short in any case. I broadly welcome extending the period for a further three years. The crucial question is that, having said that the franchises are to be extended for three years, what is the Government's purpose in doing so? The Home Secretary was clear, open and honest. He said, "We are doing so to keep open the options for change." The centre of the debate, quite clearly and quite rightly, is what those options for change will be.

Three potential dangers are on the horizon. At least two of them have been raised in the debate. The first danger is that when existing ITV franchises come up for re-tender in three years, they will go out to competitive tender, and competition will be the overriding criterion for deciding who gets them. That is the Peacock proposal. It was warmly endorsed in the debate on the Peacock report by a previous Home Secretary, the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan). He said that going for the highest bidder, with a number of safeguards —he did not specify exactly how the safeguards would work — was a sensible way of allocating future franchises. I cannot possibly agree with that. In many ways, going for the highest bidder will not only distort the tendering procedure and process but will almost inevitably lead to some of the worst bidders getting franchises.

The range of programming that will be available to viewers as a result of the successful competitor winning a tender is bound to be affected. The narrower range of programmes will diminish opportunities for the viewer. Broadcasting standards are likely to fall. Of course, in going for competition and competition alone, the cheaper, more popular options will be chosen. Of course, competitive tendering, as has been mentioned once or twice in the debate, will give a major financial advantage to multinational companies that have a much sharper edge than have smaller companies. The idea of multinational companies—for example, ones that might be headed by people such as Rupert Murdoch or Robert Maxwell—getting their hands on major television franchises for the ITV network fills me with considerable horror. Competitive tendering as the major motivating force in deciding who gets franchises in three years' time is the first danger. I hope that the Government will not go along that road, although I fear that their insane belief in the appropriateness of market competition may lead them in that direction. It would be to the detriment of public sector broadcasting.

The second danger is that of hiving off Channel 4. That was proposed by the Peacock report. It would involve Channel 4 selling its own advertising directly, rather than operating through the mechanism of the IBA. Two things would inevitably follow. First, there would be competition for advertising revenue between Channel 4 and ITV. One must question whether that is a sensible way of grabbing available revenue from the world of advertising. Secondly, there would be competition in programming. To compete effectively for advertising one will have to compete for programming and audience figures. That will mean, first, that Channel 4 will be pushed down market and will no longer be as innovative as it is at the moment, with such excellent results, and, secondly, that it will compete directly in the popular slots with the other main ITV channel. That will also be to the detriment of viewers. The inevitable result will be that the two independent channels will offer a poorer quality of choice for the viewer.

I hope that the Government will not hive off Channel 4. It has been one of the great success stories of British broadcasting in the past few years. I fear that if the

Government go ahead with the proposals that the Peacock committee put forward, it will be much to the detriment of that success.

The third issue that has not yet received a major airing in this debate, and which should do so, is that of access for independent producers. The Home Secretary made a lot of this issue in the debate on the Peacock report. The Peacock committee recommended a guaranteed 40 per cent. quota for independents. The Home Secretary stated that 25 per cent. might be a sensible idea. No quota should be established. I do not believe in setting rigid quotas of that kind. There is nothing necessarily virtuous about having more independent television productions, just as there is nothing necessarily detrimental about having more independent television productions.

Mrs. Dunwoody: When the British film industry had no quota, it was completely drowned by its larger American cousin.

Mr. Smith: I shall refer to that point in a moment. In some ways, the allocation of a specific quota for independents may lead to the problem that we fear — that is, of multinational penetration of independent and public sector broadcasting networks. I shall turn to that point in a moment. The question ought not to be, what proportion of time is taken by independent producers and what proportion of time is taken by network producers? The question ought to be, what is the range and quality of programming from either stable that is available on the channels that are open to viewers?

A number of points ought to be made. First, the existing network channels are very successful in gaining sales on the international market. That is one of the arguments that has been advanced for a greater amount of independent home market production to give the independents an edge in obtaining international sales. The existing networks are very successful in gaining international sales. They are also quite successful in providing material for Channel 4.

Secondly, there is a danger in guaranteeing quotas for independents. I make this point in response to my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe.

Mrs. Dunwoody: And Nantwich.

Mr. Smith: Yes, and Nantwich. The danger is that it will not necessarily be the small companies that will benefit from a quota that is established for independents. It will be the large companies, and very often the multinationals, that will be able to take advantage of any established quota for independents. Already there are a number of media conglomerates that are active in European satellite, and I fear that any guarantee of a quota for independents may give an advantage to predators of that kind.

The third point that has to be made is that there is a large amount to be said for the maintenance of a permanently employed studio base as the foundation for all network productions. There is no necessarily innate British broadcasting genius. The reason that our broadcasting is so successful is that we have built up experience over a long period and that skills and facilities are available in both the BBC and ITV to make very good quality products. The danger of removing a major slice of the available network time from the networks is that the skills, experience and facilities that have been built up over the years will be damaged. I should hate that to happen.

I do not quarrel with more independent products being shown on television, but I want the permanently employed studio base, which has proved to be so successful in both the BBC and ITV, to be preserved so that that quality of product can be retained. We have only to consider what has happened in the film industry. Effectively, only one film studio that is producing films on a permanent basis is left in Britain. Its future is now under threat. I should hate the same diminution of facilities, skills and experience to happen in television as has happened in the film industry during the last couple of decades. I suspect that this argument will continue for some time.

I understand that the ACTT has asked to see the Minister to discuss the matter and that, although it has been suggested that there should be discussions at Civil Service level, the Minister and the Secretary of State have not said that they are prepared to talk to the major unions in the television industry about the independents and about access for the independents. I hope that the Minister of State will be prepared to see a delegation from a number of interested hon. Members and one or two interested Members of the other place, together with representatives of the trade unions in the broadcasting industry, for talks about this issue. It is important for the future of broadcasting and for what should happen about the Peacock recommendations that those talks should take place.

We have to welcome good products from, and the participation of, the independent sector. We must not be wedded to the acceptance of over-protective working practices, but I believe that there must be stability for the employees in the industry, the maintenance of good production facilities for the networks and, above all, width range and quality of programming — not automatic acceptance that rigid application of a quota system will lead to a better quality of programming or product.

Therefore, I give the Bill a somewhat half-hearted welcome. It is a very small Bill that does not do very much. However, it provides a breathing space, which is what the Government wanted it to do. The crucial question is what the Government will do with that breathing space and what consideration they will give to the future of broadcasting that will benefit the viewers, the range of programmes and the quality of the product. Those are the key questions. There must not simply be an acceptance of competition or acceptance of the view that independent is better than network, or that Peacock was right in everything or wrong in everything. We must consider the range of programmes and products that are available to all viewers in this country.

I fear that the Government are ducking out of asking the real questions about broadcasting and about the range of programmes that are available and that instead they will accept some of the ideological implications of Peacock. That will not be best either for broadcasting or for the people of this country.

6.7 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Like my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), I am concerned about the position of the smaller companies and the Minister of State will not be surprised if, as a Scot, I ask him a question about the Government's assessment of the position, first, of Border Television and, secondly, of Grampian Television. In my experience, both of these small companies have produced excellent

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

programmes. They are well thought of in the area that they serve—Grampian in the Highlands, and Border both in Cumbria and in southern Scotland.

Secondly, like the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud), I hope that every help will be given to the interests of the independent television producers. Like the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East, many of us are concerned about the centralisation of television production. Far too much of it is located in this city. Many excellent television programmes are produced in Birmingham. */Interruption./* I hear my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) grunting approval on the Opposition Front Bench. Indeed, many excellent programmes are produced at all points north. However, small companies are vulnerable and deserve to be encouraged.

I agree very strongly with my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich—not forgetting Nantwich—(Mrs. Dunwoody) that Channel 4 should be allowed to flourish, and I support her plea that about 25 per cent. of programmes should be given over to the independent producers. Those who have had dealings with independent producers feel that they do some admirable work and that they should be encouraged. My hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich knows a great deal about the industry. I share her fears of what Mr. Ted Turner of Atlanta may do in this country. DBS is a major development. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich that we are not discussing a trivial matter. Relations between Ministers and broadcasting authorities are delicate.

I tabled today's written question 212 in which I asked "the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Metropolitan Police Commissioner about the date on which the Metropolitan police first contacted Strathclyde police about the proposed search of BBC premises in Glasgow."

The Home Secretary replied:

"I understand that the Metropolitan police first contacted Strathclyde police on this matter on 29 January."

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that this Bill does not concern the BBC. Incidental references are in order, but the hon. Gentleman is not in order to go in detail into the affairs of the BBC.

Mr. Dalyell: Every hon. Member who has spoken referred at some length to the BBC and to DBS.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is incorrect. A number of rulings have been given from the Chair about the restrictions on the debate. Incidental references are in order, but there is nothing about the BBC in the Bill. Therefore, detailed remarks would be out of order.

Mr. Dalyell: Suppose the DBS got DBS contracts as it is entitled to do. If hon. Members refer back to section 19(4) of the Broadcasting Act 1981, they will see that, on the whole, I am in order.

I want to save the time of the House. I want to ask the Minister whether we are to believe that the Metropolitan police never saw——

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Mellor): Order.

Mr. Dalyell: It is no good the Minister getting angry when he is asked questions. I am asking him a simple question about the Home Secretary's reply to my written question today. Are we to believe that the Metropolitan police never saw fit to ask any Minister——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have already given a ruling to the hon. Gentleman. He is a good House of Commons man. He knows what is in order and what is not. I know, too, that he invariably respects the rulings of the Chair. I ask the hon. Gentleman to ensure that his remarks are in order.

Mr. Dalyell: You say rightly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I am a good House of Commons man. I am certainly a good House of Commons man in that I believe that the House should be told the truth in answer to awkward questions. It is regrettable when Ministers take refuge in all sorts of devices and do not answer perfectly civil questions. I tabled a written question. I addressed it to the Home Office and the answer came back——

Mr. Francis Maude (Warwickshire, North): That has nothing to do with the Bill.

Mr. Dalyell: If there is any argument about it, the Minister could easily get me to move on to the rest of my speech if he would just say when Ministers——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not persist on that course. He knows that a reference of that sort is quite out of order. It is very unfair to the House and the rest of the business of the House that he should attempt to introduce matters which have nothing to do with the debate. I ask the hon. Gentleman again to ensure that his remarks are in order and are relevant to the Bill.

Mr. Dalyell: Considering how other people have been allowed to wander during the debate, and I am asking a delicate question——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman appears to be disputing my ruling. There have already been a number of rulings. All other hon. Members who have spoken have responded if the Chair has told them that they are going too wide and have brought their remarks within order. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will do the same.

Mr. Dalyell: Is the BBC or is it not involved in DBS? I believe that it is.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I am open to correction, but I understand that it is the intention of the BBC to be involved in DBS. It was in the consortia and has specific views about the extension. It is obvious that that matter comes within the Bill.

Mr. Dalyell: The difficulty is the uncharacteristic anger of the Minister of State, Home Office. I know from his petulance that he does not want to answer on a particular matter. Normally, he is the most obliging of Ministers. If he wished to answer the question that I have just put, he would do so very quickly.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If the Minister were to attempt to answer that question, I should immediately rule him out of order. I would not allow him to do so.

Mr. Dalyell: I must say that you are being uncharacteristically harsh, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not wish to cast aspersions on other hon. Members. The Bill

is definitely about the delicate relations between the broadcasting authorities, on the one hand, and the sponsoring Department, the Home Office, on the other. You nod to that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I ask a specific question about the meaning of the answer that was given to my question 212. Does it mean that Home Office Ministers allow the Metropolitan police, on matters of DBS or general matters, to go into the BBC without any consultation?

Mr. Merlyn Rees: I shall attempt to keep in order. In attempting to be helpful I was asking myself a question sotto voce. What would happen if the Zircon film was beamed to Britain by satellite from France and I picked it up on that little thing that I shall buy to put on the roof of my house to pick up the programmes? That is a legitimate question to ask and is relevant to the much more important question that my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) asked.

Mr. Dalyell: My right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) always was a friend in need. If the former Home Secretary can ask that question, cannot we extend the good will? Perhaps the Minister will answer the question that I put to him. *[Interruption.]* It is all right for the Government Whip. It is all right if hon. Members make gentle speeches in the House, but if they ask awkward, factual questions the whole weight of procedure is brought down on top of them. I am asking a simple factual question: when were Ministers told by the Metropolitan police that they were going into the BBC? I would have been shocked——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have told the hon. Gentleman three times now that detailed references to the BBC are not in order in this debate. I hope that he will respond to the rulings that I have given. If he does not, I shall have no alternative but to order him to resume his seat.

Mr. Dalyell: Is the BBC involved in DBS contracts? Since Queen Margaret drive is the BBC's second largest office, it is not exactly a trivial matter when the Metropolitan police are ordered in. I simply ask, in innocence, when were Ministers told of that? If they were not told on 29 January, the Metropolitan police were not doing their job. My experience of senior police officers is that they do their job and on a matter like this——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not persist in making remarks which are clearly out of order and which I have already ruled to be out of order. That is very unfair to the House and to the debate. I must again ask the hon. Member to bring his remarks in order or I shall have to ask him to resume his seat.

Mr. Dalyell: I do not like to transgress the rules of the House and I do not want to put you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in an embarrassing position. Before resuming my seat, I merely note that there has been a great reluctance by Home Office Ministers to answer a question that affects the delicate relationship between the broadcasting authorities and the police. I do not want to be offensive to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I note that the Minister has had ample opportunity to get to the Dispatch Box —[HON. MEMBERS: "He would have been out of order".] If there had been any good will of the nature that we should expect, in candour with each other, that answer would have been forthcoming. I can only suspect the worst.

6.20 pm

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): This has been a quiet, though interesting, debate. The matters raised by a superficially minor Bill are extremely important and the ripples that the Bill will cause will spread wide.

I was pleased that my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) mentioned the access of independent producers. He came down against a rigid quota and I notice that the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) did not mention that subject, even though the alliance has been flying trailers all day about how it will do a wonderful job for independent producers during the Committee stage of the Bill.

My hon. Friend the persistent Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) was right to mention the position of the smaller companies. He mentioned Border and Grampian, but there are others and I hope that the Minister and all other hon. Members will agree that the regional flavour of the productions of some small companies makes them successful and popular in their areas. Regional flavour cannot be sprinkled like salt and pepper on to programmes made overwhelmingly in London and the south-east.

I hope that I shall not add to any of the difficulties of the hon. Member for Aldershot (Mr. Critchley) if I say that he again treated the House to a delightful and perceptive speech. If we dealt with our debates in a different way, there would be universal agreement that the hon. Gentleman was the man of the match. The Minister of State will have noticed that he and I have performed our usual trick of emptying the House.

The Home Secretary and my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) referred to the great risks of DBS, which are well demonstrated by Mr. Richard Branson who is part of a successful DBS consortium and has recently taken up hot air ballooning. Last week, in pursuit of that new interest, he managed, instead of going up, to land on a factory roof. I hope that that was not part of a training programme in a bid to ride to glory on his DBS satellite.

We all know that the size and shape of broadcasting will change in an exciting and dramatic way over the next few years. The Bill makes little or no contribution to that process and in many senses will simply delay decisions that need to be taken. Keeping the options open can also be code for, "We don't know what to do." The Bill is the minimum that the Government can get away with while they await a change of Government at the election.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Gorton said, we shall consult the trade unions, the IBA and others with an interest about changes in the system of allocation of ITV franchises. One possible change would be to stagger the period for which the franchises run. They do not all have to run for exactly the same period from the same starting point. Indeed, there are strong arguments for looking at a system that would stagger the timings of franchises. The present system puts an enormous burden on those within the industry who wish to make bids and on the IBA which has to consider them.

There is also merit in the idea of regular reviews of the operation of a franchise, built in over whatever period the

[Mr. Robin Corbett]

franchises are to run. The reviews would be known in advance and would require the company to account, against the terms on which the franchise was awarded, for its performance. I agree with the ACTT that the performance reviews should include consultation with the broadcasting unions which should have access to the results of those reviews. The unions should also be given adequate notice when a franchise is to be reallocated.

Thought also needs to be given to the continuity of employment of existing employees when a contract changes hands. Currently, that generally happens through the commitments won in collective bargaining, but I believe that it would be better to have it underpinned as a right.

When a bid is being put together it is all too easy for the bidders to pledge what they think will be attractive to the IBA in terms of, for example, more news and current affairs, but for those pledges to slip in a bid for ratings, and for news programmes to be replaced by more soaps and game shows. We have seen that demonstrated in commercial television. Companies have gone back to the IBA after promising a minimum amount of regional news coverage. They say that advertising revenue is down, so they cannot sustain their commitment and the three-minute news programme every hour is chopped down to two minutes.

I believe that rolling reviews would be a better insurance against a slide into lower quality programming which is topped up only when the end of the franchise period approaches so that the company can make itself look better.

We have a commitment to a system that leads to better accountability by those who give the contracts and those who receive them. That is only proper in a democratic society and I suspect that there is general agreement in the House on that proposition.

It has been suggested that a system of financial penalties for serious breaches of a contract might assist the maintenance of programme standards. I am not sure that that is the best route, but it would have the attraction of raiding extra profits gained from a departure from the terms on which a franchise was given and a lowering of programme standards or programme cover. Whichever system is favoured, a better attempt must be made to enforce the franchise terms, to guard against any increase in cheap American imports and to try to give better scope within expanding broadcasting hours to independent producers. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury that rigid quotas may not be the best answer, but within the estimated 4 per cent. per annum rise in the number of broadcasting hours—there is no reason to assume that that number will decrease; indeed, it may grow—there should be scope for a larger slice for independent productions. That could also help to counter the risk—to put it at its lowest—of the major companies, whether the BBC or ITV companies, putting too much cash into new and expensive production facilities rather than into programme making.

I was talking only last night to a leading producer who has worked for the BBC and ITV. He was complaining about a shortage of studio capacity and when I quizzed him he admitted that he was talking about a shortage in London. I told him that there are acres of studio capacity in Nottingham, where half of the Central TV operation is centred. Central originates many of its programmes in Birmingham and Nottingham and makes a reasonable job of it. That shows that programmes can be made outside London, and Central has plans to do more in that line.

I want to make it clear that an incoming Labour Government will not, under any circumstances, accept the auctioning of franchises. We oppose this totally free market approach to broadcasting, which could only threaten the high standards set through public service broadcasting by the BBC, and which others seek to meet. It is no exaggeration to say that the standards, quality, range, width and depth of BBC programming sets a general standard to which the independent commercial sector tries to aspire. Auctions—apart from anything else that they would do—would almost certainly divert cash that would otherwise be spent on programming.

Mr. Michael Brown: The hon. Gentleman is being a little unfair on the independent companies. I would argue, as many of his hon. Friends have argued, that the independent companies—particularly Channel 4—have been in the business of innovative change.

Mr. Corbett: I agree with what the hon. Gentleman says about Channel 4, which has been praised from both sides of the House this afternoon, quite properly. The example that it has set by the imaginative way in which it has gone into the areas of programming neglected by the giants is first class.

Regrettably, I need to re-emphasise the fact that unless we hold on to the public service broadcasting sector—in which we want to see exciting developments—programming standards in the commercial sector will be put into question.

The Labour party believes that the auction system would be run under the banner of, "Never mind the quality, feel the width of the bank roll." That is no way to treat the companies involved, the people working in them and, above all, those who are invited to watch the programmes. That is an improper way to protect and promote programme quality. It would have the reverse effect. The Labour party believes that an all cash-led system, such as in sections of the press, would do nothing other than lower programme standards and narrow choice through limiting the variety and range of the programmes in a bid to chase the ratings, on which the advertising revenue critically depends.

As the House knows, we are not seeking to divide on the Bill. I am happy to tell the Minister of State that we do not intend, should the Bill get its Second Reading, as seems likely, to delay its further progress.

6.35 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Mellor): The hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) has spoken with his customary clarity and warmth. I am glad to have an opportunity once again of sharing a parliamentary high spot with him.

I make no apologies for the fact that this is a modest Bill. It is not a substitute for the more far-reaching changes in broadcasting that many hon. Members want to see; it rather prepares the ground to allow that change to be fully and properly discussed in the House and elsewhere. The Bill allows two changes to be made that we believe are beneficial to the development of broadcasting in Britain,

and that will allow us to decide, at a sensible pace, whether some more fundamental changes should be made to the independent television system.

All the hon. Members who have spoken this afternoon appreciate that we have reached an important stage in the development of broadcasting services. New technology will not be denied. It will happen and is already happening, as the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) observed, with the increasing presence on roofs in Britain of satellite dishes. A consequence of the new technology will be to increase the number of channels available to the viewer, and to make possible other ways of paying for what we watch. All of those considerations are controversial; all of them pose questions that were properly addressed in the debate about standards.

A great deal has rightly been said about the maintenence of the public broadcasting service tradition in Britain. A challenging speech was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown), who properly made it clear that the business of regulating international satellite delivery of programmes is not as easy as dealing with the business of terrestrial programmes that emanate from, and are received by, people who are within our jurisdiction.

The Peacock committee has deliberated and its deliberations are under consideration by the Government. We have had a debate in the House on its report. Other observations were made about the Peacock report. Peacock, as my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary made clear, has not determined any of the issues. It has fixed in people's minds the need to debate these areas. It has stimulated discussion and responses, even from those who disagree fundamentally with one or two of the Peacock recommendations. We shall return to the report in due course.

The IBA has offered for consideration proposals for changes in the ITV contract system. As yet, we have not made up our minds on these issues, but we do not want to close the opportunity for change. That opportunity would be closed if the IBA were to have to advertise the new contracts now and then award those contracts for a maximum period of eight years from 1 January 1990.

Mr. Buchan: Will the Minister give some view of the Government's thinking on the great paradox of the situation in which the experience of the increasing multiplicity of channels, when they are under commercial control, has meant a diminution of choice? The greater the number of channels, the less the choice has been. That has been true of American and Italian broadcasting. How does the Minister propose to deal with this point

Mr. Mellor: The question whether there is a wide choice such as there is in the United States will inevitably be a matter for individual value judgment. Our aim is to ensure that viewers are given the opportunity of a width in choice but that there is not a diminution of standards by trying to ensure that the sensible regulations that we have long experienced—the charter of the BBC, the Broadcasting Acts, the cable Acts—are extended to cover the other activities that are under our control. Indeed, the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) and I discussed that at a somewhat later hour some weeks ago. We tried to move towards sensible European regulation of European satellite broadcasts via the mechanism of a Council of Europe convention rather than a European Community directive, which is not appropriate. In that way, choice and quality can be maintained. Precisely how these things turn out will depend a great deal not on what I or the hon. Member for Paisley, South think, but on what the consumer thinks. None of us wants to be too dogmatic about that.

It would be quite wrong, with all these proposals for change and at this point in technological development, for us to permit the contractual period to expire and for the advertising process to begin now. That would, in effect, close the option of making any changes in the way in which independent television contracts are awarded, or the way in which the independent television system operates for another decade. That is why this is a modest Bill, and I make no apologies for its modesty. It makes no substantive changes to the independent television system, because those matters remain under consideration. I can assure the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) that when we have reached further conclusions and have had a chance to reflect on all that has been said the House will have every opportunity of further debate on these important matters.

All the Bill seeks to do is, first, to improve the prospects of a British DBS service in the 1990s and, secondly, to provide the opportunity of earlier changes in the ITV contract services by, in effect, providing for a three-year extension to the existing contracts. Substantive changes to the contract arrangements, if they are put forward, or any substantive changes to other features of the broadcasting structure will require further legislation. That is a further reason why Parliament will have a full opportunity to consider in detail whatever proposals for change may in due course emerge.

Mr. Dalyell: What are the Government's reflections on the position of the two small Scottish companies, Border and Grampian?

Mr. Mellor: I was going to come to that point, but I do not mind answering it now, because it is important and a number of hon. Members have referred to it.

The way in which contracts are allocated on a regional basis is entirely a matter for the IBA, and nothing that we are proposing in the Bill or otherwise makes any alteration to that. We have, as the hon. Gentleman knows, 15 regional companies, and that will continue for as long as the IBA wishes it to do so. It is in the driving seat on these issues. That is part of the arm's length regulation in these matters that we have always thought proper, so that the Government are not too concerned on the sensitive issue as to where the franchises should be and who should get them. That is a bipartisan policy from which we should move away at out peril and I am glad to see the assent of the hon. Gentleman.

The IBA, in making its decision as it would have to in due course about the future of various companies and the areas of various franchises, will make its determination on the basis of public approval or otherwise of the way in which individual companies have done their jobs and franchises are worked out. I have no doubt that the approbation of hon. Members for their regional companies will be taken into account.

I welcome the speech made by the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South, which added substance to the debate. He asked about the reviews of the performance of ITV companies undertaken by the IBA which, as he

[Mr. Mellor]

properly said, is the background to its proposals for a more formalised way of operating in the future. The IBA carried out a mid-term review of all ITV contracts and the results were published in its annual report for 1985-86. For each ITV company the IBA considered what improvements in programme performance were necessary or desirable. These were internal administrative reviews and results were not bound in any formal or legal way to whether the franchise would be continued to certain companies in future contract rounds. However, any ITV company waiting to reapply for a contract under the procedures now in force would want to take the IBA's views seriously, and we would all want that to be the case.

These reviews are different from the Peacock committee's proposal for a rolling review. Its recommendation No. 11 envisaged a formal annual review of each contractor's performance, with termination of contract to be a sanction in the event of a company's failure to meet its obligation. Some part of that thinking is reflected, as the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South knows, in the IBA's recent proposals for a new approach, one of the propositions on the table that we are considering when looking at the future of the ITV system.

The right hon. Gentleman also asked whether the IBA's approval would be needed for Border Television to be taken over. The answer is yes, because the Broadcasting Act 1981 provides that the assignment of programme contracts or a change in the ownership or control of an ITV company requires the IBA's consent. However, if it is not a full takeover but just the absorption of one contract area into another, this is again a matter for the IBA when drawing up or advertising new contracts. Once again, the ball lies in its court.

The right hon. Gentleman also asked about the provision of satellite dishes. The present range of satellite dishes generally requires planning consent, but also a licence obtainable from the Department of Trade and Industry at a cost of £10. These are to receive low-powered satellite broadcasts from some of the companies presently operating, most of which operate through cable systems. The high-powered satellites, the so-called big birds, which are what DBS is all about, will, paradoxically, require smaller dishes and these can freely be put on roofs, without the need for permission. However, we do not yet know how far DBS will go straight to the household or how far it will go to cable heads and so through cable systems. Again, none of us would want to be dogmatic or assertive about these matters. We want to see the way in which these arrangements develop.

I always listen to the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) with interest and respect. She raised an important point about the supervision of satellite services, and I can give her some of the answers that she wants. I make it clear that DBS will be regulated by the IBA, just as terrestrial services are.

Mr. Buchan: The hon. Gentleman continually refers to DBS in relation to the IBA. Do the Government think that there will be no public service broadcasting by DBS?

Mr. Mellor: The IBA is public service broadcasting. This touches on a key point. I hope that the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich will forgive me if I deviate from answering her points, but this is at the heart of the debate.

We can all be proud that we have proved that public service broadcasting can exist in both the private and the public sector. It was interesting to be able to make that point with great confidence in Vienna, to the astonishment of a number of those gathered around the table. Many of those countries are still teetering on the brink of deciding whether to bring any commercial input into their television services and are troubled about advertising. We have proved over 30 years that one can switch on BBC and ITV knowing that one is receiving a good variety of programmes but within a sensible framework imposed by a public service broadcasting concept. Our aim is to ensure as far as possible that a similar framework continues to exist with satellite broadcasting.

Mr. Buchan: Including non-commercial?

Mr. Mellor: The DBS could be non-commercial. The reason why it is not non-commercial has nothing to do with the Government. The hon. Gentleman will remember —this is relevant to the tussle that the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) had with the Chair earlier— that originally the idea was that the BBC should take on DBS. At one point it was exclusively entrusted to the BBC. However, it then found that it could not afford to take the financial risk. The up-front risk is major, which is why one of the key elements of the Bill is to extend the franchise period by three years to make it a more attractive commercial proposition.

The BBC said at first that it did not want to continue with the exclusive DBS contract and then failed to enter into partnership. The IBA then picked up the baton, and I am sure that we are delighted that British Satellite Broadcasting has provisionally been awarded a contract. It includes a range of experienced United Kingdom-based broadcasters. I hope that, following the success of some other United Kingdom-based low-powered satellite programmers such as Sky Channel or the Superchannel, we may also look forward to having, by 1990, a high-powered DBS service based in Britain.

Mr. Buchan *rose*——

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Mr. Mellor: I am enjoying my dialogue with the hon. Member for Paisley, South, so I shall give way to him first, and I shall give way to the hon. Member for Linlithgow later.

Mr. Buchan: Is it the Government's intention within the next year, if they are in power—I do not believe they will be—to allow non-commercial satellite DBS as well as independent commercial television?

Mr. Mellor: We have no objections. We made that clear when the BBC was initially asked to participate. Our approach is straight forward. We do not wish to lay down who should participate—provided the company satisfies reasonable criteria—but rather to try to ensure that anyone who has a commercially viable business proposition can participate provided he accepts the sensible broadcasting regulations that we have always had.

Mr. Buchan: How does that tie up with the proposal that the BBC revenue should be indexed? How will the BBC afford to get into DBS if the Government are blocking its chance for further financial resources?

Mr. Mellor: Five channels are potentially available and three have been allocated to the IBA. The allocation of the

other two channels must depend on resources. It has never been our intention to subsidise DBS. Indeed, it is clear from Europe that those countries that have tried to do that have failed. We are not raising obstacles to prevent anyone, whether in the private or public sector, from becoming involved in this project.

On the one hand, the hon. Member for Paisley, South has said that I am helpful but, on the other, he is snickering at the answers he has received. The IBA was the only organisation able to take on this project. It has awarded the contracts for three channels and there are another two available. Whether those two channels will develop will turn on commercial factors over which the Government neither have control nor should attempt to exercise control.

Mr. Buchan *rose*——

Mr. Mellor: I will give the hon. Gentleman one more bite at the cherry.

Mr. Buchan: The Minister said that two channels were available, subject to commercial criteria. Do the Government intend to take steps to ensure that there will be public service, non-commercial financed broadcasting by satellite? In other words, will the Government release sufficient resources? Will they scrap the idea of indexing present BBC expenditure? If the Government are not prepared to do that, it is no use saying that there are two channels available to the BBC as the resources will not be available to it to take advantage of them.

Mr. Mellor: We do not intend to subsidise the channels. There was no obstacle to prevent the BBC involvement earlier on and, similarly, there is no reason why the BBC should not be involved at a later stage.

It has always been envisaged that DBS should be financed in a way that reflects the popularily of the programmes and not by virtue of a state handout. That would be inappropriate.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Mellor: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Dalyell: Before we leave the subject of the BBC, and as we are all brimming with good will, will the Home Secretary whisper to his hon. Friend the Minister of State whether, on 29 January, the Metropolitan police told the right hon. Gentleman what they intended to do?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): That would be out of order. I am sure that the Minister will not comment.

Mr. Mellor: I am astonished that the hon. Gentleman keeps pursuing the matter. If he tables a written question —he needs no lesson about that subject from me—he will get his answer. If I were to answer him now, I would be out of order and it would be a distortion of a Broadcasting Bill on quite different matters. If I were pressed for an answer, it would mean that whenever a Home Office Minister was at the Dispatch Box he would be subjected to cross-examination on that point. If the hon. Gentleman tables a question in the proper form, he will get an answer. Now is not the time for that answer.

The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich discussed the regulation of DBS. At the moment, that regulation turns on individual countries regulating the direct broadcasting that emanates from their jurisdiction. There is some basis for control at the receiving end. We have already discovered that most satellite systems must be received via a cable distribution system and therefore the distribution by cable is controlled under the Cable and Broadcasting Act 1984. The standards of requirement are contained in that Act. In effect, a cable operator has legal responsibility for anything that is disseminated.

I repeat that we do not regard that as entirely satisfactory. We believe that some sort of convention, such as that which we are trying to introduce in the Council of Europe, would be useful. Unlike those in Brussels, we are trying to impose not the heavy hand but the light hand of regulation to mirror the arrangements that already exist in the Cable and Broadcasting Act and the charter of the BBC. I am sure that that is a sensible basis on which to proceed.

The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) said that we had adopted a piecemeal approach to this matter. That is not so. Throughout our period of office we have taken a steady, sensible, practical view of the potential within the United Kingdom both to expand broadcasting within our society and to make use of the outstanding international reputation of British broadcasting. That expansion would give us the opportunity to win audiences for British programming overseas with the consequential possibilities for business expansion and jobs. There are a number of notable feathers in our cap.

I am glad that the right hon. Member for Gorton said that Channel 4 was the most brilliantly successful channel in the world. I am aware that the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South claims some part in the paternity of that channel—whether the right hon. Gentleman and my noble Friend the Leader of the House of Lords will have to have blood tests to decide this question remains to be seen. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman would agree that the final version and the manner in which the project was carried through was due in large part to my noble Friend.

Some Opposition Members are sceptical about the manner in which the Government approach such matters. It is paradoxical that they should commend Channel 4 — a Government creation — and then express such concern that the Government are interested only in a form of cheap-jack commercialism with regard to future broadcasting.

We are as committed as any Opposition Member to the concept of public service broadcasting. I believe that we approach the task of widening consumer choice with a more realistic appreciation of the potential market. Many of the objections to Peacock and the other arrangements we have been proposing and are likely to propose have been raised on many occasions in the past. Precisely the same objections were raised, when we proposed the ITV system, as happened when we proposed commercial radio. We cannot detect any reason why commercial success must be equated with a lowering of standards. On the contrary, many of our most outstanding businesses and broadcasting companies have proved that commercial success and high standards run hand in hand.

Modest steps forward have been proposed in the Bill —and I am not knocking modest Bills of two clauses since I am discussing one with 128 clauses in Committee. The Bill makes it more likely that direct broadcasting by satellite will be successful. It extends the period by three years to 15 years and give us a period when, quietly and steadily, we may continue to evaluate the future of the independent television system in the knowledge that we

[Mr. Mellor]

have a few more years for that consideration. When the next full contract round comes forward we will be able to make changes that will take broadcasting through to the end of the century and will make use of all the knowledge and experience gleaned in the 30 years in which the ITV system has operated.

Whatever else the House may fall out about, I am glad that the House will not fall out about this Bill, and I warmly commend it to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills.)

Motor Cycle Noise Bill [Money]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Motor Cycle Noise Bill, it is expedient to authorise any increase attributable to that Act in the sums payable out of money provided by Parliament under any other Act.—*[Mr. Peter Bottomley.]*

6.58 pm

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): In the two minutes before the debate is postponed, I should like to commend the money resolution to the House. It is a good money resolution in support of a good Bill. As the sponsor of this private Member's Bill, I thank the Ministers and the officials at the Department of Transport for the considerable time and effort they have expended in helping to draft the Bill.

There is already legislation that enables a prosecution to be brought against motor cyclists for having noisy exhaust systems. However, the purpose of the Bill and the money resolution is to deal with the matter at source so that noisy exhaust systems can be dealt with by one action, which clearly is more time effective and much more cost-efficient than taking dozens of individuals to court. That is the purpose of the money resolution. The Bill is supported by——

It being Seven o'clock, and there being Private Business set down by direction of THE CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS *under Standing Order No. 16 (Time for taking private business), further proceeding stood postponed.*

British Railways Bill *(By Order)*

Order for Second Reading read.

7 pm

Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson (New Forest): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

This is one in a long series of general powers Bills that British Railways has brought forward over the years. It follows closely on the Third Reading of the Stansted Bill a fortnight ago. I hope that today will not prove quite so contentious.

Such Bills are designed to provide British Rail with powers to enable it to bring up to date the whole of its permanent way and other operations. I recognise that the feature of such Bills is often the closure of level crossings and other facilities, but it is worth remembering the positive side to all that is included in such Bills.

Investment in British Rail in the past three years has been £1,400 million and another £2,500 million is planned for the next five years. The House will be aware that recently orders for £95 million worth of new inter-city rolling stock for the east coast main line have been placed. Against the background of the closure of level crossings and the rest, I should like to remind the House that there are now plans to open five branch lines and 12 stations to add to the 56 stations and other facilities opened since 1982.

The Bill follows the normal procedures of past legislation and I do not intend to weary the House by dealing with non-contentious matters. Some of my hon. Friends, and hon. Members in other parts of the House, are anxious about some of the proposed plans so I shall deal with them in particular. If, with the permission of the House, I have the opportunity to speak again, I shall deal with other matters which might arise.

Part II of the Bill deals with proposed works. The first deals with the railway system in the Canterbury area. I am delighted to see my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) in his place. I refer to work Nos. 2, 2A, 2B, and 3 at Whitehall road leading to Whitehall farm. It might be convenient for the House to consider clause 6 at the same time. The works are needed to connect The Chartham and Canterbury West lines and the Selling Canterbury East lines, thereby permitting through running from Chartham and Canterbury East and thence to Dover, avoiding the circuitous route via Minster. That proposal is the subject of a petition by Professor Pressnell, which I have no doubt will be considered in the proper way at the proper time. I mention that proposal because there is a fear that, by virtue of clause 6, a plan exists undisclosed in the Bill to close Canterbury West station. I can give an assurance that that is definitely not so. The board has no plans for such a closure.

Work No. 4 concerns the deviation railway at Llantrisant, which will be of interest to the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John). This work is designed to help the Mid Glamorgan county council with its plan to construct a bypass at Talbot Green. British Rail's proposal will divert the railway, so enabling the land to be released for the road.

Work No. 7 is also the subject of a petition and has been a matter of concern to those living in the area. Petitions have been tabled by the Doncaster borough council and the Ramblers Association. The work relates to the level crossings at Dormer Green and Noblethorpe. They are public level crossings located close to each other, separated by about 450 yards. They are conventional gated crossings controlled by a gatekeeper who lives in a house adjacent to Noblethorpe crossing. The board believes that there is no justification for the retention of the gatekeeper. Since the roads, which are described as through routes, can be used only by farm traffic the board wishes to close the Dormer Green crossing and to divert traffic over the Noblethorpe crossing by means of a road to be built, at the board's expense, across land owned by the owner of Thorpe Grange farm, the person most directly concerned.

The future road will be suitable for vehicular traffic but will have private status. I draw attention to subsection (5) of clause 11 which states:

> "Any person who suffers loss by the extinguishment under this section of such private rights of way, if any, as may exist over Dormer Green and Noblethorpe crossings shall be entitled to be paid by the Board compensation, to be determined in case of dispute by the tribunal."

There is a remedy in that subsection for anyone who is affected.

Clause 25 is of great interest to my hon. Friends the Members for Stafford (Mr. Cash) and for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle). It relates to the closure of Whitebridge lane, Stone and involves the closure of a public level crossing to vehicular traffic. Pedestrian rights are to be retained. The board's plan is to withdraw the crossing keepers. The clause authorises the board to stop up Whitebridge lane. Wicket gates and stiles will be provided to provide a crossing for pedestrian use.

Staffordshire county council has petitioned against the board's proposal because it believes that it will create problems for heavy vehicles. It is important to remember that alternative routes will be available and that the Staffordshire police state that Whitebridge lane between the level crossing and Mount road is unsuitable for exceptional loads. The British Waterways Board contends that the bridge over the Trent and Mersey canal is capable of carrying any vehicle which complies with the construction and use regulations. I hope that those assurances will meet the point.

Part III of the Bill deals with works at Blyth and the termination of a short railway, following the Coal Board's decision after the long miners' strike not to use the railways for transportation. This provision enables the board and British Rail to come to agreement as a result of that decision.

Part IV of the Bill deals with the purchase of land and part V with the incorporation of works and lands provisions. Part VI deals with protective provisions under the British Rail Acts 1981 and 1984, both of which I guided through the House. Part VII deals with miscellaneous provisions and part VIII with general provisions, including repeal and arbitration procedures.

I draw attention to the two schedules to the Bill. Schedule I deals with the acquisition of land. Clause 36 gives powers to take land to enlarge the electrical substation at Branksome near Poole. That is of great interest to my constituents and to the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley). They know how well that railway system is improving, and the extra electrification to Weymouth should make a great difference to the journeys of our constituents.

Schedule 2 deals with enactments that are to be repealed by the Bill. This is not a contentious measure. As I say, it is a housekeeping measure, as are most of the

[Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson]

British Rail Bills. Following my short explanation, I hope that the House will feel able to give the Bill a Second Reading. If I am given permission to speak again, I shall try to deal with any specific matters raised by hon. Members.

7.10 pm

Mr. John Heddle (Mid-Staffordshire): I should like to make three constituency points, two of them on behalf of my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South-East (Mr. Lightbown). He represents the second most beautiful seat in Britain, but because of his much-deserved appointment to the Whips Office a few months ago he is unable to put to my hon. Friend the Member for New Forest (Mr. McNair-Wilson) these two points. In chronological order they appear in clause 12 and deal with the stopping up of two level crossings just by the A38 at Alrewas.

I do not know that part of Staffordshire quite as well as does my hon. Friend, but I know it almost as well because in a previous incarnation in the Parliament of 1979 to 1983 I represented the constituency of Lichfield and Tamworth. That included the village of Alrewas, which now forms the heart of my hon. Friend's Staffordshire, South-East constituency. The level crossings to be stopped up are at Fine lane and at Roddige lane.

I should like my hon. Friend to consider my remarks about an equally important matter. Perhaps I should say a matter of great commercial importance and in saying that I am expressing a partial prejudice, but I ask my hon. Friend to forgive me for that. I and my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South-East wish to make representations on behalf of Staffordshire county council. It has lobbied vigorously and vociferously, and I hope that it will continue to lobby persuasively to persuade British Rail and its professional advisers—notwithstanding the advice that they have received from the Staffordshire police, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, the British Waterways Board and any other authority that they may wish to call to support their case—to consider the views of the democratically elected representatives of the people who use and derive benefit from the land to which these level crossings give access.

I direct the attention of the House to clause 25. That clause gives power to close the level crossing in Whitebridge lane in Stone in my constituency. The proposed closure of this level crossing causes great worry not only to the county council, but to many of my constituents in Stone and to one section of my constituents with which I shall deal in a moment. The level crossing is one of only two means of access to the Whitebridge lane industrial estate and to an adjoining factory estate on the opposite side of the road.

The other access to the industrial estate and to the factories is from the A51 along Whitebridge lane over an inadequate and steep hump-backed bridge, about which my hon. Friend the Member for New Forest spoke. That bridge is over the Trent and the Mersey canal. It is just not possible for certain long wheel base vehicles to pass over the hump because they bottom upon it. The hump is too steep. Last summer the level crossing was temporarily closed, and Staffordshire county council received complaints about the need to double handle loads. The only access for such long vehicles is over the level crossing and if passed unamended the Bill would give British Rail permission to close that crossing.

The chief fire officer of Staffordshire county council is also worried about the possibility of closure of the level crossing because it would be difficult for his larger appliances to pass over the bridge.

It is estimated that between 65 and 70 per cent. of the industrial units on the Whitebridge industrial estate, an important part of the economy of Stone, are let. It is thought that if this level crossing is closed not only would it be difficult to let the remaining units, but the present occupiers might have to consider whether to relocate, because some of the occupants depend very much on deliveries by the types of vehicles about which I have spoken and they can only gain access over the bridge.

My next point is not party political: I do not need to underline that. As the House will appreciate, local employment opportunities are very much at stake. I ask my hon. Friend to give me an assurance on behalf of the promoters of the Bill that they will take that into account in any subsequent discussions that they may have with Staffordshire county council. The county council has considered the possibility of the construction of an alternative access to the industrial estate. That would be by means of a new bridge over the canal. The present estimated cost of the bridge and its associated roadworks is £300,000.

I take more than a passing interest in local government finance in general and in the finance of Staffordshire county council in particular. I do not think that the county council could support the funding of this programme. My hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South-East and I both know that there are many village bypasses and other road improvement schemes in our constituencies and throughout the county that deserve greater priority.

I understand that discussions about this level crossing took place with British Rail as long ago as 1978 and that no firm agreement was reached. British Rail considered that the possibility of contributing towards the cost of a new bridge would be a possible way out, but nothing further has been heard from British Rail about that. What does British Rail seek to save by allowing this clause to remain in the Bill? I do not know. Perhaps my hon. Friend could find out and let me know between now and 2 March. I suspect that it may mean the saving of one part-time job of a level crossing keeper during the day, and one part-time job of a level crossing keeper during the night.

I ask my hon. Friend to pass to the promoters that much more is at stake and that it rests on the promoters' decision. It is the continued prosperity and profitability of the factories and the creation of jobs in the two factory estates about which I have spoken. I remind him that 65 to 70 per cent. of the factories are let. That means that 30 per cent. are not. If this level crossing is closed, the possibility of letting those factories will be remote and the viability of the factories that are let will become questionable. He will know that the promoters of the Bill intend to debate this matter further with Staffordshire county council on 2 March. I hope that the promoters will consider discussions with the occupiers of the industrial units on these estates, with Stone chamber of trade, the Staffordshire Development Association and other interested parties.

When the history of this Bill is written in the annals of British Rail, the stopping up of this level crossing and the

saving of these two part-time jobs will be seen not to have been worth the candle. I hope that the industrial, commercial and capitalist candle will continue to burn brightly for many years in Stone in my constituency.

7.19 pm

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for New Forest (Mr. McNair-Wilson) for having introduced the Bill. As he said, it is a sort of routine measure and a general purpose Bill for British Rail and it should do us no harm. The proposals in clauses 5 and 6, which concern my constituency, are improvements on two relatively old lines in the British Rail system, but to say that they would do no one any harm would be wrong. Certain of my constituents will be done considerable harm and that harm can be removed only by generous compensation.

Clauses 5 and 6 refer to work No. 2, work No. 3 and detailed works Nos. 2A and 2B. They will be considerable improvements. The British Railways Board has been very helpful. Its solicitor sent me advance notice of what was to happen, as I imagine he did to all other hon. Members affected by the proposed changes. The information has revealed an inadequacy in the line from London to the Kent coast — to Canterbury and beyond to Ramsgate and to Dover. In the past, the two separate lines—one from Victoria and Cannon Street to Dover and the other from Charing Cross through Ashford, through Canterbury West to Ramsgate and Sandwich — have crossed in Canterbury. That crossover is a disadvantage. It was probably a wrong piece of planning, but there it is. The proposed change will remove that crossover and produce a link between the lines so that, in future, it will be possible for a person travelling from Ashford to Canterbury West to join the other line and go through Canterbury East to Dover. That is a much better plan.

This plan will affect some of my constituents who own the farmland where the rail building is to take place. That work is quite small—between 1,000 and 1,500 yards of rail. My constituent, Mr. Todd, farms Whitehall farm, which is mentioned in the Bill. The effect of the Bill is to carve his farm in two, which makes the farm no longer viable. That is why generous compensation must be considered.

A similar problem arose 10 or 12 years ago with farms and farmers in my constituency when the Canterbury bypass was built. It cut through many farms, robbing them not only of land but of their viability. If a farm is cut in half, the two halves cannot be farmed together. Even if a bridge is built to help the farmer, farming is extremely difficult. Whitehall farm is a small farm and I do not think —nor does the farmer—that there would be a case for building a bridge there. I am sure that this problem will be solved. British Rail has much experience of it. The fact that British Rail wrote to me to inform me of the proposal helped me to advise Mr. Todd and his brother, who together farm Whitehall farm, on the steps that they should take.

A petition has been presented by Professor Pressnell from the university of Kent in Canterbury. My constituents, the farmers, did not succeed in submitting a petition to the House and I have advised them to consider petitioning the other place in due course. I have sought the advice of the solicitor's office of the British Railways Board to pass further information on to my constituents.

I am not complaining about the proposed rail change because it will be a considerable improvement. We do not often hear of new railway lines being built. I know that I am talking about fewer than 1,500 yards of railway line, but that is a considerable improvement. I thank British Rail for its initiative in building a little more railway line and in improving the route to the Kent coast which will feature prominently in the next few years when the Channel tunnel is built. People will want to get to the tunnel entrance, and one of these lines will serve the tunnel directly. The infrastructure generally needs to be improved as well—an argument which is advanced all the time by people in Kent as one of the measures needed in the area.

I was glad to hear my hon. Friend the Member for New Forest say that there was no question of Canterbury West station being closed. Canterbury is sometimes looked upon as being remarkable. Of course it is a remarkable place, but it is remarkable also in that it has two stations — Canterbury West and Canterbury East. They are extremely good and important stations. Canterbury West is a very distinguished, fine-looking and beautifully kept station. I always congratulate the station manager and the staff on the way that it is kept. Perhaps its appearance has influenced British Rail's decision to keep it going.

More important, as my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) knows, Canterbury West played a famous part in the history of British railways and the railways of the world. The first passenger service in the world was on the line from Canterbury West to Whitstable. I know that because I happened to attend a service in Canterbury cathedral five years ago at which the Archbishop of Canterbury preached, and we recognised the great achievement of none other than Stephenson in having built the railway line to connect with ships sailing out of Whitstable harbour taking people to London.

Another reason why Canterbury West must remain open is that the original railway track laid down by Stephenson is in the station yard. That line has been preserved. Those industrial and archaeological reminders are important. That is not the only reason to keep the station open. The route to the coast served by Canterbury West is distinct and separate from the route served by Canterbury East.

I commend the Bill. It is an advantage to our infrastructure and our railway system. I hope that the British Railways Board will note what I have said. It must in turn take note of the concern expressed by Mr. Todd at Whitehall farm and ensure that he is properly compensated.

7.28 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Peter Bottomley): I hope that the House will forgive me if I intervene now because I hope to be helpful. I have not waited for my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) to speak because I suspect that I shall speak after him and I want to get the retaliation in first.

I am delighted to be involved in a railway debate. Each of us is here as a Member of Parliament, and our constituency system means that hon. Members can speak for particular level crossings or beautiful railway stations. My hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South-East (Mr. Lightbown), a Government Whip, nodded wisely and enthusiastically when parts of his constituency were mentioned. Within the past fortnight, I have had the

[Mr. Peter Bottomley]

opportunity to open a new railway bridge—the Well Hall railway bridge—which I hope will also go down in British Rail's history.

In no sense am I trying to wind up or answer the debate. The Government have considered the Bill's contents and there are no objections in principle to the powers sought by the British Railways Board. A few minor points will need to be raised by the Department of Transport and I have no reason to doubt that they will be cleared up satisfactorily.

As has been mentioned, there are four petitioners against the Bill who will have the opportunity to present their objections to the Select Committee, which will be in a position to give more detailed examination to the issues that are involved, and which will have the added advantage of access to expert evidence.

I recommend to the House that the Bill is given a Second Reading and that it is allowed to proceed in the usual way to detailed consideration in Committee. However, I should like to say that anyone who has not had the enjoyment of reading a Bill such as this might, with advantage, read clause 27(5), where they will notice that for the words

"shut and fasten any gate"

it is possible to substitute the words,

"lower and lock any lifting barrier".

That shows that the House gives immense attention to detail, as is absolutely right.

7.30 pm

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): I am delighted to have the opportunity to make a brief speech. I hope that my hon. and neighbouring Friend the Member for New Forest (Mr. McNair-Wilson) will allow me to say that British Rail owes him an immense debt of gratitude for his work. The House knows and recognises his eloquence and knowledge in presenting such Bills, and that should be put on the record.

My hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) treated us to a delightful nugget of parliamentary history. My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Hoddle) rightly raised an important matter of concern to his constituents.

I should like to pick out one or two points about the Bill in relation to my hon. Friend's remarks because they provide an interesting illustration of some of the matters about the railways that we take for granted in the House and in the country. Without wishing to cross swords with my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire, I suspect that the railway line was there before the factories to which he referred. However, it is assumed that it must always be British Rail that must take the necessary steps to enable life to continue. That is one of the presumptions which we all make and which, of course, costs British Rail a large sum every year. When we consider the figures for British Rail's overall costs, we should never forget the assumptions that we make which cost them money as is illustrated in the Bill.

My hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury discussed the new Canterbury link, but which is very welcome albeit rather less dramatic than the new Windsor link in Manchester, which has already been approved by the House.

The Bill illustrates concern for individuals, but also the larger matter on which my hon. Friend the Member for New Forest touched. Quite properly, he referred to the number of new stations that are being opened. However, I suspect that most people would imagine that British Rail is busy closing stations, rather than opening them. In fact, the reverse is the case. My hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West (Mr. Mitchell) reminded me the other day of the comparatively large number of new stations that British Rail has opened since the Government were elected.

My hon. Friend the Member for New Forest discussed the electrification of the Weymouth to Bournemouth line, which, as he rightly said, is important to his constituents and to mine. Of course, that electrification is welcome, but it pales into insignificance when compared with the electrification of the east coast main line, which has been talked about for many years, but which is coming to fruition only now, under this Government.

Therefore, the Bill is an interesting illustration of the way in which, with the railways, the facts belie the story of neglect that is often laid at the door of the present Government and their attitude to the railways.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): I hesitate to intervene in the hon. Gentleman's habitually eloquent opening remarks. However, I am not sure where his remarks are leading us in our debate on the Bill. Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that all those improvements to which he has referred have been financed entirely out of British Rail's own resources by the selling-off of land and property, and that not a penny piece for those improvements has come from the Department of Transport or the Government?

Mr. Adley: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman has decided to inject a partisan point into the debate. British Rail's finances are in a rather better state than many people might be led to believe. One of the reasons for that could be the support that BR receives from the Government. I am not suggesting, nor is he, that we should not like to see a great deal more investment in British Rail. However, some of the achievements that have been made belie the tales of woe about the railways which are frequently put about by some Opposition Members.

If I am asked whether what I have said about the east coast main line is related to the Bill, I refer to page 5, clause 5, line 43 which refers to the line between Doncaster and York. Therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you will be delighted to know that I am not too far out of order in my remarks.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State discussed level crossings and lifting barriers. If, as occasionally happens, there is a mishap at a lifting barrier, concern is aroused and questions are asked about the safety of those comparatively new devices. The press automatically assumes either that the mechanism was faulty or that the accident was the fault of the train driver. Anybody who has studied the accident reports relating to lifting barriers —mercifully those accidents are few and far between— will find that, generally speaking, amber gambling or flashing red light gambling car drivers are much more likely to be the cause of any distress or accidents at the barriers.

Level crossings are rarely debated in the House. I wonder how many people realise that last year the

Department of Transport contributed £18·5 million to British Rail, through the level crossing grant, but that British Rail had to provide a great deal more money from its own resources to allow roads and railway lines to cross. Through its own resources and finances, British Rail has to provide funds and account for them, although the cost of motoring is borne out of general taxation. That is one of the small points that illustrates the unfairness of comparisons between road and rail transport in this country. That is largely due to the historic way in which we deal with those matters in this House, as well as in the country.

The Bill on page 2 states that

"'the Act of 1845' means the Railways Clauses Consolidation Act 1845",

and that

"'the Act of 1863' means the Railway Clauses Act 1863".

When one starts to count the number of individual pieces of legislation that are referred to in this small Bill alone, one gains some idea of the obligations that have been laid by Parliament for 150 years upon the operators of our railways. Would that we had taken the same care, concern and time over our attitude to the methods by which we control, or do not control, the traffic on our roads. Through Bills such as this, Parliament sets tight rules and high standards for British Rail which make our railway travel one of the safest forms of transport on earth. However, on our roads we happily slaughter more than 5,000 people a year and maim 250,000 for the simple reason that we refuse to impose, upon ourselves as road users, anything remotely approaching the high standards of safety that we lay upon the railways.

I am glad to have had the opportunity to speak briefly, and I should like to congratulate my hon. and neighbouring Friend the Member for New Forest. I am happy to support his Bill.

7.38 pm

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): Like the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley), I shall be extremely brief in commenting on the Bill. I join Conservative Members in congratulating the hon. Member for New Forest (Mr. McNair-Wilson) on the clear, concise and detailed manner which he habitually adopts to present such Bills. They are traditionally non-political, but not always non-controversial. It is greatly to the hon. Gentleman's credit that the controversy behind some of those Bills is not reflected in the exchanges between the hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members.

Like the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch), I am somewhat concerned about the clause that refers to the Canterbury accord. I hope that the Minister will re-emphasise the assurance that the addition of the new stretch of railway will not mean that in future British Rail will introduce proposals to close the Canterbury East station.

The Bill is studded with references to level crossings. Many of us will agree with some of the remarks made by the hon. Member for Christchurch. The provision, maintenance and upkeep of level crossings costs the British Railways Board considerable sums and protects not its assets, but private and commercial motorists from the consequences of their actions. For once, I do not blame the Government. About 50 per cent. of the total costs of level crossings falls on the board. I suggest to the Minister that we look at that in a non-controversial, non-partisan way. If the Department coughed up, it would not be political, controversial or partisan. That area would repay further study.

The Bill understandably does not mention automatic crossings. We understand that following last year's fatal accident near Hull some crossings which may have been thought suitable for conversion to automatic crossings will not be converted because of the suspension of those crossings. Again, I must agree with the hon. Member for Christchurch that, although the provision of flashing lights without barriers is regarded as dangerous, particularly in view of that accident, it is dangerous only if motorists ignore the lights. Although we read occasionally in the newspapers about the failure of those lights, one rarely sees any detailed evidence. I know from reading the reports of the Department of Transport's railway inspectorate that their reliability is not often questioned.

A worrying aspect of the suspension of the conversion of crossings of this type is the increased financial burden of maintenance and operating services on these comparatively lightly used stretches of track. I wish to use this opportunity to express our concern that further closure proposals are not introduced because of that additional expense which is largely beyond British Rail's control. Accidents are often caused by the stupidity and carelessness of motorists who appear to believe that they can treat red lights at railway crossings as they treat red lights at road crossings. Occasionally they get a salutary reminder, and often a fatal reminder, that racing a train across a crossing against a red light is even more dangerous than jumping red lights in the normal course of driving round our towns and cities.

The Opposition welcome the Bill and I hope that when the hon. Member for New Forest replies he will appreciate our concern about the future of Canterbury East. I know that he will relay back to the British Railways Board that we would not wish the welcome provision of a new stretch of line to prejudice the line that already exists.

7.43 pm

Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson: With permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should like to reply to some of the points that have been raised.

I thank the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) for his support. He and I have been through several such occasions together and I hope that there has been a greater measure of agreement on this occasion than we may have had in the past.

I should also like to thank my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) for his kind remarks and speech. He is an acknowledged expert on the railways. Not only is he an expert on the railway system, but a fine photographer of railways and all things that travel on them. I appreciate what he said.

Both the hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friend laid considerable stress on the safety of level crossings, lifting barriers and other systems in use. I assure them both that the board bears that in mind and is extremely anxious at all times to improve the operation of unmanned crossings wherever possible. I assure them that the chairman and members of the board will note their remarks.

My hon. Friend referred to legislation and pointed out that a great deal of it was 19th century. That is absolutely true. It may be worth noting the way in which the legislation has stood the test of time. When we discuss Bills

[Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson]

of this nature we are inevitably taking a snapshot—if I dare say that with my hon. Friend so close—of the railway system, but we are looking, not only at a long history, but at a long future.

If I may, in the good spirit of some television competitions, I shall start in reverse order and deal with matters raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) relating to clauses 5 and 6. His remarks will be carefully noted by the board and his constituents' problems carefully considered. On clause 5, I remind him that a lesser but significant factor is the condition of bridge 259, carrying the Faversham-Canterbury East line over the route between Chartham and Canterbury West, which will require major engineering work within the next few years. Implementation of the scheme will enable the bridge to be eliminated by removing the superstructure and substituting solid embankment. The bridge has a separate brick arch over Whitehall road which will be retained.

The various works in the scheme include a new railway—work No. 2—connecting the Ashford-Minster line with the Faversham-Canterbury East line; and a new railway—work No. 3—following the course of a connecting line between the railways mentioned above which was installed during the last war and removed in 1957, to relink those railways and work in conjunction with work No. 2, creating a route for Ashford-Minster traffic which avoids bridge No. 259.

I can assure my hon. Friend that his other anxieties about individuals who are affected will be carefully noted.

Mr. Crouch: My point is that Mr. Todd and his brother who own Whitehall farm will receive a compulsory purchase order for the land that British Rail takes from their farm and should receive compensation for the fact that their farm is no longer viable by being cut in half by these railway works.

Mr. McNair-Wilson: As I pointed out in my opening remarks, subsection (5) provides an opportunity for aggrieved parties to seek compensation and redress through a tribunal. I hope that that will apply in the case of my hon. Friend's constituents.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Hoddle) referred to clauses 12 and 25 and I was glad to see my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) present. The eloquent way in which my hon. Friend described the problems which may confront his constituents will be carefully noted, especially the point relating to job opportunities and the prosperity of Stone and the surrounding area.

On the matter of clause 25, alternative routes exist and it will be for the petitioners in Committee to make their case. Nevertheless, clause 12—

"Stopping up of roads at Alrewas, Staffordshire"—

is worth an additional comment. Fine lane and Roddige lane level crossings are both public crossings. Crossing keepers are employed manually to work the gates. Both crossings are situated on the board's railway between Lichfield City and Wichnor Junction. With a view to improving the economies in the operation of the railway—this is the point to which my hon. Friend referred when he talked about part-time employees—the board proposes to convert the crossing to automatic operation, thus enabling the attendants to be withdrawn altogether. It is intended that the authority for that will be sought from the Secretary of State by means of an order under the Level Crossings Act 1983.

The road over each crossing is approximately 30 ft wide, far wider than the road approaches, and the board wishes to reduce the width of the crossing decks before embarking on any scheme. I hope that that will help to clarify the points which concern my hon. Friend. I can assure him that the petitions from the Staffordshire county council will be carefully considered.

I remind my hon. Friend that the Staffordshire police have made it clear that they do not believe that the road, as at present operated, is suitable for heavy vehicles. Although I listened to what he said about vehicles touching bottom on the bridge over the canal, we are assured by British Waterways that any vehicles which are legitimately on the road should be able to use that thoroughfare perfectly adequately.

We have had an extremely useful and valuable, although short, debate. As I said at the beginning, it marks a milestone in the development of the railway system. I hope that the House will allow the Bill to go forward to its next stage.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a Second time and referred to the Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills.

Motor Cycle Noise Bill [Money]

Postponed proceeding resumed.

7.52 pm

Mr. Adley: As I was saying—as they say—perhaps I should repeat the few words I said earlier. I hope that my thanks to the Minister and the Department for the work they have done will be taken as read.

I was saying that there is legislation available at present enabling prosecutions to be brought against individual motor cyclists for having noisy exhaust systems. However, the purpose of the Motor Cycle Noise Bill and the money resolution is to deal with the matter at source, where the total supply can be dealt with by one action, which is clearly not only more time-effective but cost-efficient than the present proposition of the police having to take dozens of individuals to court.

The British Motor Cyclists' Federation supports the Bill and the money resolution as does the Motor Cycle Association. I will not weary the House by reading out endless quotations because this is not a Second Reading debate and, happily, the Bill has already received a Second Reading.

Money for the Bill is needed quite simply to enable trading standards officers to do their job as proposed in the powers they will be given under the Bill. That should relieve the police of a great deal of works.

The Bill concerns non-standard exhaust systems or exhaust systems modified to make more noise. That is the point that has to be stressed. We are dealing with a Bill that is trying to prevent people from deliberately making more noise. The Bill makes illegal the sale or use of unstamped exhaust systems and the trading standards officers, the funding of whom will be provided by the money resolution if the House passes it, will have the power to confiscate unstamped systems, which will *obviously* cost money. There is a trade at present in approved exhaust systems and one hopes that if the Bill, the money resolution and all its works are ultimately approved by Parliament there will be a growing sale of those approved exhaust systems.

The Bill gives powers to trading standards officers to enter factories to look around and take away exhaust systems which they believe might be contravening the regulations. The relevant clauses mean that they do not have to make a prior appointment but can simply enter the premises.

This is a small but important money resolution for a small Bill. Noise is the curse of modern society and deliberate noise is unacceptable. The internal combustion engine is a major source of noise and pollution and I hope that the House will agree to give its support to this small but worthwhile step.

7.56 pm

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): I wish to support the money resolution which will give effect to the Motor Cycle Noise Bill. The purpose of the money resolution is to authorise limited spending of public money on the purpose of the Bill and to provide finance for weights and measures officers. The explanatory and financial memorandum says:

"It is estimated that when the provisions are fully operational the cost of purchasing samples and testing them will initially be in the range of £50,000 to £150,000, but as the provisions take effect, these costs will probably diminish."

The object of that is to enforce the law proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) who should be warmly congratulated on bringing forward his private Member's Bill and the money resolution that goes with it.

The money resolution should be supported enthusiastically by the whole House. The resolution, like the Bill to which it relates, has the paramount aim of improving the quality of life. As my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch has just said, noise is the curse of modern society. The explanatory and financial memorandum refers to the modest cost. In a population of about 50 million in the United Kingdom, a sum of £50,000 to £150,000 — *[Interruption.]* It is a little difficult to address the House with another speech going on on the Opposition Benches. In a population of 50 million, a sum of £50,000 to £150,000 works out at one tenth to three tenths of a penny per head per year. That is a small price to pay for improving our environment and controlling and curbing the curse and bane of motor cycle noise.

The money resolution appears to be open-ended and I hope that the Government will not feel inhibited if some further modest expenditure is required. I should like to explain why. Our so-called civilisation is afflicted by far too much loud and strident noise. There are radios blaring, human beings shouting and yelling, dogs barking, unwanted piped music, noise from aircraft, lorries, cars and, as we are discussing, motor cycles. People's nerves are shattered and their senses are dulled. British common law emphasises the right of individuals to the quiet enjoyment of their homes and gardens but all too often that is marred and blighted by the curse of motor cycle noise.

The money resolution relates directly to this matter as it sanctions provision for the work of weights and measures inspectors to inspect and deal with motor cycle noise. Motor cycle noise is particularly unpleasant. It is not only its volume but the character of the noise which is unsettling and juddering, like a pneumatic drill, whether in residential areas or quiet country lanes. In both that is an outrage to people's freedom to live in peace and quiet by day and, even more so, by night.

My constituents have three special reasons for wishing me to support the resolution. First, there happen to be many main roads or trunk roads with houses along them in my constituency that are used by a considerable number of motor cyclists. These roads include the A305, the A308, the A310, the A311, the A312, the A313, the A314 and, most important, the A316, the great Chertsey road, which links with the M25, along which a substantial number of motor cyclists travel.

Secondly, the resolution is of special concern to my constituents because, in addition to motor cycle noise, they have to suffer aircraft noise. The one nuisance has to be taken with the other. If the resolution is passed and weights and measures inspectors are empowered to deal with the nuisance of motor cycle noise, the totality of aircraft noise and motor cycle noise, which comprises a great deal of noise, would be mitigated. The Government have tried already to mitigate aircraft noise by refusing planning permission for a fifth terminal at Heathrow and by refusing to allow a helicopter link from Heathrow to Gatwick. That is not enough, however, and I hope that the resolution will be passed by the House so that motor cycle noise can be reduced as well.

Thirdly and finally, there is a local problem that could be relieved by the passage of the resolution. I refer to the

[Mr. Toby Jessel]

long-standing problem of scrambling motor cycles on the Butts farm estate, which is in the borough of Hounslow but adjacent to my constituency, which is within the borough of Richmond. The two local authorities, Richmond and Hounslow, have dragged their feet. The latest information is that they are only considering erecting fences. They need their heads knocked together. There is a need for legal action to be taken with an order of mandamus against the local authorities. Meanwhile, I am glad that the resolution seems likely to be passed. It will tend to make motor cycles quieter and could contribute to the solution of a distressing local problem.

8.2 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Peter Bottomley): If it is necessary, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for me to ask for the leave of the House to speak again, I do so.

I used to be responsible for noise regulation under health and safety at work legislation when I was an Employment Minister. I once sneaked a noise meter into the Chamber and during Prime Minister's Questions the reading was 95 dB. Such a noise level would be banned in most factories. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) was not present at the time.

Mr. Snape: The reading would have been 98 dB if he had been.

Mr. Bottomley: I went with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the health and safety research laboratories at Cricklewood, where she was shown some resounding cymbals. Well, one pair of cymbals resounded and the other pair made only a dull thud when she touched them. The pair that thudded had been sprayed with some noise-reducing aerosol. If I may spread a remark that she did not make, she did not say that she would like to use them on the Leader of the Opposition when he interrupted too frequently during Prime Minister's Question Time.

The money resolution should not be taken as meaning that taxpayers' money will be provided for all the work done by the trading standards officers employed by local authorities. However, regulations made under the main legislation—in other words, the Bill—will be enforced by the trading standards officers. Some local authorities may need to buy silencers for testing, but we have been told that the estimated cost of purchasing and testing will be small. I am not sure whether all the moneys will be provided by Parliament. As the provisions take effect the need for actual enforcement will diminish because suppliers will stop supplying illegal and noisy exhaust systems.

The House and the country will owe a great debt to my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) in bringing forward this sensible, simple and useful Bill. I do not consider it to be a small Bill because the effect of one noisy motor cycle can destroy the environment, as my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham has reminded us, over almost a mile. The additional work load is expected to have no significant manpower implications. I commend the resolution to the House and I hope that the Bill is enacted.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Motor Cycle Noise Bill, it is expedient to authorise any increase attributable to that Act in the sums payable out of money provided by Parliament under any other Act.

Hospital Provision (Machynlleth)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Portillo.]*

8.4 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): My good fortune in obtaining the Adjournment debate enables me to talk about a small but important town in mid-Wales, Machynlleth. It is not a declining town although it is small. It is in an area that, like other parts of mid-Wales, is seeing the growth of small industry. There is burgeoning tourism and many people are coming into the area to live and work because of the beauty that it offers as well as opportunities.

I am pleased to see that the Under-Secretary of State for Wales with responsibilitites for the Health Service in the Principality is in his place. I thank him for meeting me last week and having a discussion with me about the Machynlleth hospitals, which are the subject of the debate. I express my gratitude to him on behalf of my constituents for arranging for a petition, which I shall refer to later, to be received by one of his officials in the Welsh Office. I wish to express my gratitude also to that official for his courtesy in receiving the representations that were made to him. I commend that official's courtesy greatly. He listened with great care and made many notes. As the Minister knows, I should have been happier if he had been the person to meet the deputation that came with me to the Welsh Office, but there is no doubt that we were well received and are thankful for that.

In considering hospital provision in Machynlleth, perhaps we should know a little about the town. For centuries it has been an important centre to which people have come to market from a wide area. At one time it was the capital of Wales and the home of the Parliament of Owain Glyndwr. One might say

"how are the mighty fallen!"

because only last Saturday I held one of my constituency surgeries on the site of Owain Glyndwr's Parliament. What I can say for certain it that the people of Machynlleth hold their democracy at least as valuable now as they did centuries ago with Owain Glyndwr when he held sway in the area.

Machynlleth is a town in need of good hospital provision. It is a busy town with a growing industrial sector. It has a considerable craft industry and some remarkable shops that are perhaps a part of the original Laura Ashley boom. These shops attract people from throughout the area and from far afield. The town has a considerable part of the backbone of the economy of my constituency of Montgomery — a strong agriculture sector—and it has the important business of tourism. This means that in the summer months especially—we try to make the season in Machynlleth as long as possible now—there is a considerable influx of visitors with the result that the population grows considerably. A growing number of hotels, guest houses and camp sites fills up each year.

It is right to observe that whenever planning consent is granted for any new property in or around the town, it is in great demand. It is a town that has an increasing use for an increasing number of public buildings. Recently the remarkable Machynlleth tabernacle was restored, and it is now the tabernacle arts centre. The restoration took place with private money and the new centre is showing signs of thriving. It brings many people into the town and it will do so increasingly.

The Plas is one of the most attractive and historic buildings in mid and west Wales. There are plans afoot for it, and for new tourist facilities and other public facilities alongside the town's excellent high school. There is the now celebrated Centre for Alternative Technology outside the town.

I say all that not to cause a diversion but to emphasise that Machynlleth is growing and blooming rather than shrinking and wilting.

In a few moments, I shall refer to the views of the people of Machynlleth and to a petition that was presented on their behalf. The people of Machynlleth are not greedy. They have never demanded more than their fair share of the public spending cake. However, I remind the Minister of a snippet of Welsh history that, no doubt, he will recall. The strong community feeling and the ability to identify community needs in that town can be traced as far back as the resistance of Caradoc to Agricola's onslaught of mid-Wales. There are independent witnesses of the independence of spirit of mid-Wales and west Wales. I am sure that the Minister, who went to school rather more recently than I did, will remember his Tacitus with enthusiasm. Tacitus described in his Agricola the stout spirit and resistance of the people of mid-Wales.

That may be a rather roundabout and pittoresque way of making a point, but it is an important one. The people of Machynlleth and district are sound judges of their interests. They feel those interests strongly. They state them firmly and they have an impeccable nose for unfairness. Their nose for unfairness, as they perceive it on the matter of the Machynlleth hospitals, was demonstrated most eloquently by the petition signed by nearly 11,000 people, which has already been presented to the Welsh Office.

I seek to make a case in support of the 11,000 signatures. It is not just in support of the voices of the ordinary people of the town and the district but also of the voices of many who are closely involved in the medical profession and in the National Health Service in the area, not least the general practitioners in Machynlleth whose views accord entirely with those of the petitioners. There have been times during the history of the dispute when the general practitioners may not have seemed wholeheartedly to support the case made by the petitioners; but it is quite clear that, when they were given the opportunity to stand back and take an objective view of the situation, they formed the view that the proposals of the Powys health authority, which are currently before the Welsh Office, were not in the best interests of the town and the area.

There are two hospitals in Machynlleth. They are approximately 80 yards or so apart on opposite sides of the main road which leads through the town and towards the coast—towards Aberystwyth in one direction and towards Aberdovey in the other. The newer of those hospitals is about 50 years old. It is called the Machynlleth and Corris district hospital. It was built as a result of public subscription. Some families gave massively towards the construction of the district hospital. What is perhaps more important is that, as I have been told, every family in the district gave something, including not a few widows' mites.

As I live in mid-Wales, I am delighted to say that we who live in mid-Wales—"Powys Paradwys Cymru"—

[Mr. Alex Carlile]

live somewhat longer than average. Thus, many people living in Machynlleth and other parts of mid-Wales remember well the excitement of the collection of the money and the satisfaction of the building of the hospital.

The other hospital, the Machynlleth chest hospital, started its life, perhaps a little less promisingly, as a workhouse about 125 years ago. More recently, it achieved an enviable reputation as the Machynlleth chest hospital.

It is a pleasure to see the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales, the hon. Member for Conwy (Mr. Roberts), on the Government Front Bench. He will be well aware of the name and the reputation of Dr. G. O. Thomas, who did years of distinguished work in the Machynlleth chest hospital. Dr. Thomas and others did pioneering work in the chest hospital on the treatment of farmer's lung. They made great strides and became famed worldwide for their work on that dreadful disease. Sadly, there has been an increase in the incidence of farmer's lung in the past few years. It is one of the diseases which the Machynlleth chest hospital still treats.

The chest hospital is a place not only for the treatment of farmers lung. It has become a popular and highly respected hospital for the treatment of all sorts of chest-related ailments. Some of my own friends have had excellent treatment there. I recall a celebrated resident of Montgomeryshire, Mr. R. O. Hughes of Castle Caereinion, who sadly died recently, but was kept alive for many years by the excellent treatment that he periodically received at the chest hospital in Machynlleth. He was a patient who regularly travelled about 35 miles for treatment there. That is an example of the breadth of the hospital's catchment area.

The chest hospital and the district hospital have a wonderful reputation for their nursing care. I have visited them both on many occasions and have seen for myself the tradition of care that is carried on excellently by the present staff and Mrs. Lloyd the matron—if I may be permitted to use the old-fashioned word that is still well-understood in Wales.

The two hospitals are physically close. They work efficiently together. They efficiently share the same catering and the same administration. They have a joint league of friends which has provided a fully-furnished day room in each hospital. It is worth noting that the league of friends has in its possession a sum of money, the size of which is staggering when one considers the size of Machynlleth. I am given to understand that the amount of money which could be provided by the league of friends is in excess of £100,000. They would like to apply that sum of money to schemes of which they approve.

The catchment area, as I have already intimated, is much wider than Machynlleth itself. Indeed, it is much more than simply the whole of west Montgomeryshire or, for that matter, the whole of Montgomeryshire. It includes the old counties of Ceredigion and Meirionnydd. It is difficult to make precise estimates of its catchment area. One submission made to me suggested that it might be as large as 100,000 people. Perhaps so. Perhaps one should err on the lower side and say that the catchment area consists of 50,000 or 60,000 people. It is still substantial and, in my view, greater than has been suggested by the Powys health authority, whose proposals are currently before the Minister.

It is a town where acute medical services are required on a reasonable scale for the whole of the district. We know of many patients who live, for example, in Dolgellau, the county town of the old county of Meirionydd, who, for some quite routine medical treatment, have to travel for long distances over country roads to the town of Wrexham. It is very much to be hoped that we shall not see more people being forced to travel that kind of distance for medical treatment, or to visit their relatives in hospital.

As the Member of Parliament for Montgomery, of course I welcome the decision by the Powys health authority to spend money on the hospitals in Machynlleth to upgrade the provision of medical facilities there. Money is needed, particularly for the chest hospital, some parts of which are in less than excellent condition. However, local people believe—and I share their belief—that there are a number of misconceptions and errors in the plans that are under consideration.

The first of those misconceptions and errors relates to the proposed new geriatric unit, combined with a unit for the elderly mentally infirm—a geriatric-EMI unit, as it has come to be known. Of course I welcome the decision, and so do my constituents, to build a new geriatric-EMI unit and associated day facilities, but having reflected upon the matter and looked at it in great detail we are all of the view that it is quite wrong that those facilities should be placed in the grounds of the chest hospital, rather than on that side of the road where the district hospital is situated.

The site of the chest hospital is entirely unsuited to the provision of those facilities. It is a congested site. On that site there are the comings and goings of the ambulance station. The mortuary's proximity is a problem that causes great concern. And it causes offence in Machynlleth that it is proposed that the geriatric-EMI unit, where some patients will live for years, should have a clear view of the cemetery. In my constituency in mid-Wales, matters of birth and death are viewed very seriously indeed—perhaps in a less cavalier fashion than in some of the modernistic urban areas of England. For elderly people to have to watch cortèges proceed on their stately way could hardly drive home an unwelcome point more tellingly.

I believe that those of the elderly who have to spend their last months or years in a geriatric unit are entitled to a better view than that; and that the people of Machynlleth are right in drawing this important detail to the Minister's attention. No amount of landscaping will achieve in any reasonable time the screening that would be required to remove that defect in the proposals.

If all that I were saying was that the site is unsuitable, the Powys health authority would be able to reply—I know that the Minister is constrained tonight because he will have to decide this matter in due course—"But what is your alternative?" The alternative is a good one, and it is readily available.

Whereas the chest hospital is on the more built up side of the town, the district hospital is on the less built up side. It is on the same side of the town as the Cartref Dyfi home for the elderly. It is also on the same side of the town, conveniently, as the car park, and on the side of town with some most attractive views.

Next to the district hospital there is a site that already belongs to the health authority. It is a flat site that is large enough for the geriatric-EMI unit. That site could be built upon without any difficulty whatsoever. What is more, it

is a site that is free of obstruction and free of charge to the builders. On one side it has a view of the road. The elderly in the geriatric unit would be able to see the world go by. On the other side it has a view of the mountain. The elderly would be able to see the world in which they had lived their earlier lives. One cannot imagine a better site for the geriatric-EMI unit than that which is supported and proposed by my constituents in Machynlleth—the site next to the district hospital.

If the geriatric-EMI unit were put on the opposite side of the road from the chest hospital, people might ask what would happen to the associated occupational therapy and physiotherapy facilities. That is not a valid objection, either. In the proposed plans of the Powys health authority, the geriatric-EMI unit would have integral gymnasium-type mobility facilities and also occupational therapy facilities of its own. I suggest, therefore, that there would be no extra cost, to speak of, in putting the geriatric-EMI unit on the district hospital site and that if there were any extra cost it would be small and would be amply justified by the overall improvement in the facilities and by the fact that the unit would be in a far more attractive position.

The second of the misconceptions and errors in the plans to which I wish to draw special attention relates to the size of the geriatric-EMI unit. The Powys health authority's proposal is that there should be 14 geriatric beds, four EMI beds and two respite care beds. Those are inadequate numbers to meet the future local need. I have already said that we have a substantial elderly population, because longevity is remarkable in Montgomeryshire. Indeed, 21 per cent. of the population of the catchment area of these hospitals is over 65 years old, a very high figure. Local estimates, including those of the general practitioners who know the state of health of the young and the middle aged within the catchment area, make it clear that a greater number of beds will be needed in the future. Detailed submissions have been made to the Welsh Office on this matter. I suggest that what would be appropriate would be 20 geriatric beds, six EMI beds and two respite care beds.

The third of the misconceptions and errors is the proposal that the general practitioner and maternity beds should be moved out of the district hospital altogether to the existing site of the Machynlleth chest hospital. The effect of that would be that the district hospital would be closed to in-patients. It would probably be closed for ever; indeed, it would almost certainly be closed for ever. There have been suggestions that it would be retained for Health Service facilities, but it is a matter of considerable dubiety as to exactly what those facilities would be and how long they would last.

During the discussions on the fate of the district hospital there have been all sorts of suggestions. At one time the health authority suggested that Powys county council should take over the district hospital for some sort of use—perhaps as a day centre—but Powys county council had not even been asked, and does not have the money to take it over. We must face the fact that if the general practitioner and maternity beds are moved out of the district hospital that will probably be the beginning of the end of that hospital.

At present there are 14 general practitioner beds and two maternity beds in the district hospital. It is proposed that on the chest hospital site there should be a reduction to 12 general practitioner beds and two maternity beds. One may get the impression from the proposal to close the district hospital that in some way it is an unpleasant place, that it does not meet the needs of the patients and that it falls below an acceptable standard of care. I say to those who feel that, "Go and see for yourself, as I have. See whether there are any complaints from patients or their relations." They will find that there are none.

Many patients use the general practitioner beds in the district hospital during the year. Some are there for relatively minor complaints, others go there for a rest and recuperation, and a third group go there, sadly, for care at the ebbing of their lives when acute medical assistance no longer avails them. Of course, some modernisation would be welcome in that hospital. What hospital other than the brand new would not welcome some form of modernisation? It is a quiet, efficient, homely and attractive hospital. It is wholly unnecessary to replace it entirely. A moderate modernisation would make the Machynlleth district hospital into a general practitioner unit which could be the pride of Powys and of the Powys health authority.

The numbers proposed—a reduction to 12 general practitioner beds—are inadequate. From time to time I have checked randomly through local residents who visit the hospital on a regular basis. On several occasions this winter the district hospital's general practitioner beds have been full. Furthermore, the maternity suite operates satisfactorily. Mothers like being there and there is no need for any substantial change.

On the matter of the provision of acute medical services in Machynlleth, I draw attention to the fourth of the misconceptions and errors in the plan. It is proposed that there should be a reduction from 35 beds with an operating theatre to 15 consultant beds and minor operating facilities. There has been a gross underestimate of the needs for acute and consultant beds, having regard to a number of factors. First, as I have already said, the catchment area has been underestimated. Secondly, there has been such a delay in the completion of the second stage at Bronllys hospital in Aberystwyth that, to quote one consultant physician in the area:

"Machynlleth has been a valuable pressure valve in soaking up patients from Aberystwyth."

A point worth mentioning in passing, although I do not wish to exaggerate it too much or put a false perspective on it, is the proximity of the nuclear power stations in north Wales. With that in mind, it is as well that there should be adequate facilities for hospital beds in the area. There is already an operating theatre in the district hospital which serves both hospitals. The operating theatre needs upgrading, but I am informed that the league of friends would be especially interested in examining the possibilities, perhaps with a view to helping towards the upgrading of the operating theatre to more modern standards. Recently, when I checked, the acute beds were full. They were full on two occasions when inquiries were made recently of the occupancy of them.

I shall mention briefly the consultation process that has taken place and led to the recommendations and proposals of the Powys health authority. It has not, unfortunately, been a happy process. I do not regard it as appropriate here to make special criticism of the Powys health authority, but I observe, for I was there, that the public meeting that was reluctantly and eventually agreed to by the health authority on 9 June of last year was a wretched occasion. The presentation of the proposals was done with

[Mr. Alex Carlile]

great skill and professionalism by those representing Powys health authority, but most people at that meeting felt that the many strong feelings expressed by local residents and representatives of the local community—myself and many others—met a response that was less sympathetic than was appropriate. As a result, many representations on these matters have had to be made privately and, in some cases, fairly desperately.

The local community does not believe that it has had a fair opportunity to make out its case fully until recent weeks. The local community welcomes the fact that in the end the decision will be taken by Ministers in the Welsh Office and hopes that it can be confident that all the representations that it has made and that I have had the opportunity to make tonight will be taken into account. We all look forward to a decision that will be acceptable to the community, consistent with good medicine, and will lead to the early start of building work to improve hospital facilities in Machynlleth.

8.36 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Mark Robinson): I congratulate the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) on his good fortune in securing tonight's Adjournment debate. I congratulate him not just on his success in doing so but on the fact that the business of the House has allowed him to state his case about hospital provision in Machynlleth in rather more detail than would normally have been allowed. If he had had the opportunity in a normal debate to speak at this length, I should not now be replying to him.

I thank him, as I am sure the House does, for the interesting history that he gave us of Machynlleth and the developments that have taken place in the town from the days of Owain Glyndwr, and indeed before that of those of Caradoc and right up to the present day.

However, on checking Dods — perhaps this is my youthful appearance—I discovered that I had received my schooling just a short time in advance of the hon. and learned Gentleman. Therefore, his memory of Tacitus is perhaps even clearer than my own.

In recent months the hon. and learned Gentleman and I have been in correspondence on the subject of Powys health authority's proposals for future hospital provision for Machynlleth. I am grateful for his kind words about the manner in which his constituents, who presented a petition, were received. I have attempted to explain the procedures under which the district health authority can bring about changes of use through the established procedures and the process of public consultation that is required. I welcome the chance to expand on that tonight, bearing in mind the fact that it is not appropriate for me to make any substantive comments, which the hon. and learned Gentleman has already recognised, on the proposals at this stage as they have now been submitted to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and that the one-month period for public representations has begun and will conclude on 28 February.

I fully realise the importance of this matter to the hon. and learned Gentleman's constituents and I urge them to submit any further representations that they wish to make as soon as possible. I also assure him that the petition presented to the Welsh Office will be taken into account as part of that exercise.

It would perhaps be useful if I began by sketching out the background to the proposals in terms of the health authority's strategic plan of January 1985 and the current provision at Machynlleth. The strategic plan details the direction to be taken over the 10 years to 1994 in the operation and development of health services in Powys. Changes are proposed in all services, especially in the priority areas of caring for the elderly, the elderly mentally infirm, the mentally ill and the mentally handicapped with a change of emphasis from hospital care to continuing care in the community.

The health authority has stated that its philosophy will be to care for people as far as possible within the community and that, in order to achieve that objective, particular attention will be paid to providing community-based consultant services in geriatrics and mental handicap. The authority intends that the development of community hospitals within the district should assist the realisation of those objectives.

The proposals for provision of services take into account the fact that public transport within the county is sparse. The authority is therefore adopting the principle of developing community hospitals which can bring medical services close to small concentrations of people throughout Powys. In relation to the care of the elderly, the strategy retains the target of 10 beds per 1,000 population over the age of 65, but accepts the need to encourage the elderly to remain in their homes and aims to work jointly with the social services department, local housing authorities, other statutory bodies and voluntary groups to provide increased special housing and develop local day centres for the elderly.

Current hospital services in Machynlleth are provided at two long-established sites. The Machynlleth and Corris district hospital is situated in a 50-year-old purpose-built premises about half a mile from the centre of the town on the road towards Welshpool and Newtown. It was built as a cottage hospital in 1935, funded by voluntary contributions from the people of Machynlleth and surrounding areas. The Machynlleth chest hospital occupies an older building, the former workhouse, and is opposite the district hospital. The Poor Law institute made the workhouse available to the Red Cross during the 1914-18 war. The Welsh national memorial hospital trust leased the building in 1921 and eventually bought the workhouse for use as a chest hospital in 1929. In total, the two hospitals have 51 beds run by 54 medical and nursing staff. I also pay tribute to the league of friends and its support for the two hospitals.

The existing bed provision of Machynlleth chest hospital is 35 beds. In making its proposals, the Powys health authority considers that the categories of patients have changed over the years. The chest hospital apparently now caters mainly for elderly patients with or without a chest ailment, and the authority's view is that only one third of the 450 discharges per annum can truly be considered chest cases. In 1985, the average daily number of occupied beds at the hospital was 22·3 out of an average number available of 33·8. I apologise for the technicality of those figures.

The Machynlleth and district hospital provides 16 GP beds, two of which are maternity beds. In 1985 the average daily number of occupied beds was about nine out of an

average number available of 16. Both hospitals cater for patients from the adjoining areas of Meirionnydd and Ceredigion, as well as from Powys. For that reason, Gwynedd and East Dyfed health authorities are involved in the consultation process.

With regard to the current proposals under consideration, I understand that Powys health authority began to give detailed consideration to the future hospital needs of the Machynlleth area in 1985. That was prompted by the announcement by the consultant in chest diseases of his impending retirement, the need to consider how best to provide geriatric facilities with appropriate consultant cover, and the requirement to make the best possible use of medical services in general.

The health authority published its proposals for the future of hospital provision in the Machynlleth area in April 1986. It undertook consultation with members of the public, community health councils, other representative bodies and the neighbouring health authorities of Gwynedd and East Dyfed, but, having failed to reach local agreement on the proposals, the authority has, as I have already said, referred them to my right hon. Friend for decision.

Although I cannot comment on them, it may be helpful if I tell the House the nature of the proposals submitted by the authority. First, it is intended to provide a new 20-bed geriatric and elderly mentally ill unit and associated day hospital facilities on the Machynlleth chest hospital site. It is also intended that the facilities at present accommodated at the district hospital be transferred to the chest hospital to provide 12 GP beds, two maternity beds, a delivery suite and minor operating facilities, that 15 consultant beds be provided on the chest hospital site, that an appropriate level of both consultant and junior medical staff be appointed to manage the service and that the out-patient services currently provided by Dr. J. J. Griffiths at Tywyn, Dolgellau and Bronglais hospitals be discontinued.

The health authority has said in its public consultation document on these proposals that, although it seeks to transfer the acute services from the district hospital to the chest hospital in updated and modernised accommodation, it is intended that the district hospital will be retained for the provision of medical services. The acute psychiatric day hospital that is to be developed in the area can be accommodated in the district hospital along with county council social services provision.

With the expansion of community services in all areas of Powys, the health authority considers that there is a need for day hospital facilities not only for the elderly, but for the mentally handicapped, mentally ill and the physically disabled. In its consultation paper the health authority says that it envisages over the next five to 10 years that the district hospital would be fully utilised as a day hospital, thereby ensuring that provision is made available for the increasing needs that are inherent in any programme of expansion of community services.

The health authority has outlined in the proposals published for consultation its wish to develop a full range of services, with provision more appropriate to the needs of each discipline, to current day standards and beyond. The authority's decision to site the geriatric — elderly mentally ill unit at the chest hospital is based on its view that, over a 15-year period, a full development at Machynlleth should be on a single site. The authority considers the district hospital site too small and lacking the patient accommodation areas and range of facilities that are available on the chest hospital site.

The authority points out that the new remedial therapy department and out-patient department were built on the chest hospital site for that reason and because it had been expected that the geriatric unit, when built, could be phased into this development with an enhancement of the paramedical departments to provide a day hospital facility.

It may be helpful if I outline the details of the procedures which must be followed before a change in health care provision can be implemented. Responsibility for the detailed planning of Health Service provision and for local consultation on the plans produced rests of course in the first instance with district health authorities. In formulating plans, authorities are required to have in mind the need to make the most efficient use of their available resources which is consistent with the changing needs of patients. Ultimate ownership of all health authority buildings is normally vested in my right hon. Friend and, as proposals for permanent closure or change of use can and do have a significant effect on the local and, as in this case, wider community, special arrangements have been designed to ensure that the public and all local interests are fully consulted and that, in cases of controversy, my right hon. Friend should decide on the proposals in full knowledge of the contending considerations.

Guidance is given to health authorities in Health Service planning paper five, entitled "Procedure for Consultation on the Closure and Change of Use of Health Buildings". The procedure can be summarised as follows: the health authority should first prepare a consultation document giving the reasons for the proposals, which should include the implications for patients, such as travelling and transport, the options which have been considered and the arguments put forward in favour of them. There should be an evaluation of the possibilities of using any redundant facilities for other purposes, and manpower implications must be considered. The relationship between the closure or change of use and other developments in the district's plans should be drawn out.

A three-month period of consultation is the next stage, with comments being invited from community health councils, local authorities, joint staff consultative committees, any other recognised staff organisation not represented on the committees, family practitioner committees, local advisory committees and any other body or person which the health authority considers should be consulted.

The health authority should then reconsider the proposed closure or change of use in the light of the comments received. Should an agreed decision be reached which accords with the guidelines from the Welsh Office, the health authority may proceed with the closure or change of use. If the result is either irresolvable disagreement, as in this case, or a locally agreed conclusion which differs substantially from the original proposals, the authority is required to refer the matter with its recommendations and an outline of the alternative arrangements to my right hon. Friend.

Following referral, in order that members of the public who oppose the proposals may have adequate opportunity to make their views known before a final decision is taken,

[Mr. Mark Robinson]

a period of one month must be allowed and publicly announced in which individuals or organisations may appeal and make representations against the proposals that have been put forward.

The way in which Powys health authority has implemented this guidance is as follows. Comments on the proposals were invited in April 1986, and therefore the closing date for comments to be made on them would usually have been the end of June. It became clear, however, from early on in the discussions that these proposals would generate a great deal of comment. Powys health authority therefore decided, exceptionally, that in this case the usual timetable would be extended to allow a full discussion of the proposals with neighbouring community health councils and health authorities.

Powys health authority's proposals on the future hospital provision in the Machynlleth area, together with copies of all representations received, and incorporating amendments made by the authority in the light of comments, were presented to my right hon. Friend under cover of a letter dated 17 December 1986. The next stage was then for the health authority to issue a press notice announcing that fact and giving one month from the date of the notice for any objections to its proposals to be sent to my right hon. Friend for consideration before the final decision is given.

Once my right hon. Friend has reached a conclusion on the health authority's proposals, a letter giving his decision and the reasons for it will be sent to the health authority. Copies of the letter will be sent to other people or bodies who have expressed an interest in the matter, including the hon. and learned Gentleman, and these decisions will also be publicised by means of a press notice. I can also assure the hon. and learned Gentleman that the points that he has made tonight will be carefully considered before any final decision is taken.

Mold Bypass

8.52 pm

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): On 18, 19 and 20 February 1975, almost exactly 12 years ago to the day, a public inquiry was held into the proposed Mold bypass. On 25 July 1977 the then Secretary of State for Wales made the line order announcing his decision on the route. Between then and earlier this year the controversy concerning the road has focused entirely on the timing of its construction.

I first raised the matter with the Welsh Office a month after I was elected, on 19 July 1983. I was told by the then Minister of State, Welsh Office, my hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth (Sir J. Stradling Thomas), that

"preparation on the Mold bypass has been accelerated with a view to construction starting before the end of 1988". —[*Official Report*, 19 July 1983; Vol. 46, c. *84*.]

I raised the matter again during Welsh questions on 24 March 1986. Two days later, during the Welsh Grand Committee debate on "The Roads Programme in Wales", my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales intervened to make the following statement:

"I reassure my hon. Friend that we expect the scheme to start on the original schedule—at the beginning of the new period and not at the end of it. We do not anticipate any delay, because we understand the importance of the scheme." —[*Official Report, Welsh Grand Committee*, 26 March 1986; c. 31.]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Wyn Roberts): Would my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Raffan: I help my hon. Friend by adding that "at the beginning of the new period" meant the beginning of the time band of January 1988 to December 1990.

Mr. Roberts: My hon. Friend will be aware that the debate in the Welsh Grand Committee took place on 26 March. He will also be aware that my right hon. Friend did not receive the consultants' report, which I am sure my hon. Friend will talk about, until the autumn of 1986.

Mr. Raffan: That is not the point. My hon. Friend has the chronology out of order. Perhaps I can take the chronology, without my hon. Friend having to intervene again, through to the end of my speech. The vexed question which was at the centre of the consultants' report — the resiting of the A541 roundabout, otherwise referred to as the Buckley road roundabout — was a matter first raised by the Clwyd county council surveyor 12 years ago. If my right hon. Friend was not aware of that central problem when he intervened in my speech on 26 March 1986, one might ask why his officials had not informed him of it. That is one of the questions that I will put to my hon. Friend.

In good faith, I passed on my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's assurance to Mold town council. I heard nothing further until I led a deputation from the council to see my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State on 1 December 1986. The purpose of that meeting was to deliver a petition that had been signed by more than 4,000 local people, pressing on my hon Friend the urgent need for the construction of the bypass to relieve the town of traffic congestion and provide improved access to the Bromfield park industrial estate and the Nercwys road industrial park. It was then for the first time, like the proverbial bolt fom the blue, that my hon. Friend said that there was a problem over the siting of the proposed

roundabout on the A541 otherwise known as the Buckley road. That was confirmed in a letter that my hon. Friend wrote to me three days later on 4 December 1986. It says:

"I can confirm that we are pressing on with the preparation of the by-pass proposals but, as I mentioned to you, the Clwyd County Surveyor has expressed very serious reservations about the location of a new roundabout which it is proposed to provide as part of these proposals where the new by-pass crosses the Buckley Road. The County Surveyor fears that the present location will cause traffic leaving the town in the peak hours to back-up into the town centre. I am sure that you would agree with me that if this were to happen when the new by-pass is open to traffic it would indeed have serious consequences for town traffic which must be avoided. To this end, our consultants were asked to investigate the matter and we received their report a few weeks ago. This recommends the relocation of the Buckley Road roundabout further to the east of the present proposed position."

I and other members of the deputation from Mold town council understandably inferred from what the Minister said to us, and subsequently confirmed in writing, that the problem over the new roundabout had emerged suddenly, that the county surveyor had only recently expressed his reservations and that consultants had subsequently, even more recently, been appointed to look at the problem.

The truth is somewhat different. The county surveyor, Mr. Alastair Donaldson, has sent me copies of correspondence relating to the matter. He expressed his concern about the siting of the new roundabout not last year, not even the year before, but on 16 June 1975 in a letter to the then director of highways at the Welsh Office, Mr. Dennis Hall. On 28 February 1978, when work on the design of the scheme was resumed, Mr. Hall wrote to the Clwyd county surveyor to inform him that consulting engineers, Ward Ashcroft and Parkman, were being directed to look again at the siting of the roundabout and to consult him on the subject.

Let the county surveyor take up the story. I quote from his letter to me dated 9 February 1987:

"I did put forward one or two ideas to the Consultants, but no detailed design was done by my staff and at no time have I ever seen any plan produced by the Consultants which either incorporated any of the ideas which I put forward or any of their own ideas for improving the traffic flow at the new roundabout and A549/A541 Junction. Bearing in mind that the County Council are the Local Highway Authority for no less than four roads which are affected by the new Mold Bypass, you might think that rather extraordinary. Indeed, I had to personally attend the Exhibition in Mold to see the larger scale plans of the new proposals since I do not have copies, with the result that I have been unable to consult Members of the County Council to obtain their views."

He eventually received copies of the larger scale plans on Friday 6 February.

All this raises many questions, the detailed answers to which I look forward to hearing from my hon. Friend the Minister. As the problem over the new roundabout was first highlighted 12 years ago, why did the Welsh Office highways department not resolve the problem long ago? Why did officials wait until after the last minute, knowing that this would delay construction of the road and so render worthless my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's public commitment?

When was my hon. Friend aware that the Clwyd county council surveyor had expressed reservations about the new roundabout not a few months ago but 12 years ago? When was my hon. Friend aware that consultants had been directed to look at the roundabout problem nine years ago? Are the consultants directed to look at the roundabout problem in 1978 the same as those mentioned in my hon. Friend's letter of 4 December? If so, why did they take so long to report? And why was the Clwyd county surveyor never consulted in advance either on the consultants' report or subsequently on the Welsh Office highways department suggested changes in the alignment of the Mold bypass? If the county surveyor had been consulted, he could have told the present director of highways, Mr. George Mercer, what he told me in his letter of 9 February. He said:

"Whilst the roundabout which is in close proximity to the A549/A541 junction has been moved southward to the other side of the junction, the new proposals do not show how the Y junction of the A549 and the A541 is to tied into the new roundabout . . . Although the Consultants at the exhibition did give me an indication of one or two of the ideas which they have in mind, the fact remains that even with the new line of the Bypass, the original problem to which I drew attention in my letter of 16 June, 1975 has still not been properly tackled."

It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the Buckley road roundabout problem was raised 12 years ago, then again nine years ago, and then promptly forgotten. When the then Minister of State told me in July 1983 that

"preparation work on the Mold bypass has been accelerated"

that was presumably "Yes, Minister" jargon for, "We had better dig out the plans and files and have a look at them." Somebody apparently even forgot to do that and it took my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's fulsome commitment in the middle of my Welsh Grand Committee speech last year to flash the amber alert and set the alarm bells ringing.

Then the Welsh Office highways department did a very un-Sir Humphrey-like thing. It flew into a panic. What other conclusion can we draw? After all, when I went with the Mold town council deputation to meet my hon. Friend on 1 December, he said that he had received the consultants' report recommending the relocation of the roundabout only a few weeks ago. He only fleetingly, in passing, mentioned that it would be necessary, as a result, to amend the route. We were shown no detailed large scale plans or elevations. Why? Presumably because they had not been drawn up. It was only at the public exhibition in Mold at the beginning of this month that I or anybody else realised just how substantial and unacceptable would be the realignment resulting from the resiting of the roundabout.

I cannot believe that the suggested realignment was not drawn up after a full survey or considerable thought. As the Clwyd county surveyor has said, it does not effectively tackle the original roundabout problem. It swings unacceptably close to the communities of Mynydd Isa and Bryn-y-Baal. It runs in part through a deep gulley, where it will have a very steep gradient. It severs the two main sewer pipes serving Mynydd Isa which will have to be relaid. It passes through an area where there are uncapped mine shafts. It destroys the only wooded area between Mynydd Isa and Mold. It is based on no traffic survey.

I was told by the director of highways that a traffic survey is to be carried out in April, because that is "an average month", but summer is when congestion is at its worst. We want not a road that is adequate for an average month but a road that is satisfactory in the worst traffic months of the year.

If adopted, the realignment would lead to a delay in construction not of months but of years. My hon. Friend will remember that he assured me and the Mold town council deputation on 1 December that the delay would be only months, and only a few months at that.

[Mr. Raffan]

The town of Mold needs a bypass to relieve traffic congestion in the town, which is almost impossible to get through in the summer months. It needs it to divert heavy quarry traffic away from the town centre. It needs it to give improved access to, and so increase the attraction of, the Bromfield park industrial estate and the Nercwys road industrial park. That means additional access from the Nercwys road, which is not at present shown on the plans.

Mold needs the bypass where it will do least environmental damage to the town and the neighbouring communities of Mynydd Isa and Bryn-y-Baal. Mold needs a bypass along the lines of the originally proposed route certainly modifying and possibly dispensing altogether with the Buckley road roundabout, which I am told by the Minister's officials is a practical possibility. The new link design criteria should be incorporated as far as possible. We need that bypass to be started, as promised by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, as near as possible to the beginning of the period 1988-90.

"Mold forgotten by not bypassed" was the understandable slogan used by members of Mold town council when they led the campaign for an early start on the original bypass scheme. We now look to my hon. Friend and the Welsh Office to change that to "Mold not forgotten but bypassed."

9.5 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Wyn Roberts): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) on securing this debate and the eloquent way in which he has presented his case. He has been assiduous in pursuing the interests of his constituents and I recognise the real concern he has about the need for a bypass of Mold. In pursuing that concern I am sure that he has had to confront the problem which Ministers so frequently face in these matters, that is, the need to undertake large projects which are in the public interest but which have quite dramatic and disturbing effects on the lives of individuals. The prescribed statutory procedures are designed, of course, to ensure that full account is taken of all the different interests and views.

My hon. Friend has raised a number of pertinent issues and has posed some searching questions and I hope that I shall be able to satisfy him on those matters. But first, I think that it might be helpful to set my remarks in a more general context — indeed, it is essential that I do so. When the Government assumed office in 1979 we inherited the road construction programme of our predecessors. It was an early priority for the Government to review that in the context of our overall economic objectives. Our first review of "Roads in Wales 1980" made clear the overriding importance of tailoring our major capital investment programmes to suit those objectives. We have sustained a substantial road improvement programme and have since continued to place great emphasis on those important infrastructural improvements as a key factor in our programme for economic recovery. That has been re-emphasised in our subsequent "Roads in Wales" publications in 1983 and 1985.

I make no apologies for setting on record again the fact that since 1979 we have spent over £700 million on improving the road infrastructure. Schemes costing £260 million are currently in progress. New schemes costing £80 million should start in the next financial year and further investment of £280 million is planned to start before the end of 1990. Much of that investment has been and will be in the county of Clwyd, which embraces my hon. Friend's constituency, and will bring undoubted benefit to its people. Major bypasses were completed east of Abergele in 1981, at Hawarden in 1984, Colwyn Bay in 1985, and Holywell and Bodelwyddan in 1986. Work is in progress on bypasses at Ruabon and Gresford-Pulford and that for Newbridge should be completed later this year. My hon. Friend will not deny the high priority accorded to those schemes.

My hon. Friend knows that in constructing our programme we placed emphasis first on the M4 in south Wales and, more recently, on the enormous task of dualling the A55 across north Wales which will bring undoubted benefits. These massive schemes have, of course, taken the lion's share of our financial and staff resources and this has inevitably meant that other very worthwhile improvements have not been able to progress as quickly as we would have liked. However, the "Roads in Wales" programme continues as our forward commitment and we can look forward to a large number of projects starting within the next three or four years.

Not surprisingly, my hon. Friend has expressed concern about the time taken to progress with the Mold scheme in particular. He will recall from earlier debates, and from correspondence that I have exchanged with him, that the estimated start date for any scheme must be regarded as provisional. There are many factors which affect progress and last year I specifically drew his attention to the important qualification in "Roads in Wales 1985" that the timing of schemes will depend on such things as public reaction to proposals, the ease or difficulty of acquiring land, the complexity of engineering problems, the time needed to complete essential statutory procedures and the availability of resources. Nonetheless, we still expect that the Mold bypass will be started in the time band indicated in "Roads in Wales".

My hon. Friend referred to the fact that a line for the Mold bypass was fixed as long ago as 1977 but, even before the decision letter announcing that was published, our predecessors had announced—on 11 February 1976 — that work on preparing this scheme, along with several others, was being deferred in order to concentrate resources on higher priority projects. Indeed, the decision letter issued in September 1977—about two years after the inquiry — deferred the Mold bypass proposals "indefinitely". However, work was reactivated in 1978, but, as I mentioned earlier, there were many competing priorities with which to contend. There were other complications.

Mr. Raffan: My hon. Friend rightly says that work on preparing the scheme was resumed in 1978. I said earlier that the consultants were directed by the then director of highways at the Welsh Office to examine the problem of the roundabout then. I know how long preparing road works takes. The gestation period is long. But the central part of my speech was about the roundabout. The county surveyor did not get in touch with the Welsh Office about it last year, but in 1975, and the consultants were directed to look at the problem in 1978. Why has there been deathly silence since then?

Mr. Roberts: I am coming to that. I shall deal with all the points in sequence.

The 1977 decision letter mentioned that new design standards for roundabouts required fresh examination of the junctions included in the planned route for the bypass. But perhaps more significantly, shortly after his appointment as Clwyd county surveyor, Mr. Alastair Donaldson had twice written to the Department — as early as 1975 — expressing his concern at the proposed location of the Pont Pentre roundabout on the A549. It was his view that the suggested location for this roundabout would cause serious traffic difficulties and he suggested that the Department should reconsider the location. I understand that he recognised then that his intervention between the date of the public inquiry, but before the announcement of a decision, was difficult and that the statutory process would have to continue, but he made it clear that, as the scheme progressed, he would at every stage be pressing for a reassessment of this proposed roundabout in order that the construction of the trunk road did not impose county road problems on the county. As my hon. Friend knows only too well, the A549 and the A541 are county roads.

These issues inevitably meant complete reappraisal of the scheme and, unfortunately, this coincided with a period when design and other resources were fully stretched in progressing the other elements of the very substantial road programme that I have already described. It was, I understand, not easy to find a solution which would satisfy the surveyor's concerns and provide a bypass which would meet new highway design standards introduced in 1981. These were further to the criteria spoken about earlier as being required to be dealt with in 1978. A further complication to all this arose as a result of the changing traffic patterns resulting from the significant development which occurred in that area, not least at Mynydd Isa and at the Bryn Coch estate.

Mr. Raffan: My hon. Friend says that there was a significant change in traffic patterns. Why was a traffic survey not undertaken at that time? I have been told by the present director of highways that no traffic survey has been undertaken and that one will be carried out over a couple of days in April. Despite the changes in the built-up area at Mynydd Isa, Bryn-y-Baal and the surrounding area, no traffic survey was undertaken.

Mr. Roberts: We had some traffic figures and were content to work on the basis of those at that time. The developments in that area were quite considerable. First, the railway closed on 1 January 1984. My hon. Friend has already spoken about the Mynydd Isa residential development. There was a development on the Bromfield industrial estate. The Bryn Coch residential estate was being developed and industrial development was proposed near Nercwys road. Many of these developments resulted in expansion and, of course, there were changes in the highway network and traffic flows as a result of the Hawarden bypass.

Change has been a continuing factor in the story of the bypass and so too have changes in the criteria for roundabouts and for road alignment. As I said, it was not at all easy to find a solution to these problems. For the moment it must suffice for me to say that, because of these complications and the competing priorities, the revised proposals were not brought forward until the autumn of last year. When he spoke at the Welsh Grand Committee my right hon. Friend was speaking with the best knowledge that was available to him at the time. My hon. Friend asks when I became aware of various factors. I did not know that changes were recommended until the consultants reported in the autumn of last year.

Mr. Raffan: My hon. Friend has not yet answered the question that I put to him. The consultants were directed to look at this problem as far back as 1978. I presume the consultants were not changed and must have looked at the problem. My hon. Friend's officials must have been aware of the problem and surely they should have made him aware of it before last autumn. Even if my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales cannot be expected to be aware of a detail like this, my hon. Friend ought to have been. I do not understand why the consultants' report came as such a surprise to him when they had been specifically asked to look at the roundabout problem. I do not understand either why the Clwyd county surveyor was not directly consulted at that point, especially as the suggested changes affected four local roads for which he has direct responsibility.

Mr. Roberts: The consultants were given various directions at different times from 1978. They were asked to take into account changes in the criteria for roundabouts, road alignments, and so on. Of course, they had to take into account as well all those developments in the area to which I have referred.

Mr. Raffan: Will my hon. Friend answer the point about the county surveyor?

Mr. Roberts: The county surveyor also has his problems with the county roads, but our main interest has obviously been in that road which is the responsibility of the Welsh Office.

My hon. Friend will recall that I outlined the revised proposals to him when he brought a deputation from Mold to see me last December. Although I acknowledge that I was not able to give him details of the new line, at least I was able to tell him that a new line was proposed.

I turn now to the suggestion that the recent consultation had no real purpose because our minds are firmly set on the revised line. My hon. Friend will recognise that I must be careful not to prejudge later decisions, but I can assure him that the consultation is real and that we shall give the most careful consideration to the points being put to us. If the consultation leaflet gave the impression that all is already decided, that was certainly not the intention.

It will be realised, I am sure, that there can be only a limited range of options available in finding a cost-effective solution in this location. The Department's latest proposals have attracted criticism because the line of the bypass is too close to housing at Mynydd Isa, even though it would be in deep cutting in that area, partly for the benefit of residents there. I know that my hon. Friend is keen that we should adhere to the original route, but I am told that this could be done only if there was a radical reappraisal of the Pont Pentre junction, perhaps involving grade separation. That would undoubtedly add greatly to the cost of the scheme and we should have to undertake a fresh economic evaluation of the whole project. Nevertheless, in view of the comments that we have received, I have asked officials to look at the possibilities. An important prerequisite would be an up-to-date origin and destination survey of traffic on roads leading into

[Mr. Roberts]

Mold better to assess predicted changes in traffic patterns and, as my hon. Friend knows, this is being commissioned in April.

I have seen it suggested recently in some quarters that we have introduced these revised proposals — I emphasise again that they are just proposals—to delay matters. I shall not waste any time on that bizarre suggestion but just say that that simply is not the case.

I have tried to explain why progress on this scheme has not been as quick as my hon. Friend and his constituents would like, but let me reassure him that we do not wish to incur unnecessary delay and, indeed, we would wish to press on as quickly as we can consonant with finding a solution which would be cost-effective and would provide the best answer to all the problems involved. The first priority must be to agree the line for the bypass so that soil surveys and detailed design can proceed. A great deal of work remains to be done, including probably the preparation of amended highway orders, and we have yet precisely to identify the land requirement and secure compulsory purchase powers.

Whichever route we eventually decide to adopt, some of my hon. Friend's constituents will be affected. That is inescapable. Therefore, we can anticipate objections and another public inquiry before final decisions can be reached. It would be unwise of me to speculate on the timetable because there are so many uncertainties, as I mentioned earlier. However, I confirm again that there will be no needless delay on our part. We would hope to meet the timetable indicated in "Roads in Wales 1985."

I fully understand my hon. Friend's concern for early progress on this scheme—we all wish to see that—but I put it to him that, important though rapid progress is, it is far more important that we should achieve a road improvement which will provide the best possible solution at Mold. We should be failing in our duty if we sought to do anything less and I trust that my hon. Friend can accept this.

BBC Scotland (Police Raid)

9.25 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that Mr. Speaker deprecates Adjournment debates of which notice has not been given, but before I open on the subject of the police raid——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. The hon. Gentleman has not given notice—he has just stated that —and in view of that——

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. In view of that, I must remind the hon. Gentleman of what is stated on page 371 of "Erskine May", which I wish to read to him so that he can reflect on it:

"For many years successive Speakers have deprecated the introduction of subjects in an adjournment debate unless due notice had been given to the Minister concerned; and on occasion the Chair has expressed this view in forceful terms".

Mr. Speaker has also ruled that it is unreasonable, after 8 o'clock in the evening, to call on Ministers and their advisers to be ready to answer that day an Adjournment debate of which no prior notice has been given to the House. It seems to me that the hon. Gentleman is now seeking to do something that is contrary to the rulings of previous Speakers. Therefore, I hope that, in the light of what I have read out to him, he will not pursue the matter further.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Part of the difficulty is that I am conscious that successive Speakers have deprecated that. Normally, the rules and manners of the House of Commons are important, but the truth is that those who want to raise Adjournment debates on delicate subjects find, lo and behold, that even if they give the proper notice as they would have wished, and as I would have wished to give this morning, the Government Whips, especially in this Government—I do not exclude the Government of my choice, the Labour Government —make it clear that, somehow or another, debates will be extended. I know perfectly well that if I had given the courteous notice that I would have wished about the police raid on the BBC offices in Queen Margaret drive in Glasgow, I would have found that, by some alchemy, the previous debates would have been extended. Had I given such notice, doubtless the debate on the railway would have gone on and on and on. Once bitten, twice shy, because I have had that happen to me before.

The time of the House of Commons is extremely precious and I am conscious that we have few opportunities. Therefore, I understand that there is deprecation, and the force of it. Nevertheless, although it may be awkward, I insist on my right, and although it may be deprecated by the Chair, my right is at 9.25 pm to raise a subject which is important to many people in Scotland. It is important to put many questions on the record, so——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have told the hon. Gentleman what successive Speakers have ruled in this regard. I must repeat that this sort of conduct has been deprecated in strong terms by the Chair. If the hon. Gentleman insists on speaking, I shall have to hear him, but before he rises again I ask him to reflect that he is going clean contrary to successive rulings by successive occupants of the Chair.

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If I, as a much more junior, less experienced Member of Parliament, can anticipate that business may end early and that there may be room for a further Adjournment debate, surely the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) can also do so? That is a grave abuse of the House and it is an indirect boomeranged insult at himself that he did not anticipate this opportunity. His excuse is clearly spurious.

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) saw the opportunity for a second Adjournment debate and applied for one through the appropriate procedure. He made it clear that his debate would be in order and that a Minister would be on hand to answer it and he got clearance for it from Mr. Speaker. Therefore, I can confirm that he saw his opportunity and followed it up in the conventional way.

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) insists on addressing the House I will listen to him, but before he rises again I ask him to reflect on what successive Speakers have said about this type of conduct. I ask him to observe the normal procedures and courtesies of the House. If he persists, I shall have to listen to him, but I ask him to reflect on that and not to rise again.

Mr. Dalyell: Further to my point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Parliament exists to be used and procedures are surely the servant either of political objectives or what hon. Members believe to be important. If the matter were some trivial issue, I would not behave in this way. The hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) said that he was a new Member of the House and I must say with complete courtesy that he is being a little naive about the way Whips of both parties work. As soon as they know that a subject will be raised which they do not want raised, lo and behold, they wheel in many hon. Members to talk at length —I shall not say "filibuster"—on a particular subject. That has happened to me. Therefore, although this may be a great black mark with Mr. Speaker, I want to put on the record certain important questions about a happening which is having reverberations in Scotland. For two hours tomorrow, for example, Scottish journalists will go on strike, for the first time in many cases, about a matter of principle.

Mr. Raffan: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman is replying on a point of order to what you said or embarking on a speech. He is being a little naive if he thinks that Government Whips can prolong debates endlessly on the obscure but important question of the Mold bypass. There are only so many Members on the Government Benches side, one and myself, who know enough to prolong a debate on it. I was certainly not prevailed on by Government Whips to prolong the debate in any way. I can only think that the hon. Gentleman is being extremely naive if he also thinks that Opposition Whips can prevail on hon. Members to prolong the first Adjournment debate on a hospital at Machynlleth for any length of time. The hon. Gentleman is using a spurious, unfounded excuse to justify an abuse of our procedures. He has no justification for it. He could easily have submitted his Adjournment debate and the subject of it in time and followed the procedures as I, a much more junior and less experienced Member, did. He has bypassed—I have been talking about bypasses all night—those procedures totally. It is offensive to Mr. Speaker and to all hon. Members that he cannot follow procedures when everybody else does.

Mr. Dalyell: The hon. Member or Delyn talks about bypassing. The truth is that if I had not bypassed the procedures there would be no such Adjournment debate and I shall, therefore, get on with it.

The first question is, did the Scottish Office official who was informed by the Strathclyde police about the raid tell the Secretary of State for Scotland at the first opportunity? If he did not, why not? Did he or she take the view that such a matter as a weekend search of the BBC could wait until Monday morning and routine business? As the police search, at moderated level, was the first item on the 1 o'clock news on Saturday 31 January——

Mr. Raffan: On a further point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As the hon. Member for Linlithgow is embarking on a detailed discussion about the raids, may I ask whether he has given notice to the Minister responsible, presumably my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, that he was going to raise the subject? It is not just offensive to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and to the Chair but to all hon. Members that the hon. Gentleman should be embarking upon this debate in this way. It is a gross abuse and discourtesy and the total antithesis of our democracy and of parliamentary debate that he should not have informed my right hon. and learned Friend. He clearly has not because my right hon. and learned Friend, who is an assiduous Minister and Member of the Cabinet and a highly proficient member of the Government, would have been in his place at the Dispatch Box ready to reply to the hon. Gentleman. Not only has he bypassed the procedures of the House and gone behind the Chair's back in this devious and offensive way but he has not even had the courtesy to inform my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland that he was going to embark upon this speech.

The hon. Gentleman has claimed this evening to be talking about parliamentary debate and democracy. Surely, if he wants to air the issues, he should have ensured that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland was present in the Chamber to be able to reply to his points so that those reading *Hansard* tomorrow, I and many of my unfortunate colleagues who are not present in the Chamber could have a balanced view of the subject and a full opportunity to see the different points. My hon. Friends would have been present if they had known that the hon. Gentleman was going to make a speech. He is a powerful orator and we would all have turned up to hear him. Surely the hon. Gentleman wants them to have an opportunity to see the different points and he should have ensured that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State was here to reply and put the other point of view. Why did he not do that because——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I realise that the hon. Gentleman is raising a point of order with me but this must be brief.

All I can say again to the hon. Member for Linlithgow is that I have expressed clearly the views of successive Speakers about these matters. I have reminded him of the

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

normal courtesies with regard to Adjournment debates. He will recognise full well that one of the key aspects of our procedures in this place is that if Ministers are to have a reasonable opportunity to answer they must be given notice. The hon. Gentleman has already admitted that he has not gone through the normal procedures. He has not applied for an Adjournment debate to Mr. Speaker, he has not informed a Minister that he wished to raise these matters and I merely repeat that successive Speakers have deprecated such conduct in the strongest terms. I hope, in view of that, that the hon. Gentleman will not persist.

Mr. Dalyell: If we are on the subject of normal courtesies——

Mr. Raffan: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Dalyell: We had better understand that the normal courtesies were not observed in relation to Mr. Pat Chandler and other senior staff of BBC Scotland at Queen Margaret drive.

Mr. Raffan: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Dalyell: It is precisely because the normal courtesies have broken down in our society that I am raising these matters on the Floor of the House.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It was only a short time ago — the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) will remember this well—that the hon. Gentleman attempted to raise the same matter in another Adjournment debate. My right hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General was present on that occasion. It was another Deputy Speaker who said that I needed to have the leave of both the hon. Member for Linlithgow——

Mr. Dalyell: Which I gave.

Mr. Cash: —and that of my right hon. and learned Friend to speak on that occasion. That leave was graciously given, but it seems that the hon. Gentleman, as I accused him on the occasion to which I have referred, is abusing the procedures of the House yet again. He is attempting to raise matters in a most disgraceful manner.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his comments. He has raised a further point of order on which I can make no comment. I have made the view of the Chair entirely clear. I appeal again to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) not to persist.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Raffan: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South) *rose*——

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): Further to that point of order Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Bermingham: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have listened to point of order after point of order and I say to the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) that manners becometh man. It might help occasionally if words such as "devious" and goodness knows what else were not used.

Mr. Raffan: They are accurate.

Mr. Bermingham: I look to you, Mr. Speaker, to protect a Member who has a point about which he feels strongly and a principle that he holds dear. I notice that the Chair—I say this with great respect—has not sought to protect that Member's right to speak, even though his intervention is said to be an abuse of the processes of the House. The House would be a poorer place—I say this to the hon. Member for Delyn——

Mr. Raffan *rose*——

Mr. Bermingham: Please remain seated for a moment. Thou hast spoken enough tonight, dear boy. This House would be a poorer place if the rights of ordinary Members to express a grievance were not allowed to be put into effect.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. These are not points of order. We cannot have a debate on points of order or on my rulings.

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Mr. Raffan: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Cash: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Forsyth: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I call the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth).

Mr. Forsyth: I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Perhaps you can offer some guidance on the rights of Back Benchers. It seems that if the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) is to persist in defying your clear guidance, second Adjournment debates in future might be threatened. This is a matter of considerable concern. Adjournment debates are one of the few vehicles that are open to Back Benchers who observe the normal courtesies to raise matters of great constituency importance. Perhaps you will guide us on the likely effect of the hon. Gentleman's discourtesy should he persist in going ahead despite your clear guidance and rulings.

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Adjournment debates are highly prized. They take place every day at the end of our parliamentary day and they are private Members' time. There are rules and conventions that have been laid down. An hon. Member who has the good fortune to have an Adjournment debate as a result of the ballot, or because of Mr. Speaker's selection, expects a Minister to be present to answer the debate. Ministers cannot be present to answer debates unless notice has been given. It is for that reason that the first Adjournment debate is arranged in the traditional way with which the House is familiar. There are well-established procedures and courtesies laid down for any further Adjournment debate. If those courtesies are not observed — I merely repeat this for the hon. Gentleman once more — successive Speakers have strongly deprecated the sort of conduct in which he is persisting. I appeal to him again not to pursue it. If he insists on pursuing it, I shall of course have to hear him.

Mr. Dalyell: The difficulty is that we are talking about conduct. The conduct and standards of the House have gone down. The hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) mentioned that there had been a previous debate. During

the previous debate we thought that no Minister had heard about the BBC raid until he heard about it on the news at 1 o'clock on Saturday. As between 2 February, when he made his first statement, and 13 February, somehow, in the middle of a Friday, my hon. Friends the Members for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) and for East Kilbride (Dr. Miller) heard that the Secretary of State for Scotland was indeed told that this was a breakdown of trust——

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I shall listen to points of order if they are points of order. I do not think we need to go around the course yet again. If there is a different point of order, I shall listen to it.

Mr. Raffan: I seek your guidance, once again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, like my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling. The hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) rose, he said, to protect the rights of hon. Members. I ask you to protect the right of an hon. Member — my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, who, if he had been given notice of the debate, would have been here to reply to it. How can we possibly have an Adjournment debate, as opposed to an Adjournment monologue, if my right hon. and learned Friend is not here to reply to it? It clearly is an abuse of the House.

There is nothing democratic about the lack of procedure upon which the hon. Member for Linlithgow has embarked. He is trying to grab a few cheap headlines by ensuring that a balanced view is not presented both to the House and the country as a whole by ensuring that my right hon. and learned Friend is not here to reply to his speech point by point. What the hon. Member for Linlithgow cannot stand and dislikes more than anything else is a rebuttal of the spurious points that he makes in debates such as this.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. All that I can do is to repeat the point that I have already made on several occasions about the strong views that have been expressed by successive Speakers, but I have no power to prevent the hon. Gentleman from addressing the House if, in spite of what I have said, he intends to do so.

Mr. Cash *rose*——

Mr. Michael Forsyth *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I shall hear the hon. Member for Linlithgow.

Mr. Dalyell: It will be of benefit to the House if I ask some questions. Did the official still think, throughout the Saturday and Sunday, that there was no need to contact his or her Secretary of State?

Mr. Forsyth *rose*——

Mr. Cash *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am listening to a point of order.

Mr. Forsyth: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have already raised with you the rights of Back Benchers. As I understand it, if any hon. Member makes an application to Mr. Speaker for an Adjournment debate which has already been applied for by another hon. Member he is refused. The hon. Gentleman has not only not had the courtesy to inform the Secretary of State that he planned to raise this matter but has ignored Mr. Speaker. What will be the position — I do not know whether any hon. Member will be in this position — of an hon. Member who may have asked for an Adjournment debate on this subject in the normal way? Surely these procedures have been ignored, and this could create considerable embarrassment and difficulty. Where do we stand on this matter?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I do not think that I can deal with a hypothetical situation. I understand the point that the hon. Member has made, the difficulties that could easily arise and the possible threat to the high value that the House places on Adjourment debates. As I have said, I have no power to refuse to listen to the hon. Gentleman if he persists in addressing the House.

Mr. Dalyell: The only likely explanation——

Mr. Cash: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have been reading "Erskine May", for reasons that may become apparent. On page 290 it deals with motions for the Adjournment of the House. Following the point that you made with regard to the importance of these questions, it states unequivocally that

> "The motion 'That this House do now adjourn', moved when there is no question before the House, is a form of substantive motion, but is more conveniently treated apart. The substantive motion for the Adjournment may be used for discussing many subjects other than the termination of a sitting. Once such a motion has been agreed to, a sitting is necessarily terminated; but it frequently happens that an adjournment motion is moved without any intention of pressing it to a conclusion, and it is consequently withdrawn when its purpose has been served".

My point is that questions relating to the Adjournment of the House are frequently governed by motions. It may be that on this occasion no motion is being moved. On the other hand, this is an example of an hon. Member quite clearly, without regard for the rules of the House, trying —as I accused him the other day—to grab the headlines to raise a question that he knows perfectly well he would be unable to raise in the normal course of events, and without a Minister, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind), being present. The embarrassment that the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) is seeking to inflict upon the House, and that we have every intention of preventing him from inflicting, is a filibuster of its own kind. It is an abuse of the procedures of this House and we have absolutely no intention of allowing the hon. Gentleman to drag the procedures of this House through the mire of his own speculations and groundless allegations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I appreciate the points that the hon. Gentleman has made, but I have to point out to him and to the House that we are on the Adjournment motion. That is one of the dificulties that we are facing. Mr. Dalyell.

Mr. Dalyell: It was all part of the preordained plan——

Mr. Raffan: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In view of what you have just said and in view of the valid point that was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), I wonder whether I may ask you to ask Mr. Speaker to make a ruling on this particular event. The position is not clear. The Chair has made it quite clear that it deprecates the kind of behaviour upon which the hon. Member for Linlithgow has embarked — a total bypass of the procedures of this

[Mr. Raffan]

House, going behind the Chair's back and not ensuring that a member of the Cabinet is present to reply to the debate. As this is such a grave abuse of our procedures and such an offence to the Chair and to hon. Members, surely I am right in asking that tonight's disgraceful events should be brought directly to the attention of Mr. Speaker so that he can make a clear ruling to the House and we are not faced once again with such an appalling, disgraceful and embarrassing situation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I shall certainly report to Mr. Speaker what has happened tonight. I cannot comment further on that, but again I remind the House that the Chair and all hon. Members are bound by the rules and conventions of this House. If they are not correctly observed, it will be a very poor day for the House of Commons.

Mr. Dalyell: Was there perhaps some misunderstanding between the civil servants of the kind with which we became so familiar——

Notice being taken that Strangers were present, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER, *pursuant to Standing Order No. 143 (Withdrawal of Strangers from the House), put forthwith the Question,* That strangers do withdraw:—

The House divided: Ayes 0, Noes 8.

Division No. 92] [9.54 pm

AYES

Nil

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Michael Forsyth and
Mr. Keith Raffan.

NOES

Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Dalyell, Tam
Faulds, Andrew
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Robertson, George
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Wallace, James

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John Maxton and
Mr. Gerald Bermingham.

It appearing from the report of the Division that 40 Members were not present, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *declared that the Question was not decided.*

And it being after Ten o'clock, the Motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Whereupon MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, it being then four minutes past Ten o'clock, till tomorrow.*

Adjourned at four minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 17 February 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

NEW WRIT

For Truro, in the room of David Charles Penhaligon, Esquire, deceased.—*[Mr. Alton.]*

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRIGHTON MARINE PALACE AND PIER BILL *[Lords]*
Order for Third reading read.
Queen's consent on behalf of the Crown signified.
Read the Third time and passed, with amendments.

MID GLAMORGAN COUNTY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords]*
As amended, considered; to be read the Third time.

Oral Answers to Questions

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

AIDS

1. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what guidance his Department has given to education authorities about educating young people on the dangers of AIDS.

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): The booklet "Children at School and Problems Related to AIDS", issued in June last year, made it clear that schools have a responsibility to provide pupils with information about AIDS and its transmission. My right hon. Friend will be issuing shortly, to all local education authorities, to teachers in schools and further education institutions and to the youth service, detailed factual information about AIDS to enable young people to be fully educated on the subject and to have their questions authoritatively answered.

Mr. Hirst: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's reply. Will she assure me that such guidance as is given in schools will be given in a sensitive way that reinforces the moral guidance that children should receive in the home? Does she also agree that it is objectionable that some Labour-controlled local authorities are busy promoting gay lessons, the very sort of conduct that is leading to the AIDS cases in Britain?

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has already made it clear that there can be absolutely no justification for any sort of teaching that advocates homosexual behaviour or in any sense encourages homosexual experimentation by pupils. He is having further inquiries made most urgently of those local educational authorities which have been reported as promoting such teaching to establish the facts and to determine whether there is a case for central Government intervention. On the first part of my hon. Friend's question, of course it is the Department's clear intention to ensure that information about AIDS is given as sensitively as possible and within the context of proper family life.

Mr. Strang: Does the Minister accept that it is dangerously misleading to promote the idea that AIDS is a disease of homosexuals? I commend to her the excellent document produced by the Scottish Office as a guidance for educational establishments in Scotland. Does she recognise that it is important to produce such a document and to ensure that real information is imparted to children in the schools, not least because of some of the misinformation that is still appearing in the popular press, such as the article that appeared in a popular Scottish Sunday newspaper this weekend, which stated that AIDS could not be spread through normal heterosexual intercourse?

Mrs. Rumbold: Of course, the hon. Gentleman is quite right. The disease is promulgated not merely by homosexuals. It has now become a heterosexual disease. Therefore, it is important that the correct information about this disastrous disease is given to children and parents in a way that is clearly understood and so that there is no misapprehension about the manner in which the disease can be conveyed. It is not conveyed solely through sexual behaviour. It can be conveyed through other methods.

Mr. Key: Will my hon. Friend give guidance to teachers who, under the Education (No. 2) Act 1986, find themselves in conflict with school governors, who now have the right to say whether sex education should be taught in their schools? Under previous arrangements there would have been no problem, but now there may well be a problem, especially in Roman Catholic schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: I understand the problem to which my hon. Friend refers. It is true that, according to the new regulations under the 1986 Act, governing bodies will be able to dictate what is taught in terms of sex education to children in those schools. I reiterate, however, that we regard it as extremely important that all schools have teachers who will give clear instruction about the dangers of AIDS. This is slightly beyond the remit of simple sex education; it is more to do with health education, since it covers such matters as drug abuse.

Mr. Radice: I welcome the Minister's statement. Following the question of the hon. Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key), will the hon. Lady tell the House how the Secretary of State will ensure that in those schools that exercise their new right under the 1986 Act to ban sex education pupils will be made aware of the dangers of AIDS?

Mrs. Rumbold: It is true that the governing bodies have the final say on sex education. They will be guided by the head teachers. The matter of AIDS goes slightly wider than sex education as a whole. It is important that all

instruction appertaining to AIDS is taught within the context of a proper social structure and the proper social apparatus of married family life.

Pupil-Teacher Ratios

2. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the average pupil-teacher ratio in junior and secondary schools, respectively, at the most recent date for which figures are available; and what were the comparable totals in 1978.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Kenneth Baker): The average pupil-teacher ratio within maintained primary schools in England has fallen from 23·6:1 to 22·1:1 between 1978 and 1986. For secondary schools there has been an improvement from 16·9 to 15·9. Taken together, these are the lowest figures in our history.

Mr. Taylor: Are not these dramatic improvements a clear sign of the Government's full commitment to the improvement of education? Within this improving general picture, will my right hon. Friend bear in mind the special problems in areas such as Southend where very high accommodation costs make it difficult to recruit the additional teachers whom the Government wish the county to employ?

Mr. Baker: I certainly agree with my hon. Friend. The improvement shows that we are commiting substantial extra funds to the education service. There has been a record increase in the amount that I have made available for next year. I appreciate that in certain areas there are problems with the accommodation costs for teachers. I recall that my hon. Friend's county of Essex is one of those counties that are making special arrangements and offers to help with teachers' accommodation costs.

Dr. McDonald: Is the Secretary of State aware that, according to the Essex schools handbook, the basic staffing ratio in Essex is 31 children per teacher? That is creating many difficulties in the primary schools in Thurrock. They are facing great difficulties in obtaining staff and youngsters have suffered considerably, not from a strike, but simply because they have not been able to obtain one teacher to teach the class throughout the school year. Children have been subjected to a constant change of supply teachers and part-time teachers. There has been no teaching continuity and stability. This just shows the disastrous effect of the Government's policies on education in my constituency.

Mr. Baker: I assure the hon. Lady that I visited various schools in Essex about a fortnight ago and I was impressed by the standard of performance that I saw. I very much regret that, during the past 18 months, disruption has occurred in many schools because of strike action, which has acted against the interests of education. I deplore the possible resumption of such action.

Mr. Pawsey: What will be the impact on pupil-teacher ratios of the recently announced increases in pay and the changes in salary structure? Will the right hon. Gentleman take advantage of this opportunity to appeal to teachers not to continue with any further disruptive action?

Mr. Baker: My pay proposals will improve the pay and career prospects of all teachers. I deplore the fact that leaders of some teachers' unions are threatening further disruption and stoppages in our classrooms. It is a sad fact that the only time when the leaders of the National Union of Teachers and the National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers seem to agree is when they unite for disruption and unite against the education of our children.

11-plus Selection

3. **Ms. Clare Short** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to reintroduce selection at 11-plus years.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have no plans to compel local education authorities to reintroduce grammar schools. It is for LEAs, in the first instance, to consider how to organise school provision in their areas.

Ms. Short: I am surprised by the Secretary of State's answer. We know that he has told the press that through an expansion of the city technology colleges he is planning to reintroduce selection at 11 years. Will the right hon. Gentleman come clean with the House? Has he not learnt that selection at 11 years, which he might think is popular with parents, is not popular with the majority who are not selected? The problem with our secondary school system is that it expects to fail too many children. Dividing them into sheep and goats at 11 years is no part of the answer.

Mr. Baker: I am surprised that the hon. Lady has tabled this question because she represents a city which is Labour controlled—Birmingham—which still believes in selective schools. Birmingham maintains eight grammar schools, and I am glad to say that I have no proposals before me from Labour-controlled Birmingham to abolish them.

Mr. Greenway: Does my hon. Friend agree that, whether or not we have selection at 11-plus, children's education will be severly damaged if teachers resume strikes? Does he not feel that the time has come for teachers to put their action behind them and look forward to negotiating a replacement for Burnham, which is the way they should go?

Mr. Baker: As I said in reply to an earlier question, I deplore the fact that some of the leaders of the teacher's unions are again talking of disruption. I do not believe that teachers, generally, will respond to such an irresponsible call to inflict further worry upon parents, especially working parents, who will yet again be victimised if there is disruption in our schools and the children are sent home.

Mr. Ashdown: When we hear the Prime Minister's rhetoric about the reintroduction of grammar schools, when we listen to the Secretary of State on bench marks and see that he is attempting to introduce city technology colleges, does the right hon. Gentleman not realise that there are many who fear that there is a secret item in the Conservative party manifesto, which is the wholesale re-introduction of selective education? Will he categorically deny that?

Mr. Baker: I have read what purports to be the Liberal party's education policy in its document — there is nothing secret in it, because there is nothing in it at all. As far as I can see, the policy of the Liberal party and the SDP is to support the Labour party in abolishing grammar schools, though I believe that the Liberals in the city of Plymouth will vote to keep their grammar schools.

Mr. Ashdown: Yes or no? Answer the question.

Mr. Baker: To answer the hon. Gentleman's question, I am trying to improve the standards of quality of all schools.

Mr. Baldry: Does my right hon. Friend not think that one of the most depressing things about education policy is the way in which our opponents seek to misrepresent what we are trying to do? Would it not be sensible for the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) to ask her neighbour, the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan), for a copy of his Ruskin College speech of 1976, where he spoke of the need for core curriculum, national standards of performance and an enhanced and strengthened inspectorate to maintain those standards? Is that not exactly what we are seeking to do with our bench marks and targets of attainment?

Mr. Baker: The right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan) is in his place, and I pay tribute to the fact that he started this great debate in 1976.

Mr. Key: He was torpedoed by Shirley Williams.

Mr. Baker: Yes, he was not helped by his then Secretary of State, who has now joined the SDP. The right hon. Gentleman started on this road. I am glad to say that the Opposition Front Bench spokesman recently said that there would be agreement between us, and I dare say on both sides of the House, to move towards a national curriculum with the various bench marks and tests.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Core curriculum.

Mr. Baker: Core curriculum, yes. I hope that that will be achieved by a measure of agreement and consensus throughout the country.

Mr. Radice: The Secretary of State is right to say that the Labour party has been in favour of a core curriculum for a number of years. Will he tell the House who is speaking for the Government on grammar schools? Is it the Prime Minister, who suggested last weekend that grammar schools should be reintroduced, or is it the Secretary of State, who has remembered that bringing back grammar schools would mean bringing back the 11-plus? Is it his policy to reintroduce more grammar schools, or does he want to bring back selection by stealth?

Mr. Baker: I welcome the fact that the hon. Gentleman has now given support to my proposals for a national curriculum.

Mr. Sheerman: We have been in favour of a core curriculum for years. Look at the record.

Mr. Baker: If the hon. Gentleman had been in favour of the core curriculum he could have talked about it before I did, but he did not.

On the matter of grammar schools, looking at the history of the past 30 years, many people regret, and continue to regret, the loss of many fine schools. I am concerned with improving standards right across the system, and I intend to bring forward proposals to that effect.

Brain Drain

4. Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to seek to stop the brain drain from higher education institutions in the United Kingdom.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. George Walden): The Government are determined to maintain healthy and successful institutions of higher education in this country. Increases totalling more than £150 million are being provided for current expenditure in 1987-88 by universities and advanced further education institutions. Further additional funding, rising to over £70 million in 1989-90 has been offered to universities once satisfactory new arrangements have been agreed covering pay structure and performance appraisal.

Mr. Ross: Has the Minister had time to study the many articles on this subject in the press and media, particularly the article in *The Guardian*, which highlighted the low morale among academics due to cutbacks, freezing of posts, and lack of promotion for specialists? Does he not think that that is an indictment of the Government's policy? Is he not ashamed of the rather backhanded compliment paid to us by the United States as it draws expertise in arts and social sciences from this country to the United States? Does he not agree that shortly we will need not only a save British science campaign, but a save British arts and social sciences campaign as well?

Mr. Walden: I have done rather better than read *The Guardian*. I have talked to quite a few academics. They say to me in private, and some of them say in public, that the Government are doing the right thing in two major directions. The first is to recognise the inevitability of concentrating resources, particularly in science, in those departments which will become centres of excellence and well equipped. Secondly, they are wholeheartedly in favour of what the Government are trying to do in reforming the whole structure of academic salaries so as to produce a generation of scientists who will have promotion prospects and the right level of pay and who will be attracted to the new centres of excellence that we shall put in place.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Does my hon. Friend agree that at universities such as Birmingham and Aston the brain drain will continue because they are perplexed by the fact that they are doing just what this country needs people to do, which is produce technological graduates, but their grant keeps being cut? What does one have to do to get justice? What more does one have to do to please the Government when one is doing the right thing?

Mr. Walden: My hon. Friend talked about cuts in grant. Let me remind him of the overall facts. The money available for science in this country is being increased from three directions. First, there is an increase this year of £95 million in the funds for universities, and some of that, through the dual funding system, will go into science. Secondly, the Government are making available, conditional on restructuring, £40 million to improve the morale of scientific academics through higher pay.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak, (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) asked about Birmingham.

Mr. Walden: I shall come to Birmingham if the hon. Gentleman will wait.

Thirdly, the science budget has gone up by 6·3 per cent. this year.

The point about Birmingham and Aston, which I have visited, is that they are doing excellent work, but, like other

universities, they are in the middle of reforms which they recognise as necessary and we do not make the judgments on how those extra funds are delivered.

Mr. Sheerman: Is the Under-Secretary of State aware that when he is talking to academics he should talk also to those heads of department in science and engineering subjects, who say that the morale of the profession is lower than at any time that they can remember, and that the flood of people leaving the profession is not just a matter of quantity, but of quality, because top level engineers and scientists are going to the United States? Will he do something about the overall funding of universities and departments, which has gone down and down during the past eight years? This has been happening not only during the past year, but for the past eight years. When will the Under-Secretary of State do something about morale in our universities?

Mr. Walden: As I might have suspected, the hon. Gentleman would have done better to listen to my previous reply, which would have given him, in advance, the answer to his question. We have increased funding and we have made money available for what could be considerable increases in salaries. However, that money is conditional on certain reforms which scientists and academics know are long overdue, but which were avoided by the Labour party when it was in power.

North-West Region

5. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received about the arrangements for further education in the north-west; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend has received a number of letters in 1987 from hon. Members and from local authorities about further education in the north-west. In December I met a delegation from Bolton, including hon. Members, about the possible designation of Bolton institute of higher education as an additional polytechnic.

Mr. Thurnham: In view of the importance of advanced further education to local industry, will my hon. Friend ensure that colleges and polytechnics in the north-west obtain adequate funding for next year?

Mr. Walden: We shall do better than that. I have noticed that among the general increases in funding that the Government have provided, no less than 9 per cent. has gone to polytechnics and colleges in the north-west. I am glad to add that the increase for the Bolton institute of higher education, for which I know my hon. Friend has a particular affection, totals no less than 17 per cent. Having visited that college, I should say that that increase is well earned.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the Under-Secretary of State accept that increasing fees reduces the number of students?

Mr. Walden: The simple answer to that question is to consider the statistics. Whether Opposition Members like it or not, we are living through the biggest expansion of higher education in this country since the legendary Robbins era. The fact that the hon. Gentleman has raised that piddling question shows that he is avoiding the essential fact of that expansion.

Mr. Robert Atkins: Does my hon. Friend believe that arrangements for further education in the north-west are enhanced by the conduct of the Associated Examining Board, which recently announced that, for A-levels, for example, the proper use of the English language, the ability to spell and the correct use of syntax were not important for passing examinations? Does he agree that that is ridiculous?

Mr. Walden: I am glad not to have formal responsibility for schools, or I might be tempted to say exactly what I think about the views of the AEB.

Student Grants

6. **Mr. Spencer** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on recent progress in the review of student grants.

Mr. Walden: The review group is meeting regularly. It has received written evidence from about 100 organisations, seven of which have been invited to give oral evidence. Questionnaires have been sent to 17 foreign countries, seeking information on how their students are financed. I have visited America and plan to visit France, Germany and Sweden. To assist the review group in its work my Department is commissioning an independent survey of student's income and expenditure. I would expect the review to be completed this year.

Mr. Spencer: Does my hon. Friend agree that any new system must hold the balance fairly between the responsibilities of taxpayers, parents and students, but must also ensure that access to higher education is not made more difficult for those who come from low income backgrounds?

Mr. Walden: I can only endorse both those sentiments. I should like to add that although I am entirely against attempting to import ready-made systems from abroad, I was deeply impressed in the United States by the overall acceptance by parents, students and institutions that there is a tripartite responsibility for the maintenance of students, shared by taxpayers, parents and students.

Mr. Bermingham: Does the Minister agree that the experience of America is of a considerable number of students who must spend part of their time working in industry, stores or shops, and the rest of their time worrying about how they will ever repay the loans that they have had to take out to finance their education?

Mr. Walden: The hon. Gentleman has touched on several problems. First, he must remember that my review is not considering charging students for their educational fees, so even if we adopt a loan system there is no remote possibility of students having the same burden of debt as they have in the United States. Secondly, it is often Opposition Members and the educational community who sing the praises of the American system, which, besides having loans, somehow provides greater access than we do. That contradiction should be reconciled by the critics of loans.

Mr. Maclean: When my hon. Friend was in the United States, did he note the pride that most American universities have over the greater access to their higher education system for poor and working-class families than we have with our present grant system?

Mr. Walden: I am glad that my hon. Friend asked that estion. It is a myth, which again is cultivated by the position, that access to higher education is determined the present rate of grant. The fact is—we are not nying it—that the value of the grant has decreased in ent years and at the same time access has exploded to els which can only be compared with the Robbins riod. Access is determined, not by grants, but by the ality of schools. The Labour party is now the party of v standards in schools—*[Interruption.]* Yes, it is. A ld does not stand much of a chance of gaining entry into gher education if he has had the misfortune to be ucated in Brent.

Mr. James Lamond: Is the Minister aware of the nosphere of uncertainty and anxiety among students, ich is caused not only by the continuing delay of the port, but by the rumours of a loan system, the reduction grants to universities, which could affect their course, the Select Committee's report, which strongly pports the case of students for a proper grant system? rely the hon. Gentleman cannot believe that all that is nducive to students making the best use of their time at iversity?

Mr. Walden: First, we have increased the student grant e this year by 3·75 per cent., which is fully in line with e projected rate of inflation. I take the hon. Gentleman's int in so far as there are students who, for various asons, are having a thin time. That is why we are having eview of the problems. Secondly, I share his point about e efficient use of our higher education system. We have ther a good higher education system, partly because it efficient, and nothing that I shall recommend will mage it.

Mr. Greenway: Does my hon. Friend accept the animous view of the Select Committee that the retail ices index is no real measure of student expenditure and eds, and that a completely new student index needs to produced to give a proper measure of student penditure?

Mr. Walden: As I said in my initial reply, the review oup, of which I am chairman, is commissioning an dependent survey of student income and expenditure, t I must tell my hon. Friend that the fact that we are oking in detail at student expenditure does not mean that e are undertaking to underwrite that expenditure. The overnment must take some cognisance of the strong ancial pressures coming from perhaps even more serving areas.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Will the Minister confirm that e Select Committee found considerable hardship among idents and that it recommended that this year's grant crease should be well above the rate of inflation? Will he rther confirm that he argued for the minimum increase make it easy to introduce loans? Will he make it clear at the loans proposal will involve students in receiving rt grant and part loan—about half and half?

Mr. Walden: First, the Government are very grateful r the timely Select Committee report on student grants. must draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the fact at the Committee's terms of reference were restricted to nsidering the present grants system and not to finding alternative element of funding. As the hon. Gentleman so bold today, I draw his attention to his considerable reticence and evasiveness when I asked him in Committee whether he supported the National Union of Students in its call for a tripling of Government grants to the phenomenal figure of £1·5 billion. It will be interesting to know whether the hon. Gentleman will be as evasive today, and I should also like to know what is the position or positions of the alliance on that estimate?

Maintained Schools

7. **Mr. Nicholas Baker** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will bring forward proposals for the greater independence of maintained schools from central and local government.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Schools are getting increased autonomy under the new Education Act. As it is being implemented, I shall be considering proposals for further measures to strengthen the effectiveness of schools.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Does my right hon. Friend accept that part of the greater independence of schools is a greater ability to get rid of bad teachers and much greater responsibility, authority and independence for the good teachers, in particular head teachers, in those schools? Will he introduce proposals in this direction?

Mr. Kenneth Baker: At the very heart of my proposals is the head teacher. I want to improve the power and ability of the head teacher, who is absolutly critical to the success of a school. Under the provisions of the Education (No. 2) Act that was passed last year, local authorities are no longer able to foist, without more ado, their choice of head teacher on a school without the agreement of the governing body. That is a major step forward. I wish to re-emphasise the importance that we attach to increasing the authority of a school's head teacher.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Is the Secretary of State aware that when the reorganisation of the maintained sector takes place there will be considerable antipathy towards the maintenance of controlled and aided schools in the denominational sector? Will he consider the position in Leeds, where reorganisation will take place because of falling schools rolls, to ensure that the denominational schools within the maintained sector are treated fairly?

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Church schools and voluntary-aided schools have a much greater degree of independence. They own their own property and employ their own staff. I wish to make it clear that I want to see much greater control given to the governing bodies and head teachers over their own budgets. That will be the thrust of our policy after we are returned to office at the next election.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Is my right hon. Friend aware that a large number of head teachers in the country welcome the opportunity to have more control, together with their governors, over the way in which cash is spent within schools, and to cut down on the form-filling bureaucracy, of which many complain at the moment? Does he agree that it might be a good idea, in the long term, to establish some form of staff college to help with the training of head teachers in management and associated skills?

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I am attracted by such a proposal and I shall have something to say about that later in the year. On the question of the power of schools, already the budget of a secondary school, which is about £1·5 million

to £2 million, has been handed over to the school and governing body. Several schools in Cambridgeshire and Solihull have adopted that practice, and I want it to be extended right across the country.

Mr. Radice: Does the Secretary of State think that local government has any role to play in education?

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Local authorities will continue to be the main providers and will continue to have the responsibilities that flow from that. Just as the hon. Gentleman has become a convert to the national curriculum, so I am sure that he will become a convert to financial delegation to the schools.

Mr. Alan Howarth: In securing the very desirable objective of greater independence for maintained schools, will my right hon. Friend consider whether there may not be an awkward contradiction between policies of extending financial devolution and parental choice and the policy of imposing a national curriculum?

Mr. Kenneth Baker: As schools obtain greater independence in the control of their finances, they will also conform to a national curriculum that will be inspected by an enlarged inspectorate. I do not envisage any conflict between the two roles, as both are aimed at improving the quality of education in our schools.

Local Education Authorities (Capital Allocations)

8. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about the capital allocations made to local education authorities for 1987-88.

Mrs. Rumbold: We have received 210 such representations, including those referring to allocations for capital work at voluntary-aided and special agreement schools.

Mr. Alton: In view of the plentiful evidence that Her Majesty's inspectors of schools has given the Minister and her colleagues about the decaying state of school buildings, the massive backlog of repairs and the problems with having them carried out and about the absence of maintenance in many schools, what evidence does she adduce that capital allocations for schools are adequate?

Mrs. Rumbold: Local authorities are aware that they can put in their bids for capital allocations on the criteria that are set out by the Department, and I believe that that is what they do. They are also aware that they can use their capital receipts to top up expenditure on educational buildings. They are further aware that, within the five blocks of capital allocations, they can move between the various blocks to meet priorities. In the end, it is a decision for local authorities.

Mr. Rowe: Does my hon. Friend accept that all the arbitrary distinctions made by central Government between revenue and capital expenditure, the distinction made in education is one of the most damaging? Will she assure us that, in the discussions about allocation of school budgets and greater independence therein, that particular distinction will be considered with care?

Mrs. Rumbold: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his question. I think that he heard my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State refer to financial delegation for schools and state his belief that that is something towards which we should work.

Mr. Weetch: Does the Minister realise that there would be less pressure on capital allocations if school buildings were maintained in a state of good repair? If we wanted a logo for the state of some of the buildings in East Anglia, it would be a rotting window frame. Does the hon. Lady agree that no saving is made through the neglect of maintenance and repair, because in the end remedial works cost a great deal more?

Mrs. Rumbold: Some £400 million a year is spent on the maintenance of school buildings. It is for local authorities to ensure that their schools are properly maintained. Indeed, they have been able to do that over the past few years. As a member of a local authority, I made clear decisions about the repair and maintenance of schools in my authority, and consequently we did not suffer from the same sort of problem.

Mr. Dover: Is my hon. Friend aware that Lancashire has failed to apply for funds in accordance with the Government's priorities, and by so doing has lost £4 million for this coming year?

Mrs. Rumbold: For the information of my hon. Friend and the House, I shall put on the record what has happened in Lancashire. The authority has claimed that it did not know, and could not have known, the amount available or the predicted outcome of its submission. It is true that the authority could not possibly have known what the total Government allocation would be, but it is not true that the authority did not know the priorities of the Department in allocating capital resources. Indeed, last year, 1986-87, it asked for £5 million committed expenditure for the coming year. As it happens, its submission was for £2·8 million, which it was then allocated. It cannot, therefore, be part of the Department's responsibility if the other £2 million, for which the authority did not ask, was not given.

16-plus Students

9. **Mr. Clelland** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of young people aged 16-plus years have remained in full-time education in each of the last five years.

Mrs. Rumbold: The percentages of 16-year-olds in England remaining in full-time education in the five years from 1981-82 have been 48 per cent., 51 per cent., 48 per cent., 47 per cent. and 47 per cent. respectively.

Mr. Clelland: Is the Minister aware that the staying-on rate in my constituency is well below the national figures that she has just given? Does she agree that the reason for that is the financial pressure on young people in the poorer regions who, because they seek financial independence as well as support for the family, are forced to abandon education in their search for paid training, employment or welfare benefits? Is it not time that a system of allowances such as that proposed by the Labour party was introduced to encourage 16 and 17-year-olds to stay on at school?

Mrs. Rumbold: I do not agree that there is any need for some kind of educational maintenance allowance — [HON. MEMBERS: "Why not?"] — as has been suggested by the hon. Gentleman, because the number of 16-year-olds who are remaining in education and training has reached 90 per cent. of the numbers in that age group. I

really do not believe that what he suggests would be a very great advance. I might also say that very few other countries would agree with that proposition.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Will my hon. Friend confirm that her original figures did not refer to the several hundred thousand children who are now able to participate in the two-year youth training scheme, which offers relevant and practical training to many who failed to respond to full-time education?

Mrs. Rumbold: My hon. Friend is correct. The number of young people who are actually participating in the YTS is up to 90 per cent. of the total figures. Before the introduction of the YTS there were not anything like so many young people participating in further education.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 17 February.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others, including one with the President of the Congo. I attended a service of thanksgiving for the life and work of Sir Edward Youde, former Governor of Hong Kong. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

Mr. Wareing: Does the right hon. Lady agree with her Attorney-General that it would be "an unwarranted encroachment" into British sovereignty to allow American trade inspectors to inspect the books of British firms partaking of American technology? Does she agree with her Secretary of State for Defence that there would not be any unacceptable extra-territorial claims? Is it not about time that we told the United States Government what to do with their re-export controls, or is the Prime Minister content merely to fill the role of President Reagan's—[HON. MEMBERS: "Poodle".]—poodle?

The Prime Minister: We have made abundantly clear our views on extra-territorial jurisdiction. I think that the hon. Gentleman might be referring to some reports that have been published in the press about extra-territoriality, AWACS and United States export controls. It is not correct to say that the documents under discussion with the United States authorities have conceded that the United States has jurisdiction over United Kingdom companies, either in the case of the purchase of AWACS or United States-United Kingdom trade in general. In fact the reverse is true, with the proposed memorandum of understanding making it clear that for the defence articles of services forming the AWACS system—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: The proposed memorandum of understanding makes it clear that, for the defence articles of services forming the AWACS system, the control of exports from the United Kingdom will be enforced exclusively by the United Kingdom Government.

Mr. Bellingham: Will my right hon. Friend find time today during her busy schedule to consider the recent excellent manufacturing output figures, the best for seven years? Is it any wonder that even David Blunkett is predicting a third Tory term?

The Prime Minister: The latest figures on manufacturing output are excellent and show the increasing success of manufacturing industry, especially in export volume. I am glad to get extra support, from whatever source.

Mr. Kinnock: Yesterday the Secretary of State for Defence made a welcome statement to the effect that he does not believe that the case is made for any deployment of star wars and that the narrow interpretation of the ABM treaty is the wise one to stick to. Is that also the Prime Minister's own precise view, and does she believe that the narrow interpretation of the treaty forbids testing, development and deployment of star wars technology?

The Prime Minister: The actual interpretation of the ABM treaty is for the two signatories to that treaty, because only they have full notes of the negotiating record, which, of course, will say what the words were intended to mean. We do not have them. We are anxious for the United States to consult Europe if it is going to any accepted change within the treaty, because that will have side effects for the arms control negotiations, in which we have, of course, a considerable interest.

Mr. Kinnock: That is a rather different impression from the one given by the right hon. Lady's Secretary of State for Defence yesterday. While we naturally would welcome consultations on this vital issue, what trust can be put by the Prime Minister or anybody else in such consultations when last Wednesday the head of the United States arms control agency, Mr. Adelman, said that European allies had no business giving advice on interpretation because, to use his words, they have "no qualifications" to do so. Are those the words of somone who wants to consult, or of someone who does not mind insulting?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman cannot have listened to or understood my first reply. The fact is that there are only two signatories to this treaty, the Soviet Union and the United States. Only those two signatories have the negotiating record. Only they, therefore, can do the precise interpretation, as it was intended when they signed that treaty. If they change what has hitherto been understood to be the interpretation, yes, we do ask for consultation, because that has a considerable effect upon the arms control negotiations that are taking place in Geneva; arms control negotiations which, I might remind the right hon. Gentleman, deal with Soviet Union superiority in intercontinental ballistic missiles, Soviet Union superiority in medium-range missiles, Soviet Union superiority in short-range missiles, Soviet Union superiority in conventional weapons and Soviet Union superiority in chemical weapons. Therefore, it is absolutely right that President Reagan considers SDI. Thank goodness people considered nuclear research before the last world war.

Mr. Kinnock: In that case, and as it is so vital, will the Prime Minister tell us whether the Secretary of State for Defence or she will have sight of that negotiating record before they tender further advice, which we all hope will be influential on the United States' attitude towards the deployment of star wars technology?

The Prime Minister: No, Mr. Speaker. The point of asking for consultation is to know the effect upon arms

control negotiations. If the right hon. Gentleman wishes to look at the face of the treaty he will discover that where there are new ABM systems

"based on other physical principles"—*[Interruption.]*

I am actually reading from the treaty. What the treaty says is:

"In order to insure fulfilment of the obligation not to deploy ABM systems and their components except as provided in Article III of the Treaty, the Parties agree that in the event ABM systems based on other physical principles"

were to be developed, that should be dealt with by a certain process. If it comes to deployment, to which the right hon. Gentleman referred earlier, that is a matter for negotiation. At the moment we are not talking about deployment. President Reagan and I agreed that deployment would be a matter for consultation under the treaty.

Mr. Peter Griffiths: Will my right hon. Friend take the opportunity to congratulate the security services and the police on preventing a convicted IRA terrorist from entering this country through the port of Liverpool last week? At the same time, will she condemn the official Opposition, who in the same week voted against the extension of the prevention of terrorism legislation, under which that self-same protection was afforded to citizens of this country?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 helps the police to apprehend terrorists and therefore to protect the people of the United Kingdom. *[Interruption.]* Last week the Opposition voted against the Prevention of Terrorism Act. On the same day they voted against clause 29 of the Criminal Justice Bill, which would enable appeals to made against sentences, so as to have tougher sentences, and also against clause 30, which will increase to life imprisonment the maximum penalty for possession of a firearm with criminal intent. It was a bad day for law and order when the official Opposition voted against three measures like that.

Q2. **Mr. Cartwright** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 17 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Cartwright: Why does the Prime Minister appear to be reneging on the position taken by herself and her Government in favour of the original narrow interpretation of the ABM treaty? Will she assure the House that in her discussions with the American Administration this Administration will be urging the President not to imperil nuclear disarmament prospects by pressing ahead with the Disneyland delusions of star wars?

The Prime Minister: If it comes to deployment, that was covered by the four points that I agreed with President Reagan at Camp David some time ago. But we are not talking about deployment at the moment. We are talking about how far the research can go under the terms of the treaty. For that there are two interpretations. I must make it absolutely clear that in terms of common sense there is no point in talking about possible deployment until it is known whether something is feasible.

Q4. **Mr. Livsey** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 17 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Livsey: Will the Prime Minister comment on the fate of construction workers in south Wales, who are now daily travelling up the M4 to get work in construction in London, where there is a shortage of labour, for which they are being paid £70 a week, and then returning to south Wales, where there are 20,000 unemployed construction workers? Does she not think that this is an indication of her Government's failure to have an effective regional employment policy?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, there has been an excellent regional policy for Wales. He will also be aware that unemployment in Wales is falling. I hope that he will endorse and welcome that.

Mr. Amery: Will my right hon. Friend make it clear that on the question of the interpretation of the ABM treaty she will not be advised by such supporters of unilateral nuclear disarmament as the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition.

The Prime Minister: Yes, Mr. Speaker. We will not be advised by those who support unilateral nuclear disarmament in any event.

Q5. **Mr. Mikardo** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 17 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Mikardo: I am most grateful to the right hon. Lady for that reply. May I ask her whether, in the course of her very busy day, she can find a few minutes to have a look at the problem of Fascist entryism into the Conservative party, as illustrated by the National Fronter, who is the chairman of a constituency Conservative association not far from here, and the Tory students at Aberystwyth, who held a celebration on the anniversary of the coming to power, not of the right hon. Lady, but of a certain Adolf Hitler?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman must be hard put to it to find a question about politics for which I am responsible. With regard to his particular question, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster deals with these things in his own inimitable style.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the average sentence for rape at this time is three and a half years and the average time served in rape cases is 20 months? As the leader of the party of law and order, will my right hon. Friend confirm that we are fighting for minimum sentences and for the right to appeal against any absurdly lenient sentence? Does she appreciate that clause 29 does not go far enough, in that it does not make it possible to appeal in a specific case to protect the woman raped, who is stained for life?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend knows, it is our task to see that sufficiently severe maximum sentences are available to the judges, which they are. At present the Lord Chief Justice has given guidelines which say that there have to be heavy custodial sentences for all crimes of violence. Under clause 29 of the Criminal Justice Bill we are trying to ensure that there is a further way to appeal, not against that particular sentence, but against that kind of sentence by going to the Court of Appeal so that it can pronounce upon it in open court. That in itself is a considerable step forward.

Q6. **Miss Maynard** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 17 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Miss Maynard: Does the Prime Minister agree that the problems facing British agriculture are caused by our membership of the Common Market, and particularly the common agricultural policy? Further, does the right hon. Lady agree that the surpluses in western Europe are not created by our agriculture? Why should our farm workers and farmers therefore be made redundant? Is it not high time that we moved as quickly as possible to low-input agriculture that is more labour-intensive, more environmentally sound, under our control and not under the control of Brussels?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Lady is aware, our farmers contribute considerably to the surpluses. Enormous amounts are in intervention. I entirely accept that we must pursue a policy throughout Europe that brings supply and demand more into balance.

Tamils (Removal)

3.31 pm

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea) *(by private notice)* asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his proposals to remove a number of recently arrived Tamils.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Waddington): Over the past two months, well over 300 Sri Lankan Tamils have arrived here, having travelled from countries other than Sri Lanka, carrying forged passports or having destroyed them. A further group of 64 arrived at Heathrow from Bangladesh last Friday, 13 February. They had previously been in Malaysia and the group had been organised by an agent there who had travelled with them to Dhaka. All of these had travelled on forged or mutilated passports, or had no passports, having destroyed them in transit. None had the required United Kingdom visa. They claimed asylum on arrival, but we are satisfied, on the basis of their own accounts given to immigration officers, that they have no claim to refugee status. We are therefore arranging for them to be returned to Bangladesh without delay.

The House should know that, in view of the organised nature of this attempt to secure admission by fraudulent means, my right hon. Friend and I were not in this case prepared to accept a stop on removal by right hon. or hon. Members. Nor, in future, will we be prepared to do so in similar circumstances in which immigrants seek entry here through clearly bogus applications for asylum. The right of asylum is highly prized and the Government will continue to honour the obligations they have accepted under the 1951 United Nations convention on the status of refugees. But these obligations are to people who are judged to have a well-founded fear of persecution. We cannot accept that the making of patently false claims to asylum should be used as a means of evading the immigration control. Our system of immigration control rests on the ability to refuse admission and to remove those not qualified to enter the country. A potentially disastrous gap would be created in the control if organised groups were able to secure admission in the way attempted by these groups, and the Government cannot and will not allow that to happen.

Mr. Dubs: Will the Minister confirm that my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) contacted the Home Office last night when he first heard of this matter, in order to prevent the immediate removal of the group so that there could be more time for us to know what the facts are? When did these people leave Sri Lanka? By what route did they travel? What is likely to happen to them on their return to Bangladesh, where I understand they are being sent? Is the Minister absolutely certain that none of them has any claim to asylum in this country? If the Minister finds that any members of the group of 64 have such a claim, will he defer their removal while it is being investigated?

Mr. Waddington: The hon. Gentleman is entirely right that the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) contacted the Home Office last night. The position is that these people who formed the group arrived in Dhaka, having spent varying periods in Malaysia.

On the question of how they will be treated on their return, of course we cannot say with certainty that they may not finally find their way back to Sri Lanka, but I have to make it quite plain that they are not refugees, that their claim to refugee status has been examined and found wanting and that the information available to the Government from the British high commission in Colombo gives no reason to suppose that people who have left Sri Lanka will be harassed or ill treated on their return or that the Sri Lankan Government would take action against them if they were eventually returned to Sri Lanka.

Mr. Michael Morris (Northampton, South): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that his statement will be welcomed by those of us who know Sri Lanka well? In particular, is he aware that there are about 1 million Tamils who live happily with their Sinhalese and Moslem patriates in Sri Lanka and that, perhaps more importantly, there are reports from India that over 500 Tamils a week are returning to Sri Lanka? Is it not about time not only that we returned these people to Bangladesh but that we looked at the other 1,800 other Tamils who have claimed refugee status here and who would be perfectly welcome to return home to Sri Lanka?

Mr. Waddington: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for what he has said, but I do not think that this is the appropriate occasion to enter into a wide-ranging discussion of the situation in Sri Lanka. However, I assure the House once more that we have been in touch with our high commission in Colombo and I repeat that there is no reason to believe that those who leave Sri Lanka and later return there are harassed or ill treated in any way by the Sri Lankan authorities.

Mr. Sydney Bidwell (Ealing, Southall): Can the right hon. and learned Gentleman assure the House that, when someone comes here from Sri Lanka via India, or wherever, claiming political refugee status, the port control will not return him immediately and that ample time will be provided for Members of Parliament to make representations? In the few cases where my representations have been accepted, I find it disturbing that those people would otherwise have been returned immediately and that preparations were being made for their return. That does not seem quite to fit in with the Government's intention to give refugee status to those who deserve it.

Mr. Waddington: I should like to make plain what I hope is obvious to the House: that Her Majesty's Government attach the greatest importance to our obligations under the United Nations convention on the status of refugees. However, we are dealing with a large number of organised groups of people who have arrived in this country since December. One really ought to draw a clear distinction between the person who arrives here and makes a claim for asylum and a situation like this, where it was quite obvious, from the examination carried out by the immigration officers at the port, that the claims made by these people were manifestly bogus.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that there is widespread concern about the patent and flagrant abuse of the long and time-honoured tradition of political asylum and refugee status in this country? Will he therefore reiterate that we shall not tolerate this sort of abuse and that anyone who seeks to abuse our hospitality will be sent back to where he came from, promptly and forthwith?

Mr. Waddington: My right hon. Friend and I feel that it is terribly important for genuine claimants for refugee status that this form of abuse should not be allowed. If we were to allow such abuse, the whole system would become discredited. That is why, with the full knowledge of our obligations under the United Nations convention, we are sure that it is right to take this action today.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Is the Minster aware that the steps about which he has reluctantly informed the House today are yet a further retreat from Britain's obligations under the 1951 convention? Is he further aware that the United Nations high commissioner for refugees recommends that there is an independent appeal system among all member countries and that the British Government supported that recommendation? Today, the Minister has not only repudiated a recommendation which he claims to have supported, but has removed from asylum seekers in this country who are fortunate enough to be able to contact a Member of Parliament, the right to even have a case considered by the Minister. Yesterday I sought stops on 35 asylum seekers. The Minister cannot have considered those cases, yet he has refused the terms of the statement that he made to the House less than six months ago.

Mr. Waddington: It is not the first time that the hon. Gentleman has furnished us with long lists of names of people in respect of whom he is asking for stops. I must make the position absolutely plain. My right hon. Friend made it clear in his statement on 27 October that there would be no automatic stops on the removal of passengers who arrive here without visas. He said that there would be no change in arrangements for asylum. However, I do not believe that anyone in this House contemplated that a stop would be taken when a claim to asylum was as manifestly bogus as the claims in this case. Furthermore, we never envisaged that we would face today's problem. Large numbers of people have come to this country as a result of well-organised rackets. This is in no way a retreat from our obligations under the United Nations convention.

Mr. Mark Carlisle (Warrington, South): While I totally endorse the comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, South (Mr. Morris) about the position in Sri Lanka, would my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the present position is that the method of arrival is far more consistent with a deliberate attempt to avoid the immigration laws of this country than with a genuine claim to political asylum?

Mr. Waddington: My right hon. and learned Friend is entirely right. It would be very helpful if a message were sent from this House that it is very difficult for our staff and against the interests of all genuine asylum seekers if people allow themselves to fall into the hands of racketeers, are furnished with false documents and destroy their documents—or that part of the document which, if they still possessed it on arrival in London, would reveal that the documents were forged to gain entry to this country.

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): Will the Minister confirm that communal violence against Tamils is continuing in north Sri Lanka and that organisations such as Amnesty International and the United Nations high commission for refugees have put it on record that no group of Tamils should be capriciously returned to Sri Lanka? Is not the heart of the problem for hon. Members that, if they are to test whether these people are genuine refugees, the procedure agreed by the Home Office is worthless if the test of referral to the United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service—and for hon. Members to intervene—is set aside unilaterally by the Minister as he has decided that this case should not be referred? How can we judge whether these people are genuine refugees if the matter cannot be referred to an outside body such as UKIAS?

Mr. Waddington: But the hon. Gentleman is a reasonable person and he must consider the absurdity of the present position. If organised groups of this size arrive in this country and hon. Members claim that they should be treated as genuine claims when it is quite obvious after they have been examined by immigration officers that they are not genuine claims, where will that lead us? How on earth is that in the interests of these people, who obviously cannot be released into the community? We cannot grant temporary admission to people who are in no way documented and when we do not have the faintest idea who they are.

I must not be drawn into a debate about the situation in Sri Lanka. I shall remind the hon. Gentleman of our policy since 1985, because it has not been ungenerous. It is possible for somebody who wishes to claim refugee status to go to our high commission in Colombo and say that he is suffering hardship. Our policy since 1985 and the introduction of the visa regime allow entry to people who show that they are suffering exceptional hardship and who have connections with Britain. The hon. Gentleman may say that that is meaningless because nobody has been accepted, but the opposite is true. No fewer than 1,060 Tamils were granted visas in Sri Lanka in the first seven months of 1986.

Mr. John Watts (Slough): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that there will be a warm welcome for the firm, fair and speedy action that has been taken in this case? That welcome will come not least from the many thousands of my constituents who are members of the ethnic minority community and have no sympathy for those who seek to enter Britain by fraud. They have no wish to be associated with such criminals.

Mr. Waddington: I am absolutely sure that my hon. Friend is right. It does not do community relations any good when there is widespread abuse of the control. All members of the ethnic minority communities that I have met recognise the need for firm and fair control and are as likely to be as outraged as my hon. Friend and I when that control is abused.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have to take account of the fact that this is an Opposition day and that there is further business before us, with quite a demand to speak in the debate. I shall take two more questions from each side.

Mr. Eric Deakins (Walthamstow): The Minister has told the House that a number of Tamils have been admitted to Britain because of their fear of retaliation and persecution had they remained in Sri Lanka. The British high commission does not know about these people, so how can it be certain that they will not be harassed and persecuted on their return? Can the Minister explain why people of substantial means, like the family who are

[Mr. Eric Deakins]

relatives of one of my constituents and who are about to be sent back to Sri Lanka, should give up their homes and businesses to go to a foreign country just on a whim? There must be something more to it than that.

Mr. Waddington: I do not think much of the hon. Gentleman's last point. Large numbers of people have been coming here over the last 20 or 30 years and they did not all say that they had come because they were facing persecution. They came here because they reckoned that they would have a better life for themselves and their families in the West than in the countries in which they had lived. For obvious reasons, we have never accepted a blanket policy of non-return to Sri Lanka. There is no doubt that some parts of Sri Lanka are more dangerous than others and that it may be dangerous for some people to return. Return will cause hardship to some people but no hardship to others.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on his firm action in this case. Is it not absolutely consistent with an attempt at fraudulent entry into this country under our immigration laws that these people came from Bangladesh and Malaysia? Can my right hon. and learned Friend tell the House any more about what these people were doing in those countries? That would reassure the Opposition that these people are being returned to a country to which they chose to go before coming to this country.

Mr. Waddington: I cannot throw as much light on that aspect of the matter as my hon. Friend would wish. What seems to have happened is that an agent in Sri Lanka organised the movement of these people out of Sri Lanka to Malaysia. Either the same agent travelled with them or another agent took over the management of the racket, and this large party was eventually assembled in Bangladesh. We are piecing together the story. I assure my hon. Friend that this is the culmination of two months of some quite extraordinary events during which parties arrived from various parts of the world—and not only via Malaysia and Bangladesh.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Is not this illiberality typical of the mean-mindedness of modern Toryism under the Prime Minister, the chairman of the Conservative party, who very much typifies it, and, sadly, the Home Secretary? Will the Minister ensure that the British high commissioner in Sri Lanka checks in six or eight months what may have happened to any of these men who return to Sri Lanka?

Mr. Waddington: The hon. Gentleman is talking nonsense.

Mr. Faulds: Just ask him to check.

Mr. Waddington: At least until this summer, the Conservative party and the Labour party were supposed to believe in firm control. How on earth one can believe in firm immigration control and allow a gaping hole to be driven through it by this sort of abuse, I really do not know.

Mr. John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the vast majority of people in Britain will regard his action as absolutely right and fair? Is it not extraordinary that the Opposition should be so out of touch with ordinary people as to hold the views that they do? Why do they not condemn this action instead of trying to support it?

Mr. Waddington: It is a mystery to me.

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

3.51 pm

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): On a point of order arising out of Question Time, Mr. Speaker. I waited, as you instructed last week, Sir. You will recollect, that during Question Time the Prime Minister refused to answer a question on passive entryism and the conduct of Conservative students in honouring Adolf Hitler——

Mr. Speaker: Order. What could possibly be the point of order for me in that?

Mr. Williams: If only you will allow me, to develop my point, Mr. Speaker, I shall come to the point of order.

It is that, in refusing to answer that question, the Prime Minister referred my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. The whole House will recollect that. In so doing, is it not possible that the Prime Minister misled my hon. Friend and the House?

Will you confirm, Sir, in your role as Speaker, that as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) cannot and should not answer to the House for his role as chairman of the Conservative party, or are we to understand, from what the Prime Minister said today, that that position will be changed in the future? If it is not to be changed, is it not clear that the Prime Minister's answer was merely a device to dodge condemning the outrageous, unpatriotic, disloyal and Fascist conduct of elements within the Conservative party?

Mr. Speaker: I confirm — the whole House knows this — that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster may answer only for his responsibilities as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

Adjournment Debates

3.54 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, of which I have given you notice, Mr. Speaker.

Last night, at about half-past nine, I infringed the courtesies and conventions but not, as the patient and courteous Deputy Speaker said, the rules of the House. There used to be a convention and courtesy that if Ministers made statements, as the Home Secretary did — I believe that he did so in total good faith — on 3 February to the effect that

"no Minister knew of the steps that the police were proposing"—[*Official Report*, 3 February 1987; Vol. 109, c. 823.]—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member gave me notice of his point of order, but he must not continue the debate that he attempted to raise last night.

Mr. Dalyell: There is an issue here. I was concerned — as other hon. Members might be — with a sensitive issue. You rightly say, Sir, that notice of an intention to raise an Adjournment debate should normally be given before 8 o'clock. In a serious Adjournment debate, it is clearly infinitely better that a Minister should be present to reply. However, it is another practice — I am not making a party issue of it, because Labour Whips did exactly the same thing—that if an hon. Member wishes to raise a sensitive issue, the Government will ensure, somehow, that the debate is extended.

Let me amplify that.

Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Where is the point of order for me? I cannot possibly be responsible for any accusations of that kind.

Mr. Dalyell: This is not an accusation. It is a fact that three Adjournment debates had been applied for by Conservative Members. I was told, very courteously as always, in your Office, Sir, that there was no chance of my getting an Adjournment debate. I accepted that. Lo and behold, what happened? By chance, I peeped in and saw that one of the Adjournment debates—on the subject of the safety of transport—was not to take place. In fact, those Adjournment debates were applied for precisely so that other hon. Members could not raise more sensitive issues. That is how Whips behave. This is not very good for the House of Commons. That is why I am asking that this matter should be referred to the Procedure Committee.

I wanted to contrast what had happened with the letter to my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) from the Secretary of State for Scotland. There are people here today who came all the way from Glasgow to complain about what happened. Many people are deeply concerned about this issue. It is not a trivial matter. If it is stopped and gagged in the House by a subterfuge, that action should be considered by the Procedure Committee.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. On the last point, if the hon. Member believes that the Procedure Committee should consider the matter, he should send a submission to the Committee. I am sure that the Procedure Committee will be glad to consider it.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let me deal with one matter at a time. I confirm that I entirely support what Mr. Deputy Speaker did last night. I say to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) that in this place we proceed according to well-known rules and conventions. The hon. Member admitted last night that, for his own personal reasons, he did not observe those rules and conventions. I remind the hon. Member and the whole House that a debate is not a unilateral expression of views but an exchange of views between hon. Members and Ministers. Following last night's proceedings, I am glad to have an opportunity to reaffirm that principle.

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall take Mr. Skinner first.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. The most important feature to emerge from the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) and your reply, Sir, is that my hon. Friend declared to the House that he attempted to raise a second Adjournment debate. That is a common feature of our proceedings when it is likely that the House will rise before 10 o'clock. My hon. Friend then said that he was told that there were three Tories in the queue. The most deplorable aspect is that, apparently, the Tories had connived to stop my hon. Friend from expressing his view about a matter that was uncomfortable to the Government. If, for instance, one or two Tory Members queued at the beginning of a parliamenary Session to present 10-minute Bills — so that hon. Members who had stayed up all night were not able to present the first 10-minute Bill—I have no doubt that a Speaker would say that that was deplorable action because it was gagging some hon. Members. I should have thought that the Speaker's job——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I say to the hon. Member, and especially to the Opposition, that this is an Opposition day on which there are to be two important debates. I shall hear the points of order that hon. Members wish to raise, but I can add nothing to what I have already said to the hon. Member for Linlithgow.

As for what the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has just said on this matter — *[Interruption.]* Order, please. My Office would not say that Tories or Labour Members had won Adjournment debates. It would simply say that three hon. Members had applied for Adjournment debates. I have no doubt that, if asked, my Office would say who they were. It is a question of being first in the queue.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. You may remember that yesterday, after Question Time, I asked you whether there was any way in which certain matters of great urgency could be raised. You told me that hon. Members could apply for an Adjournment debate. I made inquiries at about 6.45 pm yesterday when it appeared that business would finish before ten o'clock. I discovered, like my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), that three Members had applied for Adjournment debates. In those circumstances, I came to the conclusion that there was no way in which I could persuade the Minister to reply to a debate even if I were to go to your Office. When you say, Mr. Speaker, that this was not organised or that your Office would not know, I accept that entirely. What we know is that, in order to avoid us raising matters, the Government deliberately made sure that the slots were filled, and when the time came for those Members in whose name those slots were to be given an Adjournment debate, they were not here. This point, Mr. Speaker, is directed at you. Was that not an abuse, in order to prevent myself and my hon. Friend from raising a topic?

Mr. Speaker: I am in receipt of information that the hon. Gentleman was not in receipt of yesterday—how many hon. Members had expressed an interest in a subsequent debate. I gave a broad hint that there was a good chance that the hon. Member for Walsall, North might be able to put his subject in. If the hon. Member did not do that until seven o'clock, I cannot help him.

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn) *rose*——

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West) *rose*——

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let me deal with one at a time. I will take Mr. Raffan first.

Mr. Raffan: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. If anybody tried to gag anybody last night, it was the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) trying to gag my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind), the Secretary of State for Scotland, by not ensuring that he gave prior notice of that debate so that he could attend the House to reply. It was an Adjournment monologue, not an Adjournment debate.

I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to reiterate the passage on page 371 of "Erskine May", as quoted by Mr. Deputy Speaker last night, that successive Speakers have deprecated an abuse of procedure to this extent by a Member trying to raise an issue on the Adjournment without giving prior notice to the Minister so that he can be present to reply, and therefore give a balanced view to the House and the country.

Mr. Speaker: I have already said, but I repeat for the benefit of the House, that two hours' notice has always been considered appropriate. If hon. Members persist in their points of order, it will take time out of the next debate, and I must not be held responsible for complaints about that.

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I apologise for taking up the time of the House, but I think I was one of the few Members present last night—no Opposition Members who have spoken today were present then. A matter of substance arises which causes concern to the Government Back Benchers who value the Adjournment debate as a means of raising constituency matters of considerable importance.

Although Mr. Deputy Speaker made it quite clear that he could not stop the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) from abusing the procedure last night, that has left some concern among Government Back Benchers about the Adjournment debate system. Will the procedures for obtaining an Adjournment debate be reviewed? As I understand it, if one follows the normal courtesies one is not allowed to apply for an Adjournment debate on a subject that has already been applied for by

another hon. Member. If hon. Gentlemen such as the hon. Member for Linlithgow abuse the procedure and do not observe the normal courtesies, those hon. Members who follow the procedure could be cheated out of raising matters of considerable concern. There is a matter of substance here. The hon. Member for Linlithgow, in pursuing his vendetta against the Scottish Office, has abused the procedures of the House, and he should apologise.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is this on the same point?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Yes. Can I ask you a simple question? Do you appreciate the distinction that my hon. Friends are trying to draw, between custom and practice and rules? Is it not true that we are dealing only with custom and practice, and that any Member of the House is entitled to stand at the Government Dispatch Box and answer a debate? Any hon. Member of the House could have taken upon himself the duty of replying to the debate of my hon. Friend. [HON. MEMBERS. "No."] Yes—within our rules, that is the case. Will you confirm that that is the case, Mr. Speaker, so that Government Members who do not understand the rules, can learn?

Mr. Meadowcroft *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Is this further to the same point of order?

Mr. Meadowcroft: Yes, Sir. Is not the problem the rigidity of the rule about having to apply for such an Adjournment debate before 8 pm? One understands why notice should be given, but if an hon. Member applies before 8 pm and then withdraws, the rigidity of the rule is called into question. Might not those who wanted to have that debate at least have been given some indication that a previous debate had been withdrawn? It can only have been withdrawn within minutes of having been applied for. It was certainly known at 9 pm that it would be withdrawn later.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. Would it not be correct to say that the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) is quite wrong? It is not just a question of the exact procedure and exact rules; it is also a question of the conventions of the House, by which the House operates. An abuse of those conventions is every bit as important as the breach of the rules themselves.

Mr. Madden: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: On the same point?

Mr. Madden: No, a separate point.

Mr. Speaker: I shall take it later. May I deal with one thing at a time?

I confirm to the House again that this is a convention, as the hon. Member for Workington has said, and as Mr. Deputy Speaker said last night several times. The Chair cannot stop the hon. Member for Linlithgow if he persists in speaking. However, it is the convention, as I have already stated, that in a debate a reply should be given. It is perfectly possible, I suppose, for a reply to be given from the Back Benches, but when we talk about a reply we normally mean a reply from the ministerial Bench.

Later——

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Further to the points of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Gentleman speaks from the Front Bench, so I shall take his point of order. However, I must say that it is bound to take time from the subsequent debate.

Mr. Williams: This is important to the House, as you will appreciate, Sir. Private Members' time is desperately sought and keenly competed for within the House and it is highly valued by all individual Members. In the case of a normal Adjournment debate the name of the hon. Member appears each week and we know who is to have the Adjournment debate, what the subject is to be and the Member's constituents know who is due to speak.

In the events last night, several unnamed Members have apparently had time available which many other hon. Members would have valued. The House does not know who was responsible for that discourtesy to the House and, equally, their constituents do not know that those hon. Members lost an opportunity to make representations in the House on their behalf. Since it is not the normal procedure for applying for an Adjournment debate, is there any way in which we can obtain the identity of those hon. Members who last night failed to turn up for their Adjournment debates?

Mr. Speaker: I have already answered that. In any event, the hon. Gentleman must know that those tactics are of long standing. Whenever there is opposed private business, there is always the chance that it might be concluded more quickly than anticipated — less than three hours—and that opportunities may therefore arise for a second or sometimes even third Adjournment debate. That is exactly what happened last night. I repeat that my Office accepts applications for additional Adjournment debates on the basis of first come, first opportunity. It is not concerned with the side of the House on which an hon. Member may sit.

Refugees (Members' Representations)

4.7 pm

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): I wish to raise a point with you, Mr. Speaker, concerning the rights of hon. Members, which arises from exchanges on the private notice question. I would ask that you look at the record and reflect upon the statements made by the Minister of State. As I understood what he said, it was to the effect that he would set aside, or even refuse, representations from hon. Members on cases of those seeking refugee status. I do not think that the Minister has the right to do that.

I would ask you, Sir, as the custodian of the rights of hon. Members to consider what the Minister said. If you believe that he was exceeding his responsibility and rights, I ask you to inform the House accordingly. I urge you to consider carefully what the Minister said, because it is quite outrageous in cases of this sort, which include women and children, many of whom fear for their lives if they are returned, that Members of this House should not have the opportunity to make representations to the Minister in the expectation that those representations will be properly considered.

Mr. Speaker: I often find myself saying from the Chair that I am not responsible for what is said from the Front Bench. I am not responsible for any views that the Minister may have expressed. *[Interruption.]* I am not. The hon. Member must seek other ways of seeking what he wishes.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I ask you to examine carefully the record of the debate that was held on the Minister's guidelines for dealing with immigration matters and cases. It is one of the few areas where the House has laid down specifically what a Member of Parliament can do and what rights he has. It was quite clear from that debate that the rights of refugees and asylum seekers were not to be restricted, and hon. Members would still be able to make representations in respect of those cases. This afternoon, in answer to a private notice question, the Minister has made a statement to the effect that he is setting aside a decision of the House and preventing hon. Members from raising with his office questions relating to the need for him to consider the case of an asylum seeker.

I ask, Mr. Speaker, that you study the statement made this afternoon and the record of the debate concerned. I think that you will find that it is necessary for the House to have a further debate on the subject before the Minister can unilaterally abrogate a statement which he made to the House only a few months ago and which was subsequently voted upon.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows that it is not for me to police statements made or regulations that may have been laid down by the Minister. This is a matter for debate; the hon. Gentleman must take it up with the Minister concerned or the Leader of the House at business questions on Thursday.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House I will put together the three motions relating to statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the draft Audit (Northern Ireland) Order 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Parliamentary Constituencies (Scotland) (Miscellaneous Changes) Order 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Town and Country Planning (Compensation for Restrictions on Mineral Workings) (Scotland) Regulations 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

Local Government (Empty Council Houses)

4.11 pm

Mr. John Powley (Norwich, South): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to oblige local authorities to make their vacant housing stock available for letting or sale.

The Bill I am presenting to the House outlines one way of reducing the number of empty council properties, by making available to prospective tenants or purchasers any local authority property, whether purpose-built or acquired, that has been empty for a period, which I would suggest should be six months. If a council-owned property has been empty or unoccupied for six months since the previous tenancy, then, provided it is habitable or can be made habitable, a person could apply to the local authority for the tenancy or the purchase of that house.

I would expect that a register would be necessary to identify those properties that have been empty for more than six months. That register would be open to public inspection and anyone seeking a tenancy or purchase could examine the register for a suitable property and make an appropriate offer. Just think about the incentive that there would be for local authorities if such a register were publicly available giving addresses of properties and the length of time that they had been empty.

The Bill would provide for some exemptions to be made and it would be right and proper to exempt from the provisions of the Bill any local authority dwelling that was in the process of being improved. Provided a dwelling was in a modernisation scheme which was actually out to tender or was being modernised, such a dwelling should not be included in dwellings available for open letting or purchase — provided, of course, that the contract was out to tender within the six months.

It must be the concern of everyone who has been a member of a local authority, as I and many other hon. Members have, or a person involved in housing organisations such as Shelter and anyone who is interested in housing generally, that we make more efficient use of the country's housing stock. That statement applies to making more efficient use of local authority housing stock, privately rented stock or owner-occupied housing stock.

We are told that in the owner-occupied and privately rented sector, over 500,000 homes are vacant; and there are many reasons for that figure. We are also told that there are around 113,300 empty council properties. Of that 113,300, some 27,100 have been empty for longer than 12 months and 13,800 have been empty for longer than two years.

May I draw attention to one or two authorities which have a particularly poor record in keeping local authority properties empty? At the top of the list, both in percentage of housing and the number of properties empty, is Liverpool, with about 7,704 empty council properties, some 11·9 per cent. of its housing stock. Manchester comes next on the list with 4,900 followed by Sheffield with 3,200, Tower Hamlets with 3,200 and Hackney with 3,100. In purely financial terms, that figure of 113,300 empty local authority properties represents over £94 million in rent not available to the respective local authorities plus about £30 million not available to the general rate fund in lost rents in any one year.

Before I speak further, I want to challenge the accuracy of that figure of 113,300. The Library supplied me with the figure for the number of empty council properites as at 1 April 1986, and that figure is confirmed by the Department of the Environment. However, I asked for a breakdown of that figure by authority and in the list supplied, which adds up to 113,300, Norwich city council is quoted as having 158 empty properties. I also wrote to my chief executive on the same subject and he quotes Norwich city council as having 447 empty properties as at 30 January 1987. The figure supplied to me for Norwich does not coincide with the figure supplied by the Department of the Environment and the Library and that makes me question whether the 113,300, which is common knowledge, could be an understatement of the number of empty council properties.

Returning to the theme of my Bill, I hope the House will agree that, whatever housing sector we refer to, we should all be concerned about empty properties, and be prepared to do something about them. It is clear that one solution will not resolve all the problems in all three sectors of housing activity, and I do not intend to deal with them. Today my purpose is to concentrate on the local authority sector and suggest a means whereby some of those properties could be brought back onto the active market instead of lying empty and idle. We all know that by the very nature of local authorities and housing management there will always be some empty properties. The void period is always there. No administration can turn round a property so that it is always occupied.

The offer of an empty property can take several weeks, and it is a fairly common experience for a particular dwelling to be refused by a prospective tenant. One of my concerns was always the number of people who claim to be in housing need and desperate for accommodation, yet at the same time refuse reasonable offers of accommodation. Some refusals cannot be avoided, but careful management, more appropriate offers to prospective tenants and a tightening up on the number of refusals could reduce the problem.

The management of some local authority housing departments leaves a great deal to be desired. Why is it that some authorities have an average period between re-lets of 20 weeks, while others can cut that down to three or four weeks?

It is clear that, within the overall number of empty properties, which I repeat is suspect, there are some properties which are about to be modernised by the local authority. I have referred to the exemptions that could be created, but it is not good enough for a local authority to say that a dwelling is going to be modernised in the future and then leave it empty for more than six months before doing anything about it.

The provisions in my Bill would provide local authorities with a strong incentive to reduce the number of empty local authority properties and reduce the length of time that those properties were empty. Some may say that lack of finance is the answer. Those who would use that argument use it whatever the problem is. They say, "It is all about money, or lack of money, and if plenty of finance was available, the problem would simply disappear."

No Government, whatever their political colour, have been able, even if they wanted to, to give local authorities unlimited sums of money to resolve their housing problems. That was not the case even in the 1970s, when

[Mr. John Powley]

we had a Labour Government. I recall a moratorium on housing expenditure in 1976, which was followed by severe restrictions on housing expenditure. No future Government will be able to give local authorities unlimited sums of money in an effort to resolve their problems.

The point surely is that we have a problem, and that little or nothing is being done about it, in the housing sectors that I mentioned. My Bill addresses itself to the local authority sector, and suggests a modest means of getting back onto the occupied housing market, some of the properties previously left empty for long periods. Surely we must all share that objective.

4.21 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I congratulate the hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Powley) on being successful in the ten-minute rule slot. I heard the Jimmy Young programme this morning—he is the Prime Minister's favourite political interviewer—on which the hon. Gentleman gave a good account of his Bill.

Clearly, I am not against the principle —*[Interruption.]*—of putting people into empty properties. However, I am against the partial application of the Bill and the method that the hon. Gentleman is suggesting. As one would expect from a Conservative Member, the Bill is yet another attempt to attack local authorities, especially those Labour-controlled authorities the hon. Gentleman listed. I object to the fact that he has singled out those councils.

At the moment, there are about 27,500 empty council dwellings in London. That represents 3·5 per cent. of the total local authority stock. However, in the private sector there are 93,500 empty properties, or 5 per cent. of the stock. Indeed, as my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) said in the debate on homelessness on 10 February, the worst public sector landlord in the country, in terms of keeping properties vacant, is the Government because 6·9 per cent. of their stock is vacant.

Anybody who knows London, who walks around it and who knows its problems, will be affronted to see empty properties, whether publicly or privately owned. It is also obscene to see builders throwing up speculative office blocks when so many people are homeless in our city.

The reasons why, at any one time, some properties are empty in local authority areas, need to be stated. First, some properties are being repaired and are subject to transfer applications. People are viewing them with the possibility of moving in and local authorities are trying to ensure that the allocation of their stock are equal and fair.

However, the Government make the problems of the local authorities much more difficult. As we know from debates and replies to questions in this House, there have been continual cuts in the amounts that the boroughs have to invest in the renovation and maintenance of their stock.

Secondly, planning the repairs schedule for a year is made much more difficult by the Government's late announcements of the money that the boroughs will receive for their forward budgets.

Thirdly, the Government impose cumbersome detailed controls on every repair scheme. Therefore, properties stay vacant in London and throughout the country because they are bottled up in the Minister's Department.

No Labour-controlled local authority in London, or in the country as a whole, deliberately keeps properties vacant. However, plenty of Tory boroughs do that. *[Interruption.]* In Wandsworth one can see hundreds of empty properties kept empty because the borough will not put them up for letting because it is waiting to sell them off. That is why properties are being deliberately kept empty.

I advise the hon. Member for Norwich, South that some London boroughs have dramatically reduced their voids. Between 1985 and 1986 empty council dwellings were reduced by 11·5 per cent. of stock. Few inner-London boroughs, which have the most problems in our city, have more than 4 per cent. of their stock available.

I am using this debate to raise a specific point with the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction, who looks as urbane as ever. In the debate on 10 February, he referred to the number of empty properties in Newham. He said that 2,400 properties were empty. He would not give way to me or the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) when we attempted to intervene. The Secretary of State did exactly the same thing. The reason that they would not give way was because they knew that they were deliberately twisting the figures to try to suit their argument.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must say to the hon. Gentleman that in this House we do not deliberately twist figures. He will please withdraw.

Hon. Members: Withdraw.

Mr. Banks: All I can say is that, if the hon. Gentlemen were not deliberately twisting the figures, they revealed a fundamental ignorance of the statistics that relate to empty properties in Newham. Perhaps I could correct the Minister's misinformation in terms of what he said in that debate. He said that there were——

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Withdraw.

Mr. Banks: I would not wish to offend the Minister in any way. However, I wish that when he puts forward information that is clearly incorrect, he should at least give those hon. Members with a constituency interest——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us be generous about this. In the view of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West, the figures were not correct.

Mr. Banks: I never deny you anything, Mr. Speaker. I withdraw any such imputation on the Minister's honour. However, I wish that he had allowed me to put this point at the time instead of having to wait for so long.

There are 2,400 empty properties in Newham, of which 394 were being considered and viewed by prospective tenants, 401 were undergoing repairs, 612 were awaiting repairs, 19 were awaiting sales and 10 were awaiting abolition, and there were 1,089 others. That makes up the approximate figure that the Minister gave. However, of the 1,089 other empty properties mentioned by the Minister, 900 are in Ronan Point and in the Taylor Woodrow Anglian tower blocks, which are structurally unsafe. Newham has had to move the residents out of those blocks but they were included in the figures that the Minister gave so that he could try to prove that Newham

is deliberately keeping its housing stock vacant. If the Minister did not know that, he is a pretty shabby Minister indeed. That is an example of the way in which figures can be manipulated to make a particular point. *[Interruption.]* That may be because of where he buys his suits.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has given his illustration. Will he now say why he opposes the Bill?

Mr. Banks: I should just like to say that many London boroughs, which are continually attacked in the House, such as Brent, Islington, Haringey, Southwark and Hackney are all taking initiatives to reduce the number of vacant properties, and they are succeeding against the odds. They will certainly not be assisted by this Bill.

Those inner-London boroughs need support and resources from the Government. Instead, they are continually attacked by financial cuts and penalties and by a vicious, unprincipled campaign of media lies and distortions in the gutter press. That campaign against those local authorities is encouraged, if not co-ordinated, by the Tory party. The Bill will not assist local authorities and, frankly, I cannot support it.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. John Powley, Mr. John Heddle, Mr. Patrick Thompson, Mr. Robert B. Jones, Mr. Peter Bruinvels, Mr. Peter Thurnham, Mr. Patrick McLoughlin, Mr. Ralph Howell, Mr. Tony Favell, Mr. Andrew Rowe and Mr. John Watts.

Local Government (Empty Council Houses)

Mr. John Powley accordingly presented a Bill to oblige local authorities to make their vacant housing stock available for letting or sale: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 3 April and to be printed. [Bill 78.]

Opposition Day

[8TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Disabled People

Mr. Speaker: We now come to the Opposition day, the first part of which will be a debate on the problems and needs of disabled people. I must tell the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

4.29 pm

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): I beg to move,

That this House, in order to achieve full participation and equality for disabled people in this country, calls on Her Majesty's Government to mark the mid-point of the Decade of Disabled Persons 1983-1992 by producing a full report on its record in relation to the United Nations World Programme of Action; to allocate now the necessary funds for full implementation of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 instead of continuing delays in default of undertakings given in July 1986; and to produce a Green Paper on the construction of a National Disability Income which will provide adequate non-means tested benefits for disabled people who are without full-time employment and assist in offsetting the extra costs of disabled living.

This is the first wide-ranging debate on the problems and needs of disabled people in which if, as we confidently expect, the hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major) catches your eye, Mr. Speaker, he will speak in his still relatively new capacity as Minister for the Disabled. In extending to him the normal courtesies, may I also express the hope that he will be much more successful in influencing the Treasury's priorities than some of his immediate predecessors on that side of the House have been.

Meanwhile, I am sure that the Minister will want to join me today in welcoming to the Palace of Westminster the exhibition, which opened this morning, of the Association of Crossroads Care Attendant Schemes. The humane and deeply important work of Pat Osborne and her colleagues in the service of disabled people and their families has rightly won the admiration and support of all parts of the House.

Our motion is one whose objectives enjoy all-party support in the House and in the country. It was drafted with the sole aim of enhancing both the well-being and status of Britain's 5·5 million people with disabilities. The motion also seeks to help those who help disabled people, not least those who assist them to live their lives independently and with dignity in the community rather than in institutions.

The whole House must be concerned about this country's reputation abroad in relation to the United Nations World Programme of Action. As the Minister will know, I had the honour to chair the World Planning Group, whose work led to the formulation of the United Nations document. I did so as Britain's and the world's first Minister for the Disabled. Those who served under my chairmanship came from the north, south, east and west of the world. They were drawn from rich and poor countries alike and unanimously agreed on the way forward for disabled people worldwide. They urged upon all Heads of Government the undoubted truth that

[Mr. Alfred Morris]

disabled people have not only problems and needs, but also rights; the same rights as all humanity to grow and to learn, to work and to create, to love and to be loved. Above all, the World Planning group argued that the basic problem of securing full participation and equality for disabled people is not one of resources, but of political will and priorities.

Here in Britain there has been no shortage of money for the means of disabling people, but important reforms for people with disabilities are held back by the failure to provide the resources they require. At the same time, huge tax cuts have been given to the most fortunate in society and more of the same is intended. Other Governments across the world have responded with vigour and urgency to the United Nations programme of action. Whereas we were once a world leader in provision for disabled people, we now lag behind many other developed countries. Many of our leading organisations of disabled people now protest that Britain has not only stood still while other countries have advanced, but that we have gone backwards since the present Government came to power, due to priorities that help the fit and fortunate more than those in special need.

If the Minister wants to argue that we have not fallen behind other countries, let him do so in the full report that we ask for in the motion. All that we have had so far are occasional and perfunctory replies to parliamentary questions from this side of the House, including one from the Prime Minister in which she said:

"The Government have kept the United Nations Secretariat informed of the development of services for disabled people in the United Kingdom."—[*Official Report*, 24 June 1986; Vol. 100, c. 87.]

Will this House be allowed to see the Government's reports to the United Nations secretariat? What do their reports say, for example, about our deteriorating local services; about the Government's shabby manoeuvring to defeat the Bill of my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing), to outlaw hurtful discrimination; and about the sombre fact that disabled people now find themselves at the back of the two longest queues in Britain, namely, those for jobs and adequate shelter?

Have the Government told the United Nations secretariat of Professor Peter Mittler's withering criticism of their policies? He has responsibility at Manchester university for training teachers of children and young people with special educational needs and is one of the foremost experts internationally in his field. Professor Mittler has said:

"We had to abandon one of only four courses in this country in the education of children with social and emotional difficulties. There were no funds to continue this work . . . The education of children with special needs in this country, and the training of those who teach them, is a higher priority than spending £1 million a day on maintaining a presence in the Falklands, not to mention the billions of pounds we spend without question on nuclear armaments."

Again, how much have the Government told the United Nations secretariat about the view taken of their policies by the leading renal consultants in this country, who resent being forced, for purely economic reasons dictated by the Government, to choose which of their patients shall have treatment, and therefore who shall live and who shall die? That is discrimination against disabled people at its most brutal and Dr. Tony Wing, a consultant at St. Thomas hospital, has said:

"This may be effective rationing but it is scarcely humane. My colleagues in other countries think it barbaric."

What is the Minister's reaction to that devastating criticism of our standing internationally in the care of disabled people?

If the Government's reports to the United Nations secretariat seem defensible to the Minister for the Disabled, I urge him to arrange time for them to be debated. Today's debate has been provided from the limited parliamentary time available to the Opposition. We owe this debate, like almost every other debate on disability in this House since the present Government came to power, solely to the high priority given by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition and his predecessors to the problems and needs of disabled people.

In the House last Tuesday my right hon. Friend raised with the Prime Minister our concern, widely shared in other parties, about the delay in implementing the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986, which, as the House knows, was so ably promoted by my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) after his success in the private Members' ballot. I am delighted to have him with me on this Front Bench today and must now remind the Minister that his Act reached the statute book with overwhelming support from both sides of the House. Before it was enacted, the then Minister for the Disabled made a clear statement of his intentions for its implementation. Sections 5 and 6 of the Act, at an estimated cost of £50 million, were due to be brought into force in October. These are absolutely key sections and the delay may have already affected the futures of disabled young people leaving school or further education well into the 1990s. Yet these sections, like other important sections of the Act, still lie dormant on the statute book. In fact, there is now no new date for their implementation—due, in the words of the Prime Minister, to their resource implications.

Can either the Prime Minister or the Minister for the Disabled name even one organisation of or for disabled people — or, indeed, anyone outside the Conservative party — that accepts their reason for delaying the implementation of this important Act? At a time when the Government are contemplating a give-away of £3 billion in the Budget, their defence that there are no resources to implement the Act is a grotesque misrepresentation of the facts. They stand guilty of a gross contempt of this House by their scandalous failure to give effect to its will.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the Government's attitude is summed up in the amendment tabled by the Prime Minister and her colleagues, which states that they will implement that Act when

"resources become available and as priorities allow"?

Does he agree that the words "as priorities allow" sum up the Government's attitude?

Mr. Morris: I entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman, who, though his own Act, has done so much to help disabled people and their families.

For the Government to say that they cannot afford to implement the legislation introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West, when everyone knows

that huge further tax cuts are in the offing for the richest 5 per cent. of taxpayers, is a total betrayal of disabled children, whose futures are put at stake.

The resources are unquestionably available fully to implement the Act and I urge all those many right hon. and hon. Members on the Government Benches who gave their support to my hon. Friend's Bill to join me now in insisting that, when Parliament wills the end, the Government must will the means. That must be especially true of legislation to help disabled people. Anyone who has spoken to a director of social services knows that the Act cannot be implemented unless the Government provide the extra resources that all of us knew would be required to give it effect.

Local authorities all over Britain, irrespective of their political colour, insist that they are already being forced to choose, not only which of their discretionary powers to use, but even which of their legal duties to disabled people can be fulfilled. It is not council leaders who are hurt by the Government's policies, but people with severe disabilities seeking to establish themselves in homes of their own, not least people with mental illness discharged after many years in hospital who find they have nowhere to live. If the Minister doubts that, he should urgently read the letter published in *The Guardian* on 2 February from three doctors at King's college hospital, in which they described how a homeless, mentally ill man of 32 recently suffered severe frostbite and had to have both his legs amputated. It is for people like him, among others, that my right hon. Friend, the Leader of the Opposition, much to his honour, found time for this debate.

Hon. Members on the Conservative side of the House often quote with approval the Audit Commission for Local Authorities in England and Wales. Was it not a major censure of the Government for the Audit Commission to say — in its recent report entitled "Making a Reality of Community Care"—that current policies on care in the community are

"wasteful, disorganised and causing unnecessary suffering to elderly and disabled people?"

The report points out that virtually all local authorities which provide social services lose grants from the Government if they increase spending in real terms, and it goes on to say:

"Hence, the system used to control expenditure can penalise local ratepayers in authorities implementing Government policy and saving money for the NHS into the bargain. Thus in one authority visited that had pioneered community care for mentally handicapped people, in accordance with the Government's guidelines, heavy grant losses were being incurred because the authority was exceeding its GRE in part as a result of this policy."

How does the Minister respond to that biting criticism of a policy towards disabled people that is so manifestly self-defeating?

In her oral replies last Tuesday to my rght hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition the Prime Minister made some grossly misleading statements both about the implementation of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 and about the comparative provision for the long-term sick and disabled by Labour and Conservative Governments. In an attempt to excuse the Government's failure to implement my hon. Friend's Act the Prime Minister said:

"The Labour Government — *[Interruption.]* — faced a similar difficulty after they had passed the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970. When a Labour Government later came in they took no steps to provide the local authorities with the resources to put the Act into effect."

The truth is that the 1970 Act, which I piloted through the House, came into effect on 29 May 1970, the final day of the 1966-70 Parliament. Three weeks later, a Conservative Government were elected. Failure to provide adequate resources during the first four crucial years of that legislation rests, therefore, very firmly with the Conservative Government of 1970-74. In fact, that Government were later very sharply criticised by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration for having "muddied the waters" in their circular to local authorities in August 1970 about the requirements of the Act.

What of the impact of the present Government on services provided under the 1970 Act? they have cut rate support grant to local authorities by a staggering £18 billion since they came to power, reducing Exchequer assistance of more than 60 per cent. when the Labour Government were in power to only 47 per cent. today. That is why, as Department of Health and Social Security Ministers know, local authorities of their own political colour now complain that they are being forced to choose even which of their legal duties to disabled people can be fulfilled.

Let me also recall what the Prime Minister said here last Tuesday about the comparative expenditure on benefits by the last Labour Government and the present Administration. She said:

"We increased spending on benefits for the long-term sick and disabled by 75 per cent., allowing for inflation, to nearly £6 billion."

She added:

"the last Labour Government . . . did not begin to do anything like as well".—*[Official Report, 10 February 1987; Vol. 110, c. 156-57.]*

Yet in a parliamentary reply to me on 24 May 1985, of which the Prime Minister must have been fully aware last Tuesday, her then Minister for the Disabled, the hon. Member for Braintree (Mr. Newton) made it pikestaff plain that, in real terms, the average annual percentage increase in spending on benefits and services for the long-term sick and disabled had been significantly higher under the Labour Government than it had been under her Government.

That parliamentary reply, which the Prime Minister must have seen before misleading the House, stated that the average percentage increase under the Labour Government, in the years 1973-74 to 1978-79, was 8·3 per cent. Under the present Government, in the years 1978-79 to 1984-85, it was only 6 per cent. The figures are not mine. They are the DHSS's figures that were given to the House by a ministerial colleague, then and now, of the Prime Minister. What the hon. Gentleman's reply of 24 May 1985 showed—to use the politest language—is that the Prime Minister is guilty beyond dispute of barefaced distortion of the facts, for which there should now be a full apology to this House.

The issue is not one of political difference, but of political integrity; and it is not only the Prime Minister's reputation but that of this House that suffers if easily verifiable truth is stood on its head.

Even the Prime Minister's figures about her Government's spending require clarification. The House of Commons Library, as an independent source, disputes them as an exaggeration; so do the disabled themselves,

[Mr. Morris]

whom the right hon. Lady robbed in 1980 of the important link forged by the last Labour Government between cash benefits and average industrial earnings, the loss of which has incontrovertibly kept their incomes much below what they would otherwise have been. The Prime Minister's self-congratulatory words of last Tuesday should be compared by the House with a document published by the Disablement Income Group — DIG — about her Government's record, entitled "Disastrous Years for Disabled People". That bluntly sums up exactly what so many other organisations of the disabled think about the right hon. Lady's priorities.

Right hon. and hon. Members on the Opposition Benches take legitimate pride in the fact that the last Labour Government's spending on cash benefits for long-term sick and disabled people more than trebled in five years. It was a wholly unprecedented increase. Again, our spending on centrally provided services almost trebled. In real terms, these were very substantial achievements in economic conditions of great difficulty. We quite deliberately singled out the disabled for special help and went further in providing new benefits than our manifesto commitments.

Even when public spending in almost every other area had to be cut back, there was rapidly increasing expenditure on new help for disabled people. The trebling of expenditure on cash benefits made many important advances possible, but it was not nearly enough. As I said at the time, there remained a long unfinished agenda of unmet need and, in particular, the need to construct a national disability income that would provide adequate, non-means-tested benefits for disabled people unable to find work and offset the extra costs of disabled living.

The demand for a comprehensive new income scheme for disabled people, which is subscribed to by hon. Members of all parties, has now been given a strong new impetus by an important new document from the DIG. It was launched here in the Palace of Westminster, at a presentation arranged by my right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) and the hon. Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam), on 27 January. The document shows that, at present, one very severely disabled person can receive just over £100 a week less than another with identical disabilities and family commitments, if his or her disabilities are the result of an accident at home rather than at work. A third person, with identical disabilities, can receive a further £25 less if he or she became disabled before contributing to national insurance. That is the nub of the case for our call in the motion for a Green Paper on the construction of a national disability income.

Even if it is argued that we cannot yet afford the financial support that disabled people need — unlike other European countries, notably the Netherlands and Scandinavia—it is now essential at least to make some progress towards meeting that need. To be meaningful, such progress must be towards a scheme based on meeting the twofold financial effects of disability: loss of earnings, which may be total or partial, and extra living costs. As there are two financial effects of disability, we need two kinds of benefits: an income maintenance element and one that will meet the extra costs of disabled living.

Any change at variance with these principles makes the social security system less satisfactory for disabled people. For example, we must avoid repeating the mistakes of the severe disablement allowance, which illogically imposes the twin test of incapacity for work and degree of disability on what should be a straightforward income maintenance benefit. Such nonsense—I use the DIG's description of the allowance — would not have arisen if the Government had been working towards a national disability income. The so-called "reform" of the supplementary benefit system provides other examples.

On 2 April 1984, announcing the social security reviews, the Secretary of State said that disablement benefits were not to be tackled. He said that reliable information from the new survey by the OPCS was essential for the longer-term development of the Government's disablement benefits policy.

Yet in fact the right hon. Gentleman did not wait for the results of the survey before tampering with important benefits for disabled people. The first adverse effect is that the most severely disabled will lose financially. It was only when we pointed this out to the Government that they announced a second disablement premium. As the Minister must know, however, that premium does not solve the problems of the most severely disabled. The criteria that the Government have chosen — even the latest criteria — are a confusing nonsense and the premium remains a hasty, ill-conceived reaction to our well-founded criticism of the original proposals. Many severely disabled people will suffer badly in consequence and, here again, the hardship inflicted upon them would not have arisen if the Government had been working towards a national disability income.

The second adverse affect of the Government's new Act is that disabled people in need will in future have to suffer the indignity of pleading both poverty and disability to get help from the social fund. Ministers have said that disabled people will not have to prove individual requirements on such intimate grounds as, for example, incontinence or the need for frequent baths. Yet the social fund removes all rights to any payment and thus requires every intimate detail of disabled applicants' lives to be discussed by the social fund officers and everyone with whom they liaise.

The disablement cost allowance of a national disability income would protect disabled people from those indignities, but the disablement premiums and the social fund are both at variance with that objective. They take us further away from a sound, coherent and rational system of benefits for disabled people. That is why we now call, with the backing of all the organisations of disabled people, for a commitment from the Government at least to work towards a national disability income.

For their part, the British public accept the need for a national disability income, as the findings of a Gallup poll commissioned by the DIG amply demonstrated in January of this year. Asked about the adequacy of benefits paid to very severely disabled people, 83 per cent. of those questioned said that the incomes of people who are born disabled are completely inadequate. Of those questioned, 76 per cent. thought that benefits for disability should be the same regardless of cause, while 67 per cent. were prepared to pay more in tax to meet the costs of a national disability income.

Those willing to pay more tax included 66 per cent. of Conservative voters, 67 per cent. of Labour voters and 72 per cent. of Liberal-SDP alliance voters. That is the extent

of public support for a national disability income. It very strongly backs the DIG's approach and totally vindicates our call in the motion for a Green Paper.

What the British public recognised in their response to this important survey of opinion is that most people with disabilities have to face a higher cost of living than other people, and do so with lower than average incomes. The extra help that their organisations seek for disabled people is not for the provision of luxuries, but to achieve equality of opportunity and social fairness for people for whom disability is now all too often another word for poverty and humiliation. There is ultimately no gain in depriving the disabled of the help they need to live independent and fulfilling lives; for the costs of driving them into institutions can be very much higher than those of adequate benefits and community support services.

Not once in my speech, Mr. Speaker, have I used the word "compassion". The late and respected Sir Neil Marten—who among others assisted me throughout the proceedings on the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970—used to say, even then—and I most strongly agreed with him—that disabled people were fed up with compassion. They want understanding; they want respect for their abilities and for their social worth; they want the status that an acceptance of their rights can confer, so that they can be a part of and not apart from society. Above all, they want more equality and social justice and, as the Minister must know, they want our motion and not the Prime Minister's shoddy amendment to be approved by the House today.

I commend the motion to the House.

5 pm

The Minister for Social Security and the Disabled (Mr. John Major): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"congratulates the Government on its continuing commitment to improving provision for disabled people; draws attention to the increase in annual spending on their social security entitlements of £2·5 billion in real terms since 1978-79; welcomes improvements in their tax position and employment opportunities; reaffirms its commitment to the provisions of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 with implementation as resources become available and as priorities allow; and welcomes the survey by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys into the numbers, circumstances and needs of disabled people as a basis for a comprehensive review of benefits of long-term sick and disabled people."

The right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) has raised a number of important matters and I will respond to his detailed points in due course. I should say at the outset that I welcome this opportunity to discuss provision for disabled people because it is an exceedingly important subject, and one to which the Government have given priority and will continue to do so. In his opening remarks the right hon. Gentleman referred approvingly to the Crossroads care attendance scheme and to Pat Osborne and colleagues. I fully endorse the comments made by the right hon. Gentleman. The Government have encouraged such schemes by providing direct financial assistance to the national association and my hon. Friend the Minister for Health and I take a considerable interest in their very worthwhile activities.

It might be helpful to put this debate into perspective. There will be general agreement in the House—the right hon. Gentleman touched on this briefly today and has done so more widely on other occasions—that in the past 15 years or so there have been enormous advances in the recognition given to the legitimate needs of disabled people. Much may remain to be done, but much has been achieved. The right hon. Gentleman's own Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 was an early and very important milestone. There were substantial—in many ways radical—improvements in social security provision for disabled people during the 1970s under successive Administrations. I refer in particular to the introduction of attendance allowance, mobility allowance and invalid care allowance. In more recent years, the Government have sought to build upon those achievements by abolishing the household duties test, extending the invalid care allowance, taking the mobility allowance out of tax, and so on. All those developments are welcome.

The right hon. Gentleman was critical of the Government's record in some respects, but I do not accept either his figures or many of his contentions. Social security expenditure on cash benefits for long-term sick and disabled people has increased dramatically since 1978-79—by about £2·5 billion, of which £1·75 billion is attributable to the increase in the number of beneficiaries, which is itself welcome because it implies a wider take-up, and £750 million to increases in the value of benefits. There is wider entitlement and better take-up. We have repeatedly stated that care of disabled people is a priority concern, and I believe that the scale of expenditure and resources shows that we mean what we say in that respect.

In the NHS, special priority has been given to services for elderly people and for mentally and physically handicapped people. Concern for mentally ill people was re-emphasised by the publication of "Care in Action" in 1981. There have been improvements in relation to access and transport and the voluntary code of good practice in relation to employment. Last year more than 77,000 disabled people were placed in work or on the community programme through the MSC. The list that I have given is illustrative, but by no means exhaustive.

Local authority spending on social services has increased by about 20 per cent. in purchasing power in real terms during the period of this Government. As the right hon. Gentleman will know, the whole question of finance for community care is currently being considered in depth by Sir Roy Griffiths' high-level inquiry. Whatever other points of contention there may be, no one can doubt the scale of progress made—nor, I should add, can we be complacent about what needs to be done, and it is to that proposition that I wish to direct most of my remarks on this occasion.

I know that many Members are deeply interested in progress on implementing the recommendations of the McColl report on the artificial limb service. Some of the recommendations raise significant and difficult issues—most notably, whether the services should in future be managed outside the DHSS—and I hope to announce decisions on that important matter very shortly.

In advance of that structural decision, I wish today to announce some improvements to the wheelchair service. I am anxious to enhance choice in the range of wheelchairs provided. As the House may know, we recently introduced brighter colours to supplement the standard black and grey chairs. In addition, we introduced two new powered models for indoor use which are both more attractive in appearance and have more sophisticated control units and

[Mr. John Major]

more reliable batteries. These are small but welcome innovations, and we have decided to place particular emphasis on several further developments.

The McColl working party singled out a number of aspects of the wheelchair range which in its view require specific attention and I wish to announce decisions on three of those matters now. The first was the provision of a low cost chair for occasional users whose basic requirement is for a light, manoeuverable pushchair. We agree with that and have therefore purchased two types, which we have issued to users so that we may assess their suitability and acceptability. Following those trials and any modifications that may be necessary, we shall add such a chair to the range for general use.

The second area of concern to the working party was the range of chairs for children. McColl felt that the present range provided by the wheelchair service was unsatisfactory. Again, we agree. We have therefore decided that the wheelchair service should take the initiative and develop a new chair specially designed with the needs of children in mind. We shall focus attention particularly on adaptability, extra support, lightness, ability to fold and—this, too, is important, particularly to young people — overall appearance. Work on development has already commenced. We intend that introduction of the chair should be as rapid as possible, and I assure the House that we will push it speedily.

McColl also felt that the needs of younger active disabled people requiring a wheelchair to enable them to participate in sporting activities were not well catered for. Again, I agree. The development and supply of such a chair will cost money — perhaps substantial sums. As this cannot at the moment be at the expense of other users, we have directed that further improvement in the efficiency of supply and repair of wheelchairs generally should be achieved and that the funds released should be used for this purpose. From the inquiries that we have made, we are confident that this can be done.

There is a further point. The provision of a wheelchair is often only one step towards mobility, especially for the most severely disabled. The supply of accessories is vital, too, with seating perhaps the most important element. Correct seating is essential to enable severely disabled children and adults to use a wheelchair. Hospital treatment — sometimes to correct serious postural difficulties—can result from incorrect provision. In the past there has been some doubt about the extent to which the wheelchair service should provide seating. I wish to remove that doubt. We have now decided that the wheelchair service will extend its responsibilities to include the supply of special seating support for those severely disabled wheelchair users who need it. This innovation will take effect immediately.

I am conscious that there are other matters relating to wheelchairs about which I have no comment to make on this occasion, but I hope that my observations on those minor matters will be generally welcomed by the House. As I said earlier, nobody can be complacent about what remains to be done to improve the quality of life for disabled people. The hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke)—who I believe is later to make his first and welcome appearance as Front Bench Opposition spokesman on this subject—accurately identified some of those needs in the Bill that he introduced last Session, which is now the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act. We entirely accept the principles of that Act and we are at one with the hon. Gentleman in wanting to see it in operation.

The hon. Gentleman will acknowledge, as he has done on previous occasions, that the Government put in a considerable amount of effort — not least the former Minister for Health, my hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Mr. Hayhoe) and the former Minister with responsibility for the disabled, my hon. Friend the Member for Braintree (Mr. Newton) — to improve the detailed provisions of that legislation. The hon. Member for Monklands, West, for his part, was generous enough to acknowledge on more than one occasion—not least on Third Reading and on Report—that parts of the measure had significant resource implications. My hon. Friends made it clear that those provisions could only be brought into effect in stages. I think that that point was well understood by the House at that time and the Government's position has not changed in any way since then.

Some things, however, have changed——

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): What about section 7?

Mr. Major: I am sure that the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing), with his record on matters concerning disabled people, will be able to catch the eye of the Chair if he wishes to speak in the debate. The House will look forward to hearing from him then.

Since Royal Assent, the local authority associations have taken a more detailed look at that Act in the form in which it reached the statute book and have revised their cost estimates sharply upwards. On the basis of the latest estimates, the total annual cost of the Act might amount to around £150 million rather than the £100 million that was generally expected during the passage of the Bill. I should emphasise that that position is still fluid. The local authority associations are still refining their estimates and we are discussing the figures with them.

We are not, therefore, seeking to be unfairly dilatory in the implementation of the Act. There has been continuing contact between my officials and the local authority associations and I shall be meeting the associations myself a week today to review progress. I also hope to arrange a meeting shortly with representatives of the voluntary organisations who have asked to see me on the subject. I shall be happy to hear what they have to say and to discuss with them the precise circumstances of implementation as they see them. I hope that my meetings with the local authority associations and with the voluntary associations will be fruitful.

Mr. Lewis Carter-Jones (Eccles): I can see the problem and I can see the value of the discussion. When the Minister has had the discussions and the sums have been fixed—I assume that this will be in the not too distant future—will he tell the Chancellor of the Exchequer that some of the billions to be given away would be going to a good cause if they were spent on the implementation of my hon. Friends Act?

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman's long-standing concern is well known, and he may have knowledge of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's Finance Bill proposals

which I as yet do not have. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will read carefully what the hon. Gentleman has said.

Subject to the outcome of my discussions with the associations next week, it remains our hope that sections 4, 8, 9 and 10 of the Act can be implemented by 1 April. I am also optimistic that it will be possible to implement section 11 during the course of the year.

The right hon. Member for Wythenshawe referred—understandably, as I know his concern in the matter—to the important sections 5 and 6. I also wish to examine whether we shall be able to make progress on those sections which deal with the identification and assessment of disabled school leavers. As the right hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Monklands, West will know, the local authority associations originally believed that implementing those sections would not have a significant cost but I must tell the House that they have now, rather belatedly, changed their minds. They now estimate that the annual cost of those sections would be between £30 million and £50 million. That is one matter that I wish to examine with them urgenty at the meeting next week. The effect is that the cost of the Act may be up to 50 per cent. greater than we believed a year ago.

Mr. Wigley: Does the Minister accept that the full cost of implementing that Act will be reached only over some years, as the provisions work through, particularly with regard to schoolchildren? Will he also accept that in a letter of 16 February to hon. Members, the Association of County Councils said:

"The Association still believe that the whole Act should be implemented at the earliest possible date and that adequate resources should be made available for this to be done."

That is the standpoint of the association.

Mr. Major: I am fully aware that that is the association's standpoint, and it is one matter that I look forward eagerly to discussing with the association. On the cost profile,the hon. Gentleman is right. The cost will build up over a period. How rapidly it builds up is one of the matters that one may wish to examine.

The right hon. Member for Wythenshawe has suggested in the past that at any rate section 5(i) and (ii) might be implemented so that disabled young people leaving school in 1988 and 1989 can be identified. That may be difficult, as even that limited implementation might have substantial actual and potential resource implications for local authorities. However, I undertake to pursue that point specifically with the local authority associations in my discussions with them next week.

I must make it clear to the House that we think it would be irresponsible to bring the Act into operation before we are clear about the costs and are satisfied that local authorities are able properly to implement the Act. We wish to ensure that when the commencement orders are made local authorities have the resources to implement the Act properly. I know some of the frustrations that the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe must have suffered when some parts of his Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 were not implemented as he had hoped during the passage of that measure.

I should make a further point which I want to make on the general issue of implementation. The hon. Member for Monklands, West made it clear, implicitly on Second Reading and explicitly in his usual generous fashion during the final stages of the Bill in the House, that he accepted that it would be necessary to consider implementation of the Bill by phasing. I understand entirely that on this matter hon. Members have deep and genuine concerns and that they have differences about the tempo at which phasing can realistically take place. The Government are not able to commit substantial resources to the implementation of the Act until we are sure that they are available. Phased implementation was implicit at the time the legislation was passed and it is barely a year since the Bill was introduced into the House. I repeat that we support the principles of the Act and that, when we can, we shall seek to implement it in the way that I have described to the House.

Mr. Warning: In regard to the Act introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke), surely it is imperative that section 7, which deals with psychiatric patients discharged from hospital, should be implemented soon, so that those people may receive direct assistance from local authorities and from area health authorities. Lack of resources cannot be made an excuse when we are approaching 17 March and the Budget. The Minister may not be au fait with the details of the Budget, but as a Minister in the Government he should have an input to ensure that funds that could provide for discharged psychiatric patients do not go to rich taxpayers.

Mr. Major: Whatever the hon. Gentleman may think, he will know that under successive Governments the details of the Finance Bill are predominantly a matter for the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Chancellors are aware of the concerns of Ministers, but I have nothing further to say on budgetary matters.

On the United Nations decade of disabled persons, the Government have drafted a response to the United Nations questionnaire which was addressed to all member states, reporting progress on the implementation of the world programme. We propose to consult RADAR, the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation and the British Council of Organisations of Disabled People before the final version of the response is sent to the United Nations. That document will not be suitable for formal publication but we shall make copies available to anyone who is interested and we shall place a copy in the Library of the House. As the document will make clear, the Government's record on implementing the proposals in the world programme is good. My hon. and learned Friend the Under-Secretary may elaborate on that when he catches your eye later, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I am acutely conscious that a number of hon. Members are keen to contribute to what will now be a rather short debate and that there are many important matters that time does not permit me to deal with. In particular, I have said little about the important aspect of cash support, to which the right hon. Gentleman referred when he gave his views on a national disability income. The Government have over a period made their position clear on that. A major survey by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys into the numbers, circumstances and needs of the disabled people is well under way. When the results are available, they will provide the basis for a comprehensive review of disability benefits. That is the Government's position and I think it is well understood in the House.

I have sought to strike a positive note. I share with the right hon. Gentleman the view that disability, whether

[Mr. Major]

physical or mental, can be a considerable and crushing affliction for those whom it strikes and for those who care for them, but a great deal can be done to alleviate its effect and help disabled people to play a full part in society. As I have outlined, a great deal has been done by successive Governments of all parties, individual Members of the House, the caring agencies, professional people, voluntary organisations, relatives, friends, neighbours and the wider community.

That work will continue. It will do so in small ways, such as the announcement I made last week on invalidity benefit, which will remove a financial impediment to disabled people serving as elected councillors. It will continue in larger ways, with the McColl report. It will continue with the OPCS survey and the consequent review of disability benefits.

My hope, my expectation and my ambition—and I think that I carry the right hon. Gentleman with me on this—is that we can consolidate and build upon the progress that has been made. We need to be realistic about the pace of it; I appreciate that it may sometimes seem infuriatingly slow, but I hope that we are in a position to reassure the House generally and those who are unfortunate enough to be disabled that much progress has been made, that progress is certain and that it will continue.

5.21 pm

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent): It is significant that the Minister failed to respond to the challenge of my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) about the relative records of the Labour Government and the present Government. We have repeated those figures in every debate about disability since this Government took office, and they have not been repudiated. The Minister spent a great deal of time talking about wheelchairs. This debate is not about wheelchairs; it is about the veracity of the Prime Minister, nothing less.

The Minister knows that I am concerned with the McColl report and with wheelchairs, but today we are concerned with statements made by the Prime Minister in response to the, in my view, brilliant attack by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition. Last Tuesday my right hon. Friend attacked the Prime Minister and she made a categorical response. The Minister today has failed to retrieve the Prime Minister's error last Tuesday when she boasted that the long-term sick and disabled have been given a 75 per cent. real increase in benefit. She tried to convince the House that disabled people have been treated generously by the Government.

Mr. Major: I do not want to turn an occasion like this into a party political bashing session, but I must draw it to the right hon. Gentleman's attention that I quite specifically, in the early part of my speech, drew the attention of the House to the very dramatic increase in cash benefits for long-term sick and disabled people, from about £3·5 billion to £6 billion during the period of this Government. That is a substantial increase indeed. It was referred to by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and it is not a matter for dispute. It is an unchallengeable fact that that increase has taken place.

Mr. Ashley: If we are speaking of unchallengeable facts, we had better go over again the facts that we have put forward before. The first fact is that spending by the Labour Government on the long-term sick and disabled more than trebled in five years. The second fact is that the percentage increase in spending on long-term sick and disabled people rose by 8·3 per cent. between 1974 and 1979 but the increase in spending on long-term sick and disabled people under this Government has been 6 per cent. That is 6 per cent. compared with 8·3 per cent. I did not hear the Minister deny those facts for one moment.

It was the Prime Minister who made the party political point last Tuesday, and that is why we are challenging the Government on this issue. I can be as constructive as the next Member, but the Prime Minister was wrong. The Prime Minister misled the House of Commons and I believe that disabled people want those facts to be refuted, because the Prime Minister was totally wrong, and they know that she was wrong.

What about the Prime Minister's statement that there has been a 75 per cent. real increase in benefit? Let me explain it to the Minister. The vast majority of the people concerned live on invalidity benefit, and that basic benefit increased in real terms by a mere 4·5 per cent. from November 1978 to July 1986. So, during eight years of this Government, the increase in benefit has been a fraction over 0·5 per cent. per year. Some generosity there! Over the same period, net earnings for the top taxpayers increased by an astronomical 202 per cent. according to the Incomes Data Service top pay unit. That vast discrepancy alone will demolish the myth that the Government favour disabled people. It shows that disabled people are given a very low priority by this Government. That vast discrepancy conforms to the unpleasant face of capitalism and the policies derived from it.

If the basic invalidity benefit has risen only 4·5 per cent., from where did the Prime Minister get the 75 per cent. figure? Perhaps I can explain for the Prime Minister's enlightenment. The number of people receiving invalidity benefit has risen by over 40 per cent.; the number receiving attendance allowance has risen by over 70 per cent.; the number receiving mobility allowance has risen by well over 100 per cent. So more disabled people are receiving benefits—which are their legal entitlement. That has nothing whatever to do with the Government's generosity. They are simply receiving their legal entitlement. The Prime Minister responded to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition by saying that her Government had given a 75 per cent. increase to disabled people. That was a grossly misleading statement to make to the House of Commons.

Have the Government had the opportunity to be generous? Of course they have. They have had the biggest opportunity in history to be generous to disabled people, because they have had a fantastic oil bonanza. They have had the biggest windfall of all time. It has been a dream of El Dorado come true. For the first time ever a British Government have had the resources for a national disability income that is both equitable and comprehensive. They could provide a new deal. They could provide a fair deal. They could, in fact, give disabled people the ideal—a national disability income, which has been spelt out. But the Government have refused to make a commitment to, let alone introduce, a disability income even though, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Wythenshawe rightly said, the present system is unjust and unfair.

The Minister's excuse in his speech a short while ago was that the Government were awaiting the result of the OPCS survey. My right hon. Friend said that the Government did not wait for the result before tampering with benefits. I want to criticise my right hon. Friend there, because the word "tampering" is inadequate and far too weak. The Government have not simply tampered with benefits; they have actually by their recent Act, actually cut the benefits of some of the most severely disabled people. We all know that that is what they have done. Why did they not wait for the OPCS survey before cutting the benefits to some severely disabled people? If that survey prevents the Government from helping disabled people, why did they wait for five years after taking office before commissioning it?

The Minister mentioned — the Prime Minister often mentions this — the value of the mobility allowance. Time and again, when challenged, the Prime Minister has said, "We have increased and improved the mobility allowance." I am sick of hearing about the mobility allowance. The increase is presented like a jewel in the Government's crown, but the 116 per cent. improvement in the cash value of the mobility allowance has to be compared with the increase in the price of petrol, which has gone up by 111 per cent. The mobility allowance has done little more than match the increase in the price of petrol. I hope that the Government will not continue to boast about the mobility allowance.

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman tell the House who made the mobility allowance free of tax? Was it not the Government in 1982?

Mr. Ashley: I spoke a moment ago about a jewel in the crown. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to deal with a tiny, piffling increase as compared with the jewel that I talked about, I shall give him that concession. I shall readily acknowledge that the Government did that. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to criticise the Labour Government, that is fine, but no Conservative Member has been able to attack the basis of the case that I make. The Government have failed in any substantial way to increase the value of the mobility allowance. I have explained what has happened. The hon. Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) has no strong case on that point.

The Government have refused our request to extend the mobility allowance to three deserving groups. They are, first, mentally handicapped people; secondly, autistic people; and, thirdly, those who are both deaf and blind —not those who are deaf or blind. We have repeatedly put this point to the Minister. The present ruling is that if people are unable to walk they will get the allowance . These people can walk, but of course they cannot walk unaided. Because of their disability they must be helped, and they should get the allowance.

The Minister is one of the best Ministers in the Government. He is a humane person, but he is not able to administer a proper policy because of the people who run the Department. They are squeezing him. He will help if he can, but the Government refuse to extend the allowance to the people whom I mentioned. It is quite wrong for the Government to do that.

The Minister mentioned the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act. That Act was passed for two reasons; first, the skill and determination of my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke); and, secondly, the agreement and support of the Government. My hon. Friend's skill and determination were genuine. The Government's agreement and support were bogus. Their support was purely for public relations reasons. They sought credit for endorsing the Bill, but have refused to provide the cash to implement vital sections of it. That is bare-faced Tammany Hall manipulating and manoeuvring. It has further damaged the Government's reputation, if that is possible. A date has been given for implementing just three of the Bill's 11 sections. All of them require little expenditure, and as a consequence of the Government's decision, thousands of young disabled people will suffer.

I assure the Government that we intend to monitor the deprivation of disabled people, not only today, but on Budget day, when billions of pounds will be handed out by the Chancellor.

Jobs for the disabled are more than a source of income. They are symbols of cherished independence. The Government's record on jobs for the disabled is appalling. The latest figures show that in spring 1985, 1,764,000 economically active people were limited by health problems, and no fewer than 412,000 of them were unemployed. Those figures, provided by the House of Commons Library, were taken from the *Employment Gazette 1986*. They show a shocking rate of unemployment of 23 per cent. for disabled people.

The Government have failed effectively to tackle unemployment among disabled people. They have failed to make the quota system work. They have condoned the breaking of the law by employers and have refused to support the splendid initiative that was taken by the European Commission. They have undermined proposals to improve employment prospects for disabled people. The European Commission's document, which was first-rate, called for the enforcement of quotas as well as anti-discrimination legislation, but after discussions in which our Government played a prominent part, the final European Council's report was a badly watered down version of the Commission's draft document. It merely mentioned establishing rights in accordance with national laws and practice and the need to avoid dismissal on the ground of disability. The proposal to enforce quotas was scrapped.

The Germans are far more realistic than we are. They are far more generous to disabled workers. Their quota system is effective. It is backed by levies and tough sanctions that secure 80 per cent. enforcement. The British Government merely put their efforts into the voluntary system—that is, the code of practice mentioned by the Minister. I support the code of practice, and I back the Government in their efforts, but persuasion should be a complement to, not a substitute for, policy. The figures show that the Government have failed to find adequate jobs for disabled people.

Before the Prime Minister boasts of helping the disabled, she should study the facts. She should see the miserly limitations on help in the context of vast handouts to others. She should recognise the Government's failure to rise to the challenge. She should talk to disabled people and discover the extent to which the Government have failed them. Disabled people have been badly let down. I want no lectures from the Government about making party political points, after the Prime Minister has made party political points at the Dispatch Box. If she seeks to intrude on disability and make party political points she

[Mr. Ashley]

must expect the answers, and the answers are devastating to the Government. The Government stand condemned for their attitude to disabled people. Disabled people need a better deal. They will not get it under the present Government, but they will get it under the next Government.

5.39 pm

Mr. John Hannam (Exeter): I am pleased that the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) referred to the German quota scheme, because it gives me something with which I can agree. I have to be careful what I say about the right hon. Gentleman, because he is the chairman of the all-party disablement group. He wears the crown, though there are not many jewels in it, and I am his menial servant, the secretary. I do not intend to follow up some of the points that he raised in what I consider was a rather griping speech in, generally speaking, a non-partisan type of debate on disablement.

I welcome this opportunity to debate the needs of the disabled, because I believe that the record of this country is unparalleled. I find that my view is reiterated whenever I travel abroad to conferences on the rehabilitation of the disabled. I congratulate the Government on the constant and steady progress that has been made in dealing with the needs of the disabled. Hardly a week goes by without further announcements by my right hon. and hon. Friends, not only in the Department of Health and Social Security but in other Departments, about some form of increased help for the handicapped members of our society.

Only this week, two further changes were made. The first was to ensure that the disabled would not be deterred from serving in local government. The second was to increase the benefits for the disabled and the handicapped who are living in residential care and nursing homes. Today my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and the Disabled has made further important announcements about the implementation of some of the recommendations of the McColl report on wheelchair provision. In thanking him for making those announcements, may I add that both I and other hon. Members hope very much that something will be done about providing an indoor-outdoor powered wheelchair for the very seriously disabled.

There are always grounds for pressure and even criticism because of delays, but my experience over the last 16 years of working for the disabled is of constant improvements year after year by Government after Government, with the frontiers being steadily moved outwards. When I look at the range of benefits and facilities that are now available, about which we have our debates and discussions, and at the range of facilities that are available to the sick and the disabled I am immensely proud to have been part of that process.

Therefore, I resent the attempts in recent weeks by the Leader of the Opposition, who started the ball rolling, to make party political capital out of the recently enacted and very much desired Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 of his hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke). That Act was a major step for the hon. Member and also for the Government who agreed to support his private Member's Bill, because it has huge resource implications. I was a sponsor of the Bill and fought as hard as any hon. Member could do to help its passage through Parliament. The Act of the hon. Member for Monklands, West represents a major legislative step forward and takes the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 through to its logical conclusion—to the community.

I fully support the hon. Member's Act, but we cannot kid ourselves that it is inexpensive legislation. When fully implemented, it will involve expenditure of over £150 million. I do not intend to go into all the pros and cons of this partisan debate about what should or should not be done in the coming months. However, I refer the House to what the hon. Member for Monklands, West acknowledged. He said:

> "I accept . . . that it will be necessary to consider implementation on the basis of phasing."—[*Official Report*, 4 July 1986; Vol. 100, c. 1340.]

All of us knew that the Act would require phasing in over a period and here we are, in the first year, pressing Ministers to bring into effect various important parts of the Act. In my speech I shall do all that I can to highlight some of the areas that support our pressure to try to get the Department and the local authorities to agree to the satisfactory implementation of sections 5 and 6 of the Act.

I do not know why problems have emerged over the assessment of children's special needs. Where good practices already exist in certain local authority areas, sections 5 and 6 will add few additional responsibilities, but it is absolutely vital that when a disabled child leaves full-time education we should establish a bridge between local education authorities and social services departments. It is at the point when handicapped youngsters leave school and go home to their families that the greatest strains in their development emerge. It is then that the need for day care centres and further education and activity centres becomes most acute.

In my constituency I recently visited a further education centre that is now being established by the Exeter college of education, where a superb job is being done in providing for the needs of handicapped youngsters and adults of all ages. However, it highlighted the gap that still exists in providing for those with severe mental illness or handicaps who are being discharged into the community or to their parents. That gap needs to be closed if the whole system of care in the community is to work. We are reminded of that gap if we go upstairs and visit the Crossroads care exhibition and hear about the needs that have been discovered and that are being so marvellously catered for, again with help from the Government.

The evidence that I have recently received about this gap in local provision and the need to do something about it came, again, from my own constituency. Exeter is probably regarded as one of the foremost authorities in the country in making provision for the discharge of those in institutional care. However, the parent of a 25-year-old severe schizophrenic took me to talk to the doctor who is in charge of the Russell clinic at Digby hospital in Exeter, where 20 to 30 mentally ill patients are resident.

Tremendous progress has been made in moving patients into the new hostels that have been established in Exeter, but the few hostels that have been established are absolutely full and there is nowhere else for patients to be moved to from the hostels. Despite the progress that is being made in advancing the number of patients to the point where they could move into local authority housing units of two, three or four, in which they could live under normal conditions, with just a little supervision, such

housing is not available because there is no tie-up between the local authority, the health authority and the social services department.

The whole cycle has become log-jammed. The hostels are full; therefore the institutionalised patients are becoming frustrated and upset because they are waiting for a chance to move out into hostels. They are also beginning to lose the stability that is so essential to their peace of mind. We must ensure full working co-ordination between local authorities and health authorities, the education and social services departments and the local voluntary agencies.

As he has stated again today, I know that my hon. Friend recognises the need to implement the remaining sections of the Act. I assure him of the full support of the all-party disablement group in his forthcoming negotiations with the local authorities.

Many areas could be touched upon in a debate such as this, but time does not allow. Therefore, I shall pick out a couple of issues that I should like to bring to the notice of the House. The first is a subject that we have debated many times—kidney transplants.

For several years every effort has been made to promote the present opting-in kidney donor card scheme. In debate after debate, both I and other hon. Members have displayed our donor cards and have hoped that our example, combined with the Government's determined publicity campaign, would produce a large enough public response to provide the required number of transplant organs. The Government have done everything possible within the existing scheme to make it work, but I regret to say that the opting-in procedure is not working well enough.

A Gallup survey showed that, of the 893 people questioned, 71 per cent. did not have donor cards and that a further 7 per cent. had cards but did not carry them. A total of 82 per cent. of those surveyed had not read or heard anything that would influence them in deciding whether or not to donate their kidneys. At present, there are about 3,700 kidney patients on the transplant waiting list, with about a third of that number are likely to have a transplant operation each year. These numbers have increased steadily over the years, but that is the position now. The cost of dialysis machines and their operation amounts to £30 million a year.

Something must be done to close that gap. We should consider changing to an opting-out system whereby doctors assume that organs are available for transplantation unless a card is carried stating otherwise. If that system was used in conjunction with a computerised index system on a national scale, we should achieve the desired results.

The other point that I want to raise concerns diabetics and the issue of blood glucose testing strips and disposable syringes by general practitioners under prescription. When I wrote to my hon. Friend the Minister last summer, he gave a strong indication in his reply that the Department accepted the case for blood testing strips to be available on prescription and it was hoped, given resource constraints, to carry that out in the not-too-distant future. I raised the question again last month and received a similarly encouraging response from my hon. and learned Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security who is to reply to this debate. I want to press the point a little further and remind my hon. and learned Friend of the fearful nature of diabetes and the importance of self-monitoring so that early action can be taken to avoid the appalling complications that can occur at a later stage.

I want to quote from the Department's report on a meeting that was held with the British Diabetic Association and the British Medical Association. The second point in the report states:

"The Department acknowledges that blood glucose monitoring offers significant potential advantages over the prescribable urine tests, including better diabetic control. Patients with better control over their condition can avoid or delay the onset of complications, which can lead to expensive NHS treatment quite apart from the humane arguments."

I want to press once again for the earliest possible introduction of prescribable blood testing strips.

I accept that a scheme for disposable syringes would be expensive and might cost £8 million and £9 million. However, now that the Government are considering the issue of disposable needles for drug misusers as part of the AIDS campaign, I stress that it would be completely unfair and unacceptable not to provide free syringes also to diabetics. I hope therefore that these provisions can be introduced as quickly as possible. The long-term gains far outweigh the short-term costs.

The right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) and others referred to the Disablement Income Group campaign for a general disability income. As I have been a patron of DIG for a number of years, it would be remiss of me not to say a few words in support of that long-running campaign.

Simply to say that someone is disabled does not effectively describe the deprivation and hardship which that person can suffer if for one reason or another he or she is unable to work and became disabled other than while covered by industrial injuries compensation. As an example, I want to consider three men of the same age who have become paralysed from the neck down, unable to walk or use their arms, unable to look after themselves and unable to work. The real difference between the three men is that they became disabled in different ways. The first was injured at work and receives £199·45 a week in industrial injuries compensation. The second was injured at home, but had worked and paid national insurance contributions and receives £91·30 a week. The third was born with exactly the same disability, has never worked, and receives just £75·85 a week. They have equal disabilities, but unequal financial allowances. The objective of the DIG campaign, which I fully support, is to secure a fairer distribution of income dependent on the extent of the disability rather than the cause or timing of the disability.

A disability allowance would have two essential parts. There would be a "below the line" allowance to cover the general expense and other costs experienced by disabled people in their daily living — clothing, adaptations, heating and so on. Secondly, there would be an "above the line" allowance which would depend on the degree of disability and the ability to work and would provide an alternative to earnings.

I have long campaigned for such a disability income and also for the "no-fault liability" such as is operated in New Zealand, because I believe that that would solve our problem. I recognise that there are substantial resource implications and it would take some time to put such a scheme into effect. However, in the meantime, I ask my right hon. and hon. Friends to recognise the logic of such a step, which would remove many of the existing

[Mr. John Hannam]

anomalies and complicated benefits. Whenever my right hon. and hon. Friends adjust or alter existing benefit schemes, will they try to effect any such changes within the general objective of creating a disability allowance so that, when the time is ripe, much of the sorting out will already have been completed and the changeover will not be so complicated?

The all-party disablement group has been engaged in many important issues in recent months and I want to thank Ministers for the courteous and helpful way in which they have received our representations. We have had meetings about McColl, access regulations, training of teachers for the deaf, the mobility allowance and about many of the issues that have been raised today.

I believe that progress is being made constantly. The frontiers are being pushed back and expenditure on the disabled is increasing steadily. I have no hesitation in supporting the Government's amendment to the Opposition motion. I congratulate my right hon. and hon. Friends and ask them to maintain the momentum towards a society in which the disabled and handicapped are allowed to live as fruitful and as happy a life as possible.

5.55 pm

Mrs. Elizabeth Shields (Ryedale): I have pleasure in taking part in this debate because alliance Members supported the passage through the House of what is now the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 and we want to ensure that real progress is made over the next decade to implement fully that Act and other legislation intended to improve the quality of life for disabled people.

We also want more support for the many first-class and excellent voluntary organisations concerned with the disabled, both in general terms and in their campaigns to increase public knowledge and understanding of disability and to try to combat prejudice and stigma. To that end, we believe that the £50 million earmarked for educational purposes for the disabled under the 1986 Act should be made available as soon as possible. Through education, more disabled people can be helped to a better quality of life and the able bodied can learn to be of assistance to those in need. One national body, known as PHAB—Physically Handicapped and Able Bodied — was established to bring together persons in both categories for social and recreational activities. PHAB does excellent work, as I know from the programme of a local branch in my constituency.

The alliance wants the best possible education and training for students with disabilities up to the age of 19. For many such students that age limit is arbitrary, and we would hope to extend that entitlement and ensure that continuing education is available to all people with disabilities. We also hope to implement fully the Education Act 1981 and integrate children with disabilities, where possible, into ordinary schools and to fund adequately education for children who require special arrangements.

It is the Government's declared intention to return people in homes or institutions to the community. We do not disagree with that in principle. Many people currently in hospitals or homes for the mentally handicapped should probably never have been put there in the first place. There was simply no other state provision for them, especially if they were elderly and in need of attention, but did not qualify for medical or surgical treatment in hospital. If individuals can be returned to the community they can live a comparatively full life, provided — and this is important — that there is adequate support and the necessary back-up services.

The aim of such services must be to provide patients with the kind of care appropriate to individual needs, giving as much independence as possible and being sufficiently flexible to cope with differing demands and requirements. It is difficult to estimate this community care option accurately. The cost of transferring individual patients from institutions into the community will be quite different from the average cost per patient of institutional care and from the marginal savings accruing from the transfer in question. The bulk of the savings will come only when the unit or institution is closed, and that means the transfer of all patients or residents, some of whom may be severely handicapped, either physically or mentally.

Community care is not a cheap option. The Government have said that any changes must be implemented within planned resources. They are promoting community integration for the disabled, but they are still hanging fire on the financial implementation of the 1986 Act. Some patients will be able to live in the community with very little extra support, but they will be balanced by patients who need 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week support for every week of the year. Such support will have to be mainly professional, although it will be supplemented by informal help from family, friends and neighbours. The availability of voluntary support will vary, with urban areas likely to benefit more than rural areas. Therefore, the burden will fall heavily on the statutory services.

Last week I visited Claypenny hospital in my constituency. It caters for many mentally handicapped people. The transfer of some of its residents into the community has already taken place and others are preparing for removal. One person with very little disability now has a regular job. This is good and encouraging. However, I am greatly worried about those whose severe handicaps could cause problems and unhappiness for themselves outside their present environment with its great wealth of resources and activities. That will happen unless sufficient numbers of trained staff are made available in the community to care for such patients.

Claypenny hospital—no doubt this applies to similar establishments all over Britain—has a devoted nursing staff, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, caterers, launderers and engineers — all the human resources essential to the welfare of the patients in an excellent institution and necessary for the smooth running of its day-to-day life. A community home with a few residents, about three or four to each house, is ideal. But what about individual attention and the provision of the many facilities now available in hospital? What guarantee is there that the education of the disabled will continue to the same or even to an increased standard?

Claypenny has its own fine special school set in its spacious grounds, and that school is doing good work. I am told that in due course it will close. That seems a great waste of excellent resources. Will funds be available in the community to replace this kind of educational back-up? I hope that the Minister will tell us about that.

Another matter must be considered when discussing voluntary help for disabled people. The Government must

take far more account of the selfless people who stay at home to care for others. The carers are much neglected, and they are mostly women. Women have traditionally been allocated this caring responsibility and that tradition has been reinforced by the practices of both Conservative and Labour Governments. The Prime Minister has laid stress on Victorian values, irrespective of the fact that many of them were bad and certainly not to be encouraged —especially those that relegated women to the home as if that were her only place and role in life. Equally, a Labour Government in 1976 explicitly excluded married and cohabiting women from their entitlement to the invalid care allowance when it was introduced. Any comprehensive policy for care in the community must recognise the position of the carer.

Last year an early-day motion, signed by hon. Members of all parties, called for measures to lighten the burden of carers, to provide adequate respite care and to make the invalid care allowance available to married women carers, as advised by the European Court of Justice and recommended by the Parliamentary Committee. Carers, who are often daughters who give up their own fulfilling career to look after elderly parents or relatives, should be recognised in terms of rights to income support, training, holidays, respite care and professional back-up where necessary. Their contribution to society is as valuable as what is known as "productive" work.

All this costs money, but the total sum of £150 million that has been associated with the Act should be made available as soon as possible. Local councils can also contribute from their own budgets, and I am pleased to learn that in next year's budget North Yorkshire county council is providing a generous £885,000 for the care of elderly, disabled and handicapped people. This is the result of a balanced council that has all parties working together. It will mean more home helps — an important service that makes life more bearable for the housebound. Home helps are the salt of the earth and do an excellent job. Those in old people's homes are remembered as well. Additional staff there will mean greater personal attention and more security for our senior citizens.

In considering the handicapped we should not forget the problems faced by the deaf and the blind for whom special kinds of help are required to enable them to enjoy life. As the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) said, even greater support is needed for those who are both deaf and blind, because in their world they depend totally on their other three senses.

Britain is still a long way from being a society which offers equal opportunities to all. There is discrimination against many minority groups, and this includes people with disabilities. For example, there is no protection in law from discrimination in employment. A Bill of Rights, enforced by a human rights commission, would protect minorities. Even though there are statutory provisions governing the employment of persons with disabilities, they form a disproportionately high number of the unemployed. I urge the Government to see that the implementation of the 1986 Act is not delayed and to ensure that tax cuts in the budget next month are not made at the expense of those whose needs have already been recognised by hon. Members in all parts of the House.

6.6 pm

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): I welcome this debate. I did not find the speech by the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) offensive, but I found it rather heavy on electioneering and rather light on facts. The Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 was not passed as a result only of efforts made by the Opposition. I remember being present on Second Reading and when the Bill made progress later on. At that time, the worry of the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) was that the Bill could well be talked out. I was one of a number of Conservative Members who supported the measure and I was prepared to urge colleagues to make short speeches so as not to risk losing the Bill.

That Bill had all-party support and was supported by the Government. For that reason I do not accept the criticisms made in this debate. Opposition criticism appears to relate to the delay in implementing the provisions of the Act. Reference was made earlier to the cost, which is now estimated at £150 million. From a sedentary position, the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) muttered, "So what?" All Governments must take cognisance of the revenue implications of policies that they implement. No doubt that was why the Labour Government of 1974-1979 did not provide resources to implement the 1970 Act. There may be a difference of opinion about the timetabling of this measure, but there is no difference of opinion about the principle.

I am keen to see implemented as soon as possible the provision that will allow disabled people to be represented before a tribunal. I believe that he who is his own advocate has a fool for a client. In some cases, a person who is emotionally involved in the proceedings is worried because it is his own problem that is being decided by the tribunal, and he wants to put over his case about receiving a benefit. Such people often get muddled and do not present the facts in a correct and intelligible way. It is important to ensure that, where possible, disabled people are represented.

Mr. Carter-Jones: On a point of clarity, I can tell the hon. Gentleman that the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 went through the House at about 4 o'clock on the last morning before the general election. The implementation of that Act, known as the Alf Morris Act, was up to the Conservative Government.

Mr. Knight: I do not withdraw the point that I made earlier. The Labour Government of 1974 had the opportunity to implement that Act and they did not provide resources to local government to enable that to be done. Undoubtedly, the reason why they did not do so was that they had other priorities at that time, given the state of the economy. No criticism can be levelled today against the Government and I deplore the attacks on the Prime Minister that were made earlier in the debate.

Mr. Wigley: On Tuesday last week.

Mr. Major: The hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) referred again to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. I did not interrupt the speech of the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South again, because of the shortness of the debate. Before the points that have been made get taken out of context, it would be wise for people to read the record and assure themselves that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said that spending on disabled benefit has gone up by 75 per cent. That is what I said, and it is wholly true.

Mr. Knight: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. That 75 per cent. increase takes the amount now being spent to nearly £6 billion. There is nothing to be ashamed of in that.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Referring to the point made by my hon. Friend the Minister, perhaps it is worth bearing in mind that that 75 per cent. increase in real terms includes an increase of 50 per cent. due to the increased number of beneficiaries and more than 20 per cent. because of the increase in real value of benefits for long-term sick and disabled people.

Mr. Knight: That is an important point, and I am sure that the House has noted it.

There are two areas in which there are problems for disabled people. The first is the fact that disabled people want nothing more than to be treated as ordinary citizens and members of the community. I regret to say that there is still discrimination in some areas, such as entry into cinemas, discos, dance halls, offices and shops. I would welcome the full force of the law being brought against those organisations and companies that break it in this area.

Opposition Members earlier mentioned the problem of disabled people and unemployment. It is fair to say that the disabled today still suffer, if not from prejudice, then certainly from some employers' reluctance to take them on. There appears to be a presumption that a person who is physically disabled is also mentally slow, incompetent and unable to work as well as an able-bodied person. I deplore that attitude, which still exists in some parts of industry.

There is no reason why someone who suffers from a physical disability should be prevented from acting as a typist, a receptionist or a telephonist. I know of a number of blind people and severely handicapped people who discharge those duties admirably.

All hon. Members should welcome the Government's initiatives on unemployment. I understand that, as far as access to MSC employment and training programmes is concerned, in some cases the disabled have preferential access because of relaxed eligibility conditions. I particularly welcome the fares-to-work scheme and the scheme which allows disabled people to borrow special aids for employment, such as fixtures for typewriters, earpieces for telephones and so on. Those allow a person to work who might otherwise not be able to do so.

I applaud the fact that the Government have implemented a job introduction scheme which encourages employers to recruit disabled people by offering a weekly grant of £45 for a trial period. I hope that, in the short term, the cash will triumph over the unfortunate attitude of some employers and will lead to more disabled people being offered employment.

The House should applaud the fact that, as the Minister said earlier, the Government are providing £6 billion in 1986-87 to assist the disabled. The ability of any Government to assist must depend on the state of the economy. Labour Members have no monopoly of compassion for the disabled. Conservative Members care about them, too. Putting that care into practice is the difficult thing. In view of the projected growth of the economy and of Britain's strong financial position, I look forward to a continuation in the next Parliament of the increasing help that the Government are giving to the disabled.

6.15 pm

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Some hon. Members are apparently suffering from an illusion about the nature of the motion before the House. They assume that no party political difference exists on this issue. The Government's record and attitude show clearly that there is a difference between us, no matter how much compassion there may be in the hearts of individual Conservative Members.

I remember an infamous day—18 November 1983—when I attempted to bring in a Bill that would have outlawed discrimination against disabled people. With four honourable exceptions Conservative Members were dragooned into the Division Lobby to stop that measure having a Second Reading. It was voted down on a closure. That illustrated more than anything else the attitude of the Government.

We have all heard of the St. Valentine's day massacre in Chicago in the 1920s. There has been another one recently. On Saturday 14 February 1987 the Careline bus service for the disabled that runs between the railway stations in London and the airports was closed down because the Government were unwilling to provide the revenue support that it needed. I know that there will be another service—the airbus service—but that will not be introduced until July. What will disabled people, not only from London but from all over the country, do? How will they get about between now and July? Even the Greater London Association for the Disabled is doubtful whether the airbus service will be an adequate substitute.

We should not be surprised at the Government's attitude. I worry about whether section 7 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act will ever be implemented so long as this Government have a majority. Psychiatric patients are being let out of hospital into an alien environment after six months, only to receive at best inadequate attention and at worst the fate of being completely ignored. In terms of this Government's expenditure on Trident and armaments, implementing section 7 costs very little—very little in terms of the £3·5 billion tax reductions for the very rich. There is no reason why the Government should not provide the resources called for under section 7 of that Act for these poor people.

The Government's indifference to the plight of the disabled is now well documented. Local authorities have been denuded of funds and have had to ignore their statutory obligations. There is a marked contrast between the district auditor surcharging and disqualifying councillors in Liverpool because they delayed levying a rate—a relatively minor and highly controversial matter—and the Government's attitude to local authorities which charged for home helps in contravention of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970.

The Government do nothing to ensure that local authorities discharge their statutory obligations to the disabled. The disabled have been under attack by this Government who have doubled the available scale margin from 50p to £1 and extended its application to heating allowances. The disabled now face the propect of having to pay 20 per cent. of their rates, irrespective of their means.

The Government are abolishing the additional allowances for items such as extra heating, special diets, laundry and clothing. They have replaced them, to all

intents and purposes, with the measly £23 a week special disablement premium, and the most severely disabled have been the chief sufferers.

The Government are a lost cause, but soon there will be a new Parliament and it will have to address its attention to the creation of a national disability income. The need for that has been highlighted by a number of organisations, including the Disablement Income Group. The group has shown that three men aged 39, paralysed from the neck down, unable to do anything for themselves and unable to take employment, are treated differently according to how they became disabled. The man who is paralysed from the neck down but was injured at work receives £199·45 a week; the man who was injured in the home but has worked and paid his national insurance contributions receives only £91·30 a week; but the poor man who was born disabled, has never worked, and therefore has never paid any national insurance contribution, receives £75·85 per week.

Such anomalies can really be taken account of only by a proper national disability income. Such an income would have two elements. First, there would be a disablement costs allowance, which would defray expenses and the difficulties of daily living experienced by disabled people. Secondly, it would provide an alternative source of income to the earnings lost through disability. The present allowances are quite inadequate. An attendance allowance of £30·95 a week will not buy 24-hour care; a mobility allowance of £21·65 a week cannot cover the cost of daily taxi fares for people who are unable to use public transport; and £23·25 a week for a disability premium does not replace the weekly earnings of even the lowest-paid worker in this country. A disablement costs allowance would replace the chaos of the current inadequate benefit schemes. It would deal not only with the extra costs currently covered by additional allowances such as heating, but with the mechanical and electrical aids that are often needed by disabled people as an aid to living — to enable them to lead even the semblance of a proper life.

I believe that the next Labour Government — and speed the day when they take power—will have to keep faith with the 10 per cent. of the population and the 29 per cent. of households which have at least one disabled member. They must do that by doing at least three things. First, they must outlaw discrimination against disabled people.

The House will have a Bill before it very soon, if I am given leave to introduce the measure on 4 March. Secondly, there must be a national disability scheme. Thirdly, I believe that we should have a Minister for the Disabled with a Department equipped to run the rule over all legislation and all measures emanating from all Departments of State.

Socialists have an ideological as well as a humanitarian commitment to ensuring that disabled people are given equality, but this Government still have an opportunity in the remaining time available to them. If Ministers have consciences, if they believe that there is a case for bettering the living standards of disabled people, they have on the statute book the 1970 Act. The legislative background is there. It requires only the will — not the will to give largesse to rich taxpayers but the will to give to those who, often through no fault of their own, are suffering disability and need a real chance in life.

6.25 pm

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I am glad to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing). It is appropriate that the debate was introduced by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), who in so many ways is the father of us all when it comes to legislation for disabled people. The experience that my right hon. Friend had with the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 is a warning to us all of what happens when there is legislation on the statute book that does not immediately receive the resources or the full implementation that it deserves. My right hon. Friend underlined that in the way in which he introduced the warnings of what could be happening to the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986, which was piloted through the House by the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke), who I am glad to see is sitting on the Front Bench this evening.

I shall not introduce party political bickering into the debate. I have paid credit in the past to some of the things that the Government have done — for example, what they have done for mentally handicapped people in Wales, the "all-well" strategy, and so forth. However, no one can say that the Prime Minister's response at Question Time last Tuesday was anything short of callous and indifferent. The Prime Minister said:

> "However, the provisions of the Act, which have significant resource implications, can only be brought into effect as and when these resources can be provided."—[*Official Report*, 10 February 1987; Vol. 110, c. 156.]

That was it. The Prime Minister did not say that the Government wanted to make progress as quickly as they could, or that they were doing everything in their power. She did not say that this was a high priority in the Government's programme. No; there was a full stop at that point. That was all the sympathy and action for the disabled that we had from the Prime Minister last Tuesday.

The amendment contains the words that I interjected when the Minister of State was speaking earlier. The amendment

> "re-affirms its commitment to the provisions of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 with implementation as resources become available and as priorities allow".

The reality is that the priorities of disabled people do not allow the Act to go ahead as rapidly as possible. Thousands of people the length and breadth of these islands need the implementation of all the provisions of the Act, and they need it now. People coming out of long-stay hospitals, people suffering from mental illness—as we have heard from several speakers—desperately need the provisions. Those people are being let loose into the community without community facilities and provisions being made available to them. But they are not a sufficient priority to be put above the other demands on the Government's purse.

No doubt, in a few weeks we shall be given a reduction in income tax. One sixth of every penny to be knocked off income tax would pay for the implementation of the Act, and it is not all needed in one parliamentary year, as the Minister said. But that is not the Government's priority. They would rather give the money away in the run-up to an election than spend it on essential services for the disabled. Nor is it their priority to help mentally handicapped children in schools. Such children need a

[Mr. Dafydd Wigley]

personal plan and provision when they leave school at the age of 18 or 19 so that they do not come home to aging parents who do not know how to care for them, and have no back-up facilities within the community. That is a priority for many of us, but it is not the Government's priority.

Mr. Thurnham *rose*——

Mr. Wigley: No, I am not giving way. Time is short.

The Government would rather give away about £3,000 million to income tax payers to buy votes. There are unpaid carers in the community—often they are women —looking after elderly and disabled relatives in their own homes, who desperately need support services within the community. They desperately need domiciliary nursing support. They need therapy in their own households to stop their relatives from being hospitalised and going into long-stay institutions. They need that help now. They have a desperate priority. However, the priority of the Government is to cut income tax, not to find that one sixth of one penny of income tax which is needed to implement the Act.

We know of the need for greater assessment so that all those who have a real need, and who should come within the provisions of the 1970 Act will have those needs met. Yes, that will need expenditure, but it is not a priority for the Government.

The Prime Minister's response to this matter last Tuesday was a disgrace to the Conservative party and to the House. The Prime Minister and her Ministers should have been much more willing to ensure that the needs of disabled people are not the last priority in the queue. They should ensure that disabled people do not come after everything else and that money which is expected in the Budget is not given away elsewhere. They should ensure that those needs rank high in the order of priorities as we see them.

I accept that the Minister—as he said in an earlier intervention—does not know what is in the Budget. However, he could tell the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister that unless provision is made within the next financial year for the implementation of the Act, he will not vote for the Government on the Budget or anything else. It is a matter of principle and whether the Minister will stand up for what is needed by disabled people. It is a question of whether his priorities are those of disabled people, or of the Treasury or those of a Conservative Government before an election.

One can pursue many issues connected with disabled people. This issue will not go away. It will return at Question Time after Question Time, week after week. It will run hard in a general election, unless the Government rapidly find the money to make the Act a reality.

In cutting my comments short I wish to refer to the review of the supplementary benefit limits for board and lodging and residential and nursing care that were announced on Thursday of last week. An extra £5 was given for elderly people and £10 for physically disabled people under pension age. That is an increase of up to £190 a week from April.

Although the £10 a week was welcomed, it still does not address the problem of the more profoundly or multiple-handicap people who incur high care costs and face charges of up to £300 a week. Local authorities are obliged to top up the difference, and most do so. My concern is for the future, as more profoundly handicapped people go into residential care rather than hospital, and smaller "normal" homes are developed where economy of scale costs are not possible. If those people are seeking residential care they may have topping-up problems and be channelled into inappropriate care. The Spastics Society has made representations to the Minister seeking a special category of people on higher rate attendance allowance who would receive the nursing home rate of £230 a week without having to be in a nursing home. If the Government had acknowledged the special needs of that group of profoundly handicapped people, they would have encouraged local authorities to top up the difference.

The board and lodging rate for people with mental handicaps is also a problem. That remains unchanged, at £150 a week. MENCAP responded angrily to that. It will inevitably exacerbate the problems of mentally handicapped people in smaller group homes that are registered as residential care homes.

While the Government are attempting to seek a longer-term solution to the issue, individual disabled people are experiencing difficulties in the short term. The imposition of blanket limits inevitably results in the needs of individuals not being recognised. I hope that the Minister will take on board the need for profoundly mentally and physically handicapped people to be better catered for in the system. I underline the great dismay and disappointment that I believe hon. Members on both sides of the House feel because progress is not being made as they had hoped. Progress is being made, by stages, but we had hoped that it would be made by rapid stages. At present, there is no end to the tunnel. There is no light in sight. I hope that the Minister will give a greater commitment to the speedy, full implementation of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 within the next 12 months.

6.33 pm

Mr. Lewis Stevens (Nuneaton): Labour Members have decried the £6 billion being spent on the disabled as though nothing had been done. Yet that figure represents a £2·5 billion increase. The increase in the number of people who now receive the increased benefit should also be welcomed by all hon. Members. Instead, however, Labour Members are somewhat mealy-mouthed about the success of the Government's measures.

The Social Security Act 1986 was mentioned in the usual disparaging way by the Opposition, but within the terms of that Act 160,000 disabled people will receive £4 to £5 per week more than at present. Surely that is a help. We talk about disabled people as though every one of them was extremely severely disabled. They all matter, however small their disability, but they are not all at the extreme end of the disability scale. The review that the Minister has had carried out into the genuine needs of the severely disabled is also important. A commitment was made in Committee on the Social Security Bill that people's needs would be considered carefully before the level of benefits was set. It was also stated that grants—not loans—could be made available through the social fund. That possibility could certainly be considered in some cases.

The severely disabled, who are obviously those in the greatest need, can be looked after even better than they are today within the terms of the new social security

framework. The Government have made commitments to do that. They have also made commitments regarding the Bill introduced by the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke), which contained some extremely important provisions. As was mentioned earlier, it is important that the disabled should be able to get help quickly for representations before tribunals. I welcome the Minister's comments today and the fact that there has at last been movement on the McColl report. That will be welcome news for many disabled people, and I hope that other measures recommended in the report will be implemented in the near future.

I welcome the steps towards people moving out of care and into the community. I am convinced that that is the right approach, but the benefits for those moving out should be monitored carefully. It is not just a matter of value for money. It is a matter of whether the homes into which those individuals move function well and to their benefit. These are comparatively early days, but we should monitor that change closely through local authorities and the DHSS to ensure that such moves are genuinely beneficial to all those concerned. I still have some slight doubt as to whether all the people being moved out are really ready for it and whether the places to which they are moved are suitable. A more formal institution might still be preferable for some of them at this stage.

Changes in the education provision for handicapped people have been working successfully for some years, but the effect on children going into normal schools should be studied. How much does that benefit some of those children? The majority will certainly benefit, but that also needs to be considered. The right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) mentioned those who are deaf and blind. Some parents in my constituency work very hard on behalf of the organisation called SENSE. I have visited that organisation's centre in Edgbaston, Birmingham. Those people have a most difficult problem — to put it mildly — in terms of mobility and being looked after. I can conceive of little that equals the difficulties of parents and other people who look after those children. I ask the Minister to consider carefully the terms of the early-day motion on mobility allowance for those people.

I have exhausted the few minutes that I had. The Government are concerned. The Government have taken action in the past and are taking action in the new social security review. The Government have a commitment to the legislation introduced by the hon. Member for Monklands, West. We have shown that we care about the disabled. More must be done, and I am sure that the Government will do it.

6.39 pm

Mr. Lewis Carter-Jones (Eccles): After 22 years involvement in the House in respect of disability, I shall now make my shortest speech on the subject. It is heartwarming that the disabled people are concerned about prevention. I am delighted to be associated with the Spastics Society's move to prevent disability in the young. The society has realised the suffering caused by disability, and it is willing to make a sacrifice to do something about the problem.

One of the great problems faced by disabled people is the handicap that prevents them from being educated. They will have a double handicap if we make it difficult for them to be educated. Will the Minister please ensure that more resources are made available for the provisions of the Education Act 1981, which we said were the Warnock recommendations without the resources? Those resources must be provided.

The disabled child or disabled adult who gets the education that he or she deserves has a good and substantial chance of being rehabilitated and of becoming who he or she wants to be — an income tax payer. If disabled people are to become income tax payers, after overcoming their disability, receiving their education and being rehabilitated, we shall have failed if the Manpower Services Commission does not fight much harder for them to get them employment. Will the Minister for Social Security and the Disabled please go to the Under-Secretary of State for Employment with responsibility for the disabled — the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Lee) — and say, "There is a fair amount of money available to the MSC, but there is not enough drive or initiative. There is an awful lot of propaganda and a tremendous amount of paperwork but there are not enough jobs."? At the end of the day, if we have prevented disability in some cases and educated in others and have rehabilitated disabled people, we owe them a chance to get a place in society working wherever possible.

6.41 pm

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): Like other right hon. and hon. Members, my time is restricted. There are many points which I should like to make but which I shall reserve for another occasion. The Minister was generous enough to say some kind things, and I am grateful to him. Whether by the end of my speech he will feel that I have reciprocated is another matter.

It is extremely important that we should have this debate. The admirable speeches of my right hon. Friends the Members for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) and for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), my hon. Friends the Members for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) and for Eccles (Mr. Carter-Jones) and the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley), show that the Opposition believe that there are questions that will not go away. We are determined to pose them and determined that the Under-Secretary of State should reply to them.

The Minister for Social Security and the Disabled began, as is the Government's style in matters relevant to disability, by announcing in dribs and drabs measures about which we should have heard some time ago when we expected a Government response to the McColl report. As with aspects of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986, we are finding that the Government and Government spokespersons are promising announcements — we await them — but nothing is said or done.

I obtained a Library paper on the McColl report which considered the issues mentioned by the Minister — wheelchairs and the rest. The McColl report is very important. The Library paper said that the previous Minister for Social Security — the hon. Member for Braintree (Mr. Newton) — was to make an announcement before the summer. This is February and the present Minister still has not made a clear statement on the Government's thinking on the McColl report. The Government's attitude to the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act is similar.

I welcomed, as did the whole House, the support given to the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and

[Mr. Tom Clarke]

Representation) Act by those hon. Members who have participated in this debate, including the hon. Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam), but I could not agree with the account of the Government's timetable given by the Minister and shared to some extent by the hon. Member for Exeter.

The Government are well behind the commitments that they gave the House on Third Reading and when considering Lords amendments. If the Minister has any doubts about that, I refer him to the comment made on 11 April on Third Reading by the then Minister for Health the right hon. Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Mr. Hayhoe) — when referring to the clause dealing specifically with the problems of disabled school leavers, which the Government disgracefully set aside. He said:

"I am advised that there probably need not be any delay in implementing the new clause. I hope that its provisions will apply soon." — [*Official Report*, 11 April 1985; Vol. 95, c. 484.]

On 4 July, in the debate on the Lords amendments—by which time the Government had had plenty of time to think about their timing — the present Minister for Health, the hon. Member for Braintree (Mr. Newton), said:

"If possible, we should like to bring the provisions into effect in time to benefit disabled young people leaving full-time education in the summer of 1987, that is by the autumn of this year. We shall be consulting urgently with local authority associations about achieving that." — [*Official Report*, 4 July 1986; Vol. 100, c. 1328.]

That commitment has not been honoured. I challenge the Minister to give us evidence to the contrary. If he suggests that my right hon. and hon. Friends and I are misleading the House, I ask him to explain the position to voluntary organisations—from the Advocacy Alliance to RADAR, MENCAP, MIND and the Scottish Society for the Mentally Handicapped—which all feel as strongly as I do about the Government's failure to honour their commitment.

Those voluntary organisations said:

"It is this particular section of the Act which is causing the most anxiety among the organisations at present. It already looks as though the Government will not bring this section into operation by October. If the Government does not move now, the future of those leaving school in 1988 and 1989 will be seriously and adversely affected. The young disabled people will leave school without a proper assessment of their needs and of their future".

I should like to repeat the next sentence, which is perhaps the most important comment so far on the Government's attitude to this legislation. The voluntary organisations — I know of not one that supports the Government's position—said:

"Still more serious is the implication of these delays on the rest of the Act and the future of all ages of people with disabilities. How can the voluntary organisations be assured that the other sections of the Act will be implemented and how long will this take?"

That overwhelming question mark hangs above the Government Dispatch Box as we debate these matters. The question mark was just as overwhelming when the Prime Minister attempted the other day to answer our question and left us with even more doubts about the Government's credibility than we had before.

I ask the Minister also, because leaks are not unknown in the Government, whether he has read, or is even aware of, the report yesterday in the *Daily Telegraph* about the disabled benefits review. The hon. Gentleman mentioned the OPCS survey which is being conducted. The House is entitled to know what that survey has been doing. Will it lead to a review, especially one about nil costs? If there are to be winners and losers, as the Prime Minister said in another context, are not disabled winners and losers to know exactly who they are before the election? The Minister owes the House that information at least.

With regard to local authority associations, I am delighted that the Association of County Councils, the Association of Metropolitan Authorities and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, which all supported the Act, have expressed their disappointment at the Government's niggardly attitude to the provision of resources.

Let there be no doubt, when the Minister and some of his hon. Friends suggest that I for one second agreed to the Government's timetable, that Conservative Members were fully aware of the resources implications and fully aware that the House would be profoundly disappointed if, seven months after Royal Assent, we found that not one ha'penny had been spent and not a single order introduced. They knew, too, that the House would be disappointed to know that, although we have pressed the Government time after time, the people of Northern Ireland still do not know whether the Government intend to apply the Act to them. If they are in doubt, may I remind them of the views of the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth), on Third Reading on 11 April. He said:

"Those of us who may from time to time take a slightly parsimonious attitude to Government matters are anxious that all the resources needed should be found to fulfil the agreed measures behind this important Bill.

I add my voice to those of other Conservative Members who give their support in seeking the resources needed to fulfil the Bill's excellent objectives."—[*Official Report*, 11 April 1986; Vol. 95, c. 484.]

For the Government now to pretend that they did not know about resource implications, to pretend that hon. Members—especially my right hon. and hon. Friends—and local authorities did not anticipate that, is to mislead the House beyond what is acceptable.

Even if every word, line and clause of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 were implemented, problems would still remain. The hon. Member for Ryedale (Mrs. Shields), in an interesting and helpful speech, referred to the problem of carers. When the Government tell us about the cost, as they estimate it, of implementing the Act—setting aside the other priorities in which they seem to believe: £164 million to dispose of and advertise the sale of British Gas, over £200 million that they are spending on AWACS and the proposals to reduce tax in the next Budget—we would want to remind them that carers in Britain save the Treasury millions of pounds every day, every week and every year. The Government should not exploit that dedication.

Some Conservative Members gave genuine support to what is now the Act. I acknowledge that at the time and I do so now. If they believe that the Government are not acting in a lethargic manner, they are being led up the garden path. There is a difference on these matters between the two sides of the House. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition warned, two days before the last general election, that were the Prime Minister re-elected there would be cuts in community services. He said then, and our debate has confirmed it:

"I warn you not to fall ill; I warn you not to get old." The Prime Minister mentioned St. Francis of Assisi. She forgot that he had suggested that we should seek not just to be understood, but to understand.

The inexcusable lethargy on the part of the Government is a clear admission that they fail to understand the problems of the 5·5 million disabled people and their carers in this country. For that reason I invite the House to support our motion, and I invite the British people to reach their own conclusions when the time comes.

6.56 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Nicholas Lyell): It is a matter of note that the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) should make his debut on the Front Bench in a debate which largely centres on the implementation of a Bill which he piloted skilfully from the Back Benches.

I would have been able to give the hon. Gentleman a warmer welcome if he had not so heavily laced his opening speech from that position with humbug. The hon. Gentleman knew when he introduced his Bill, with Government support and the support of my hon. Friends—a point that was well made by my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight)—that he was accepting phasing. He said:

"I accept, as I did on Second Reading, that it will be necessary to consider implementation on the basis of phasing."—[*Official Report*, 4 July 1986; Vol. 100, c. 1340.]

We shall implement some sections of the Act promptly. It remains our hope, as my hon. Friend said, subject to the outcome of his discussions with the local authority associations, that sections 4, 8, 9 and 10 of the Act can be implemented by 1 April. My hon. Friend said that he was optimistic that it would be possible to implement section 11 this year. Some realities come home to us when we look at sections 5 and 6. As my hon. Friend said, he also wishes to examine whether we shall be able to make progress on sections 5 and 6, which deal with the identification and assessment of disabled school leavers.

The hon. Member for Monklands, West originally believed that the implementation of those sections would not have a significant cost. The hon. Gentleman told the House—it was put more strongly by the right hon. Gentleman and Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris)—that the Opposition now estimate the annual cost of those sections at between £30 million and £50 million, which is a matter that any Government would have to mention. It is a matter which Opposition Members ought to appreciate because they were clearly sensitive during this debate about their inability to allocate any specific sum between 1974 and 1979 to the implementation of the Chronically Sick and Disabled persons Act 1970, which was introduced by the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe. The reasons why they were in difficulty are well known to the House—the problem in 1976, the fact that the party was over, and the return from the airport.

Priorities and finances must be a matter for any Government. The priorities of the Opposition in this matter of disablement benefits deserve more careful scrutiny, and I commend this to the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) and the hon. Member for Monklands, West who has just joined the Front Bench. That £3·5 billion, which is all supposedly to be produced from the rich—although we notice from the newspapers that they are getting a little richer, and no doubt the yield is getting a little smaller—will not help the poor, the disabled or the long-term sick. As we know, that £3·5 billion, which is supposed to be spent on child benefit, on extra pensions and on the long-term scale rate, does not provide the extra £1 billion that would be necessary to offset the corresponding deductions from the means-tested benefits of the poor; nor does it provide the normal upratings that go with it for the long-term sick, for widows and for the disabled, which would require an extra £1 billion, making it £5·5 billion.

The hon. Gentleman seeks to attack us because we have careful priorities in finance, but the foundations of his party's strategy on the sick, pensioners and the disabled are undercut by its failure to think through the points that it is seeking to make. The Opposition say, "Take it out of defence spending." I watched the Leader of the Opposition talking to Sir Robin Day last night. He was not talking about taking anything out of defence spending. He was putting it into some sort of conventional defence which is supposed to help us. No money was to be obtained there.

The Opposition say that we should not make tax cuts, as though tax cuts affected only the rich; as though the only people in this country who pay tax were rich. A high proportion of the taxation that funds benefits is paid by people who get little more in earnings than many of the people who receive benefit. That is one of the realities that the Government do not forget.

The right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) made an uncharacteristic and ill-placed attack on my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. He failed to quote what she said and it shows the Opposition's sensitivity on this point. What my right hon. Friend said about the 75 per cent. increase in spending on benefits under this Government—no less than £2·5 billion—to £6 billion was absolutely accurate. Opposition Members are entitled to play with statistics, like the rest of us, and they are perfectly entitled to say that spending on the disabled went up by 8·3 per cent. in real terms during their period of office and that it has gone up by 6 per cent. during our period of office, but I shall put that into its real terms. When it comes to constant price money, the money that has to be provided by the taxes of people who go to work and pay their taxes, the increased amount paid each year during their period of office, 1974 to 1979, was £166 million. The increased amount that was being paid during the first six years of this Government was not £166 million, but £215 million in real terms. That puts the matter into perspective.

My hon. Friend has made our position clear. We will seek to implement the Act on the basis that we have set out. We hope to make significant progress with sections 4, 8, 9 and 10, and we hope section 11 in the near future, and we are looking carefully at sections 5 and 6. We will set about it in the workmanlike way in which we have set about our care of the disabled over the past six years and which we hope to continue over the next five years.

I invite the House to reject the motion tabled by the Opposition, and I commend the amendment in the names of my right hon. Friends to the House. If there is a Division, I invite the House to join us in the Lobby.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 179, Noes 267.

Division No. 93] **[7.00 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley, N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. James Hamilton and
Mr. Ron Davies.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Ames, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bigge-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boneor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Sir Alexander
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, John
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Irving, Charles
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lilley, Peter

Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Mather, Sir Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'lch N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'coster)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Portillo and
Mr. David Lightbown.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House congratulates the Government on its continuing commitment to improving provision for disabled people; draws attention to the increase in annual spending on their social security entitlements of £2·5 billion in real terms since 1978-79; welcomes improvements in their tax position and employment opportunities; reaffirms its commitment to the provisions of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 with implementation as resources become available and as priorities allow; and welcomes the survey by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys into the numbers, circumstances and needs of disabled people as a basis for a comprehensive review of benefits of long-term sick and disabled people.

Women in the Community

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Before I call the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson), I have to tell the House that Mr. Speaker has selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister and other Ministers.

7.15 pm

Ms. Jo Richardson (Barking): I beg to move,

That this House condemns the Government's policies which have increased the disadvantages of women in the community and at work, particularly with regard to their health and well being, and have failed to recognise the justifiable care, security and opportunity needs of women.

I begin by reminding the House of an event that took place in July 1985—the United Nations conference in Nairobi, which marked the end of the United Nations Decade for Women. At that conference, 157 nations, including the United Kingdom, were represented and they unanimously agreed a document known as the Nairobi forward-looking strategies for the advancement of women. That far-reaching and imaginative document sets out a detailed blueprint for action on equality, employment, health, education, peace and development. It cites the need for equal pay and for conditions for work of equal value and recommends the desegregation of jobs so that women are no longer consigned to occupations characterised by low pay, poor promotion prospects and job insecurity. It considers the need for better training opportunities for women and the provision of opportunities for retraining to reduce unemployment among women. It also recommends that the tax law be amended so that they are not a disincentive to married women seeking or undertaking paid employment.

Representatives of the British Government agreed the document and eventually, but only after a great deal of nagging, ratified the 1981 United Nations convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. The Government's support for it was, however, seriously reduced by no fewer than five pages of reservations attached to their ratification. Those reservations included the right to regard our existing Sex Discrimation Act 1975 and our Equal Pay Act 1970 as sufficient to meet the needs of women in Britain and the requirements of the United Nations convention. They also included the right to continue to apply discriminatory retirement pensions, social security and taxation laws, to retain discriminatory immigration and nationality laws and to reject all measures for positive action as practices "which provide for women to be treated more favourably than men".

Despite the fact that the European courts have forced the Government grudgingly to give way on some of the more blatant aspects of their continuing discrimination against women, the Government have fought to hold on to as many of those reservations as possible, or to equalise down, as with immigration, the justifiable demands of women. Two years after the close of the United Nations Decade for Women, the ideals of Nairobi are still a long way from becoming a reality.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): Did the Government also go on record on that occasion as exempting themselves from the requirement to deal with the problem of low pay? When they introduced the Wages Bill to encourage low pay, which is overwhelmingly a problem for women, they had to resile from the International Labour Organisation convention. Did they confess to the world in Nairobi that they were encouraging low pay and thus reducing the living standards of working women?

Ms. Richardson: I did not have the privilege and, frankly, could not afford to go to Nairobi, but I am certain from what I have heard that they would not have made any confessions about low pay, which they have allowed to continue and about which they have done nothing, although I am sure that it is among their reservations as they have done nothing whatever about it.

If the "forward strategies" had been implemented, women and men in paid employment would be entitled to three months' parental leave after the birth of a child. The Government have not only failed to implement that but have played the leading role in blocking the European Economic Community initiative on parental leave. In this context, I was grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) for introducing a 10-minute rule Bill on parental leave last week. The United Nations strategy if implemented, would provide all men and women with easy access to child care facilities. Despite consistent and overwhelming evidence that this is one of the most important considerations of parents in paid employment, state provision is virtually non-existent for children under the age of three and covers only a tiny minority of three to five-year-olds.

In 1985, the last year of the Decade for Women, the Government taxed the provision of work place nurseries, treating that essential service as a perk. This year by the withdrawal of Manpower Services Commission funding, they allowed the closure of the only skillcentre course with a Labour local authority funded creche, for women training in non-traditional skills—the very training and retraining required to break down job segregation in the work place—and moved the training places to a college which does not have the atmosphere in which women can learn about non-traditional skills and where no creche places are available.

In the work place, women continue to earn less than three quarters of a man's wage. The equal value amendment of 1984, which the Government deliberately made unnecessarily complex and weighted against women, has failed to provide a satisfactory outcome in the first case ever taken. Indeed, the tribunal rulings in this and other test cases have driven a coach and horses through both the letter and the spirit of the law.

The Government's dual attack through privatisation and deregulation in the work place has robbed women of health and safety protection and of protection against unfair dismissal and against exploitation and poverty wages. Privatisation and deregulation of public services such as transport have robbed women of affordable, safe public transport, on which women are much more reliant than men because fewer women have cars to take them through badly-lit, poorly patrolled streets which are fast becoming no-go areas for lone women walking at night. If we are to protect women against rape, which has been much in the news recently, it is crucial to provide safe, well-lit streets and estates. It is about time we woke up to the fact that much of our environment is daunting to women and old people and causes problems for them.

The caring and service sectors of employment, in which many work unsocial hours, have been further singled out

by the Government. In those sectors women form the vast majority of a grossly undervalued, low-paid work force. Yet the Government's abolition of the fair wages resolution, coupled with, for example, contracting out hospital cleaning has led to massive cuts in pay and conditions of employment for women who are already among the lowest paid.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Is my hon. Friend aware that she does not have to go further than the House to find difficulties that arise for women? Those who serve in the Refreshment Departments of both Houses of Parliament are offered transport home only after 11.30 pm. Those women who are kept here late and are low paid must hope to get public transport and I can assure her that many of them are frightened about that.

Ms. Richardson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for reminding me of that. Many have spoken to me about it. Obviously, they are grateful for the provision of taxis, but the service should start earlier. If we had decent late transport and, in some cases women-only transport, they could get home safely. The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) laughs, but it is not a joke.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): I am worried about the prospect of too much public transport use late at night because it frightens women. I am not sure that that is the solution because women are worried about safety late at night.

Ms. Richardson: In case the hon. Gentleman does not know, the Government's Sex Discrimination Act 1986 removed protective legislation so women can now work unsocial hours and undertake night shift work, but the Government refused to accept amendments to provide transport late at night. Women must work, and when they work late transport must be provided for them.

To return to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody), there is a great deal of discrimination against women in this place, not just in the Chamber, but among the work force. For a start, we should have a creche here.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Is my hon. Friend aware that, because of the provisions of the London Regional Transport Act 1984 and the requirement on LRT to make operating profits, there has been an enormous cut in the number of bus conductors and conductresses in London, resulting in one-person operated buses which has meant an increase in attacks on women passengers on the buses? Is she aware that with the cut in station staff there has been an increase in attacks on women using tube trains late at night? One way to protect passengers is to provide more staff on the stations and the buses. That will help to diminish women's fear of travelling late at night.

Ms. Richardson: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. The provision of machines is no substitute for people who can look after and look out for those who travel at night.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) referred to the wages councils and low pay. The removal of wages council protection from workers under the age of 21 — two thirds of those affected are women — and the restrictions on wages councils' powers coupled with the Government's denunciation of ILO convention No. 26 have opened up yet more opportunities for unscrupulous employers to cut wages in areas of employment already known as "sweated labour" which are heavily dominated by women workers.

The Government's attack on part-time workers — almost exclusively women — has been no less remorseless. Those workers' rights — not least, their maternity rights — have been systematically and cynically eroded by the Government. Maternity rights in this country are already among the worst in Europe and if the proposals in the White Paper "Building Businesses . . . Not Barriers" are ever implemented, the majority of working women will not even qualify for the right to return to work after childbirth.

Part-timers are at present entitled to claim maternity pay and unfair dismissal if they work at least 16 hours a week. Under the proposals, they will have to work 20 hours a week for two years for the same entitlements. Those working eight hours will have to work 12 hours for five years before qualifying. Firms with fewer than 10 employees will be fully entitled to refuse women the right to return to work and anyone wishing to fight for her rights at a tribunal may have to pay £25 for the privilege. Overall, the proposals in the White Paper would mean that 300,000 workers, almost entirely women, would lose existing employment rights. Furthermore, the proposals threaten the whole concept of job sharing. Job sharing has made an important contribution to women's employment, promotion and training opportunities, but the Government have failed to recognise and promote it.

The unprecedented attacks on maternity rights and on women's rights to social security were continued through the social security review and the consequent Act. The abolition of the universal maternity grant, which was discussed at great length only last week and the abolition of the "best 20 years rule" for SERPS, are two examples of how further spiteful reductions in women's economic social security and well-being have been made behind a smokescreen of reform.

On occasions during the passage of the Sex Discrimination Act 1986 the Government discussed equality, but they have not even begun to understand what that word means. Women's needs and aspirations have been further eroded by the introduction of the new availability-for-work test, which is heavily biased towards the removal of even more women from the unemployment register and, therefore, will deprive them of benefits. Not content with merely dismantling women's rights to social security, the Chancellor now intends to follow the trail blazed by the Fowler review with his Green Paper on the taxation of husbands and wives. The proposals for transferable tax allowances, which reject women's rights and their justifiable demand for independence and privacy in taxation matters, are based precisely on the principle that the United Nations declaration sought to eliminate —deliberately creating a disincentive for married women to seek or continue in paid employment.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Is the hon. Lady aware that Denmark has a system of transferable allowances and also has the highest proportion of married women in work in Europe?

Ms. Richardson: I believe that the Danish system is different from the one proposed by the Chancellor in the Green Paper. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is aware that all organisations concerned with progress towards sex

[Ms. Richardson]

equality—from the Equal Opportunities Commission to the women's national commission and, incidentally, the European Parliament's committee on taxation, chaired by a distinguished British Conservative, Dame Shelagh Roberts — have said "No deal, Nigel." They have rejected the Chancellor's proposals for what they are—continued discrimination against women.

Of course, that is precisely what the Government will and must continue to do because their economic and social strategy depends on creating and maintaining a vast reserve of unwaged women, forced to remain at home to carry out, with the minimum of support, the caring and servicing tasks that are the responsibility of the entire community. That has been ably pointed out by the Audit Commission report on community care, which was critical of the way in which the concept of community care has been approached. The Government fail to acknowledge the value and burden of work that falls to lone women. Let no one forget that the Government fought every inch of the way against amendments that we tabled to the Social Security Bill—amendments that were designed to extend invalid care allowance to married and cohabiting women. The Government capitulated only in the face of another humiliating defeat in the European Court. Moreover, the Government also fail to acknowledge the consistent demands of the community to be allowed to share in the care of their communities.

The Labour-led Greenwich council recognises that 75 per cent. of women are carers and that 50 per cent. of married women between the ages of 36 and 64 can expect to be responsible for caring for an elderly or infirm person. If women have to give up paid work to look after such a person, they are consigning themselves to a lifetime of poverty and isolation. That may well lead to the breakdown of their health and will certainly prevent them from taking any employment opportunities that may be offered. If women cannot cope, they must turn to a Health Service that has reached breaking point.

In recognition of the problems faced by women, the women's equality unit in Greenwich has launched the women's health care project and the carers project, both of which identify and give community support to the economic, social and personal needs of the carers and the people they care for. Such support includes respite care for women who have not had a break or a holiday for a considerable time—in one case 23 years. It also includes day care centres, community transport, purpose-built and adapted housing and training for carers, especially women, who are assumed to be naturally resources.

One of the most amazing things that I learnt from Jackie Drake—who took the test case on invalid care allowance to the European Court—was that, prior to the case, married women who were carers were not allowed to receive or to be offered any training in how to care for an elderly person, but a man or a single woman was offered such training. The implication is that a married woman should know how to lift an elderly or heavy person from a chair into a bath. That shows just how ridiculous matters can be. The projects that I have described are typical of the policies that Greenwich has introduced for women. I wonder whether that is what the Prime Minister and her party mean by a "loony Left" waste of resources.

Greenwich has just announced that, from 1 April this year, there will be no charge for under-fives in its day nurseries. It also plans to devote 32 per cent. of its social services budget to make more nursery provision available. Women's unemployment in Greenwich went up by 18·2 per cent. in the period between July 1984 and July 1985. Therefore, one can imagine that policies such as those introduced by a good Labour local authority will do much to help women who are seeking work. Those policies have been introduced in spite of the onslaught of cuts that have been imposed by the most centralist and anti-democratic Government that we have ever seen. Very soon, the community in Greenwich will be able to make its voice heard again in the House, and it is fitting that it should be the voice of Diedre Woods, who has always listened to women and responded to their views.

The Government have done nothing for women except to hit them very hard. The Labour party will tackle the discrimination and deprivation that the majority of women suffer, and its decision to establish a ministry for women underlines that commitment. The views of 52 per cent. of the population cannot continue to be marginalised or ignored. All issues are women's issues. There is no such thing as a woman's issue. It is men who set the agenda for women and it is they who decide what are women's issues. I believe that women should have a voice in everything. The next Labour Government will, by their policies, open up decision making so that all women have a voice. That is not only just, but our country will be the better for it.

7.37 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. John Lee): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'welcomes the contribution which Government policies have made in meeting the needs of women, particularly through the increased level and range of health service provision and the encouragement and help given to them to play a fuller role in the community and in employment.'

I find it somewhat ironic that the Opposition should have chosen such an obviously discriminatory title for today's debate, with the two principal Opposition speakers being female. No doubt they were selected from the range of the Opposition spokespeople on their ability and commitment rather than gender. However, one wonders whether the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) will be appealing to the Equal Opportunities Commission. I wonder what the reaction of Opposition Members would have been had the Government chosen as a subject for today's debate "Men in the community".

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood) *rose*——

Mr. Lee: More seriously, women represent 52 per cent. of our country's population and 43 per cent. of its labour force. Those percentages represent 22·3 million women, of whom 9·5 million are in civilian employment. If one adds to those figures those in self-employment and the armed forces we have, for September 1986, a total of 10·1 million women in employment. However, we hardly need statistics to show that women's well-being and their contribution to the social fabric of the nation and its economic wealth are of crucial importance.

The hon. Member for Barking—I accept her deep and genuine commitment to women's rights—attacked this Government's record on matters affecting women and our attitude towards their wish to play a full part in all aspects of national life. She drew for us a picture of

women's life in the United Kingdom in 1987 and of a Government indifferent or even downright hostile to the advancement of women that I do not recognise, and I am sure other hon. Members do not recognise, and which I am sure few women outside—other than, possibly, the most militant feminist groups—would recognise either.

In fact, for the vast majority of women in this country, life in very many ways has probably never been better. Today, women have far more opportunity to play a full part in society alongside, if they wish, their traditional roles of wife and mother. There are greater opportunities in education. Training and employment—including self-employment, which is proving to be one very effective way of enabling women to combine career and family responsibilities.

In education, it is no longer expected that girls should, in the main, study only a restricted range of subjects and go on to a similarly restricted range of often dead-end jobs, simply to bridge the gap between school and marriage. There were, of course, always exceptions to that general picture, but in today's more enlightened times all girls are encouraged to study the same range of subjects as boys and then go on to the same after-school training or further education. They are also encouraged to consider the whole range of job opportunities throughout industry and commerce.

Women today also have the benefit of labour-saving domestic equipment, and while that does not in itself change the traditional division of responsibility in the home, it has freed women from much of the drugery of earlier years. In health care, too, such strides have been made that the 1987 woman is far fitter than her predecessors.

I agree that there is a way to go before women achieve true equality, but let us not start this debate from a false position. Let us have due regard for the fact that life for the majority of women in unquestionably better. The task now is to see how we can build on that progress.

In employment, the Government are firmly committed to the principle of equal opportunities and to the legislation that gives effect to that principle. The legislation must take a large amount of credit for the improvements in practice and attitude that have taken place over the past 10 years.

Since 1979, we have extended both the Sex Discrimination and the Equal Pay Acts considerably. As hon. Members will know, the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act made unlawful sex discrimination, and discrimination against married people, in employment — including recruitment and promotion, and in training. It also made sex discrimination unlawful in education, the provision of goods, facilities and services and in the disposal and management of premises. The employment provision did not, however, cover firms with five or fewer employees, partnerships of five or fewer — in their treatment of partners—and private households.

The 1975 Act also established the Equal Opportunities Commission. We have, of course, since 1979 consistently supported the important work of that commission and its code of practice, which we were pleased to lay before Parliament in 1985. We have taken every opportunity to commend the code and the work of the commission to employers.

The 1970 Equal Pay Act provided that men and women must be paid equally when they were doing, for the same or associated employers, the same or broadly similar work or work judged equal by a job evaluation study.

The Sex Discrimination Act 1986, which I steered through its final stages in this House, brought the original 1975 Act more closely into line with European legislation. It made it unlawful as from 7 February 1987 for even the smallest firm or partnership to discriminate between men and women. From 7 November 1987, it will give women the right not to be compulsorily retired at a different age from comparable male colleagues and the right to complain of unfair dismissal up to age 65—while not affecting women's right to draw state retirement pension at age 60, a right which, I know from my postbag, many men would like.

Hon. Members will know that in introducing these changes to the sex discrimination provisions on age of retirement, we were implementing, and very swiftly indeed, the decision of the European Court of Justice in the case of Miss Marshall *v.* South-West Hampshire area health authority. That decision, of course, also established that public sector employees already have a direct remedy under European law if their employer operates discriminatory retirement ages. I know that many employers in the private sector have already been able to introduce common retirement ages for men and women. I hope that more will be able to do so in advance of the legislative provisions.

The 1986 Act will also free adult women from outdated restrictions on the hours they may work. From 27 February 1987, restrictions in the Mines and Quarries Act 1954 and the Factories Act 1961 will be lifted. Because of the United Kingdom's obligations under the European social charter, the prohibition on women working at night, contained in the Hours of Employment (Conventions) Act 1936, will be lifted on a date to be appointed after February 1988. The hon. Member for Barking has represented that as yet another attack on women's rights and of the Government's determination to oppress them. I tell her that that is not how it is regarded by the many women who, in the past, saw with frustration the men whom they worked alongside being able to earn more in overtime or to gain the valuable experience that was needed to obtain promotion. Such women said, and I agree with them, that they were as capable as men of running their own lives and they did not need the nannying of the restrictions that we swept away.

The 1986 Act also removed, from 7 November 1986, the need for ministerial designation before special training could be provided to help women move into occupations traditionally dominated by men or to return to work after time at home looking after their families—a small, but, I am sure, welcome lessening of bureaucracy.

Since 1 January 1984, women have been able to claim equal pay for work of equal value. The hon. Member for Barking has said that the new legislation on that is somehow preventing women from actually obtaining equal pay. We have never sought to deny that equal value legislation is complicated, but this is a complicated area. It is not easy to compare the value of two different jobs — jobs that can require different training and experience.

In framing the new legislation on equal pay, we had to ensure that differences in pay rates could be challenged when the differences arose from sex discrimination, not

[Mr. Lee]

when they were necessary for other reasons. The hon. Lady has said that the law is not effective and does not enable women to obtain equal pay. I do not accept that and nor, I am sure, do the 30 ladies at Berry Magicoal for whom, it was reported only last Wednesday, APEX had won a 22 per cent. pay rise through claims for equal pay for work of equal value.

However, I think that we must all recognise that there is a limit to what can be achieved by legislation alone. To change deep-rooted social attitudes needs action on a number of fronts. There has been progress, as the figures show, and the Government have taken many practical steps to promote equal opportunities in the priority areas of employment — and that includes self-employment — and training. I shall say a little about each of those in turn, taking employment first.

In Europe, the United Kingdom is second only to Denmark in women's participation in paid employment, as my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) said. We are the only European country where women's unemployment is less than men's, and between 1983 and 1984 we accounted for over half the Community's total growth in female employment.

In the three and half years from March 1983 to September 1986 alone the number of full-time female employees rose by 362,000 and the number of part-timers by 286,000. During the same period, the number of full-time male employees regrettably fell by 93,000.

Some 44 per cent. of women work part-time. I know some people dismiss part-time jobs as second-rate and unimportant, but I wonder whether they are really in touch with what people want. According to the 1984 labour force survey, over a third of unemployed women were looking for part-time work, and only 8 per cent. of part-time women workers said that they were working part-time because they could not find a full-time job.

The Government welcome the growth of women's employment and want it to continue.

Ms. Richardson: Does not the Minister recognise that it is not part-time employment that we are against? Women, and some men, would like part-time employment. It is a question of the pay and status of that employment. I repeat that, in particular, part-time women workers receive less then three quarters of the average wage of male workers. Is it not about time that the hon. Gentleman recognised that we are against not part-time working but low-paid working?

Mr. Lee: I accept that many part-time pay rates are on the low side, but at the end of the day the rates of pay must depend on what the market can stand and on what individual firms can afford to pay. That is a fundamental economic fact of life.

As I told the hon. Member for Barking in reply to her written question on 12 December, all the enterprise and training schemes in the Government's Action for Jobs campaign are open to women. Women have therefore benefited with men from the £10 billion spent on those measures since 1979, and will continue to benefit from the further £3 billion to be spent this financial year.

Ms. Clare Short: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, because I think he has just misled the House. For example, there was a deliberate move by this Government to exclude women from the community programme, which is one of the major parts of the Government's provision, firstly stopping women registering as unemployed unless they were in receipt of benefit, and then not allowing women onto the programme who were not in receipt of benefit. That was a deliberate exclusion of women. The hon. Gentleman should not stand there and say that women can benefit from all these programmes when his Department set out to exclude women from one of their biggest programmes.

Mr. Lee: The vast majority of our Action for Jobs schemes are available to women, as indeed is the community programme, but the hon. Lady is quite right that the community programme is directed essentially to those whom we judge to be in most need of that help and training. The programme and commitment are not open-ended. One of the factors or strictures that we take into account is that those individuals who are eligible for the programme are in receipt of benefit. What the hon. Lady says is correct, but there is a reason for it.

Before I say more about these schemes, I draw the attention of the House to the dramatic and heartening increase in self-employment which we have seen in recent years and to the encouraging fact that women have been prominent in that increase. Between 1981 and 1984, there was a dramatic jump in the numbers of women setting up in business for themselves — some 42 per cent. Women make up about a quarter of all those who are self-employed. That is almost 700,000 women, around a third of whom were employing other people. The proportion of women on the enterprise allowance scheme has risen from a mere 10 per cent. in 1982 to 25 per cent. today.

In other words, women have taken advantage of the climate we have created for small businesses to thrive. Women who are prepared to take the risk of setting up on their own account clearly have the requisite courage. But the Government recognise that they are not yet getting all the encouragement they might, and often still face scepticism on the part of those with whom they deal. I therefore do urge women starting up or wanting to start up in business to use the help available from my Department's small firms services, local enterprise agencies and the Council for Small Industries in Rural Areas, COSIRA. Initiatives to encourage and advise women considering self-employment are also being taken by such organisations as Women in Enterprise, Aston university and the Scottish Enterprise Foundation. The Government fully support these initiatives.

Next I come to perhaps the most crucial areas where the Government can — and do — make an important contribution — namely, broadening girls' horizons and the training and retraining of girls and women. I am pleased to say that there are encouraging signs that job segregation is starting to break down. Between the census years 1971 and 1981 — admittedly, going back a few years — the number of women managers and administrators increased by 139 per cent., engineers and scientists by 282 per cent. and construction craft workers by 134 per cent. The actual numbers involved are still regrettably small, but there has been a marked movement, and work-based education and training are essential factors in consolidating and improving upon this progress. The Government will continue to do all they can in these areas.

As I said earlier, attempts are being made to combat sex-stereotyping from an early age. Our policy statement "Science 5-16" proposes that science should have a place in the education of all pupils throughout the years of compulsory schooling. It also encourages positive action to interest girls in aspects of science which they have tended to find unappealing. On training, as I indicated, all Manpower Services Commission training schemes are open to women on an equal basis, and women are encouraged to consider the full range of options available, not just those traditional to their sex. Point taken on the community programme.

The YTS, increasingly recognised by national companies as the main accepted route of entry, is particularly significant for girls, who obtained historically only a tiny share of traditional apprenticeships. In the one-year scheme, for example, 80 per cent. of all young women on the scheme were in employer-led provision, gaining direct experience of industry and commerce. In two-year YTS, with its increased vocational focus, all young people will have the opportunity to acquire a vocational qualification or a credit towards one. This will revolutionise the opportunities which 16-year-old girls leaving school have until now had to obtain such qualifications. Scheme providers are also encouraged to take positive action, where appropriate, and a number of single-sex schemes and schemes with reserved places for girls are now being run.

Ms. Clare Short: Will the hon. Gentleman not admit that YTS absolutely reflects the normal segregation of the labour market for 16 and 17-year-olds, that the overwhelming majority of girls in YTS are doing traditional girls' work, and that YTS has not broken through that barrier. YTS has been a devastating failure in that way, despite all the declarations of intent to use it as a means of breaking down that segregation. Will not the hon. Gentleman agree that that is the case?

Mr. Lee: I cannot accept what the hon. Lady is saying. The figures show, on my understanding of them, that there has been a significant proportionate increase in the number of women in a whole range of training opportunities under YTS, as compared historically with a very small number of women who were involved in traditional apprenticeships in a very narrow range of industries.

To give another example, the MSC runs many "wider opportunities for women" courses, specifically aimed at women returning to the labour market after a period spent bringing up a family. These courses are designed to update skills and job-hunting techniques, to help rebuild lost confidence, and to encourage women to take up jobs in new areas such as the new technologies and management. Over 2,000 places are available every year.

The fact is that the MSC makes strenuous efforts to comabat sex stereotyping and promote equal opportunities in its training provision. It also funds a programme of development projects, designed to demonstrate to employers the benfits of developing women's skill and abilities across the full occupational spectrum. This is vital because, without the necessary training and qualifications, women will find it impossible to move into a broader range of occupations and attain the highest levels in their chosen careers.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford West): From what the Minister has been saying, am I right in assuming that the Government welcome the appointments of sex equality officers by local authorities to promote the sort of policies that he has been describing?

Mr. Lee: The hon. Gentleman will not lead me into that rather difficult area of local government and local authority expenditure.

We have also supported and continue to support the EOC Women into Science and Engineering campaign and the Women's National Commission's programme of roadshows. These are important to help change attitudes and to widen women's and girls' employment horizons. We are also firm supporters of equal opportunities at the international level. In May 1986, the Government ratified the United Nation convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.

We welcomed the two European Community directives accepted in 1986 — the occupational social security directive and the directive on the self-employed. We also welcomed the European Commission's action plan for women for the years 1986-90 and the forward-looking strategies which came out of the UN conference held in Nairobi in 1985 to mark the end of the United Nations Decade for Women to which the hon. Member for Barking referred. Last December I was pleased to host a joint United Kingdom-EC conference on women and training, which provided a forum for an exchange of practical experience. During the United Kingdom presidency, we also played a leading role in the adoption, last December, of the resolution for a community action programme on employment growth; this contains a number of proposals to bring about greater equality for women in the labour market.

I know that hon. Members opposite and some women's groups outside this House consider that the Government should be doing more to help women. The numerous meetings I have had with women's groups since taking over my present responsibilities some five months ago have shown me that in particular there is considerable concern about parental leave and the provisions affecting women in our White Paper "Building Business . . . Not Barriers". I know that child care is considered by many to be central to the whole issue of women and employment.

Parental leave, if fully agreed between employer and employee, can be valuable—it was for this reason that I was pleased to open the joint CBI-EOC conference on the subject of parental leave in November last year. It can, however, be only a temporary and partial solution. When parental leave ends, the needs of the child and the requirements of the job remain. Moreover, imposing one form of parental leave by law—as the EC draft directive required — would increase employers' costs and administrative burdens, damage competitiveness and reduce job prospects. It would ultimately be detrimental to the welfare of working parents and their children.

The right approach is surely the one suggested in the EOC's code of practice, which I highly commend. This code makes a number of specific recommendations to do with part-time work, flexitime, personal leave and child facilities. These recommendations give employers and their employees a range of options from which they can adopt those which suit the priorities of the employees and represent what an employer, in the particular circumstances, can afford.

[Mr. Lee]

We must strike a better balance between the rights of employees and the burdens on employers, in order to encourage rather than restrict employment opportunities —which will benefit women and men alike. It helps no one if more rights are given to the employed which damage competitiveness and therefore reduce the amount of employment available and the prosperity of us all.

I am sure that we are all concerned that women should be safe both in their homes and travelling to and from their work or indeed for any other purpose. A significant proportion of the hon. Lady's speech was devoted to this subject. We all recognise that women are, sadly, at risk from sexual assault and rape, which can have permanent physical and psychological effects on them. Sexual harassment is also distressing and we wholeheartedly condemn it as a particularly degrading and unacceptable form of sex discrimination.

Case law has shown that the Sex Discrimination Act can provide a remedy where sexual harassment at work lead to serious consequences, such as dismissal or forced resignation. Increasingly, employers and trade unions have been responding to growing awareness and concern by agreeing policies in this sensitive area. This is a welcome development and one, I might add, in which Government Departments are themselves giving a lead.

The Government have also taken action against kerb crawlers to enable women to be freed from oppressive behaviour. In rape cases, the Home Office has issued new guidance to the police on the sympathetic treatment of victims, aimed at protecting their privacy and providing them with the help and advice they need in coping with the trauma of an attack.

It is sometimes suggested, as it was by the hon. Lady, that there should be separate provision to enable women to travel safely. For example, she suggested women-only taxi services and special carriages on trains. The question of safe travel to and from work also came up in the debates on the removal of hours of work restrictions by the Sex Discrimination Act 1986. Special transport facilities for women would be a departure from the fundamental priniciple of the Sex Discrimination Act that men and women should be treated equally and have equal access to goods, facilities and services. However, in publicising the hours of work provisions of the new Sex Discrimination Act, we have reminded employers of the need to consider the availability of transport before introducing changes in women's hours, as well as of their general duties under health and safety legislation to safeguard the health, safety and welfare at work of all their employees.

I know that Opposition Members espouse the idea of a Ministry for women. I must say I find this a curious notion. Why not a Ministry for youth, for the old, or perhaps ultimately even for men? There would be no end to the special groups spanning a large proportion of the population who might equally feel that they should have a Minister of their own if a Ministry for women were ever created.

The Prime Minister has always made it clear that she does not intend to appoint a Minister to co-ordinate initiatives on women's issues. While the Home Secretary has a general responsibility for equal opportunities, each Minister is responsible for developing the policy of his Department to take account of the Government's commitment to equality.

Women, therefore, need not fear that their interests are not adequately represented under the present Government. Moreover, the 1985 Nairobi conference, which I mentioned earlier, demonstrated to us that women's non-governmental organisations needed a channel through which they could obtain the Government's response to issues and in particular to the forward-looking strategies for the advancement of women.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Waddington), the Minister of State, Home Office, was therefore asked to convene regular meetings of Ministers most directly concerned with such issues. The primary objective of the group is to identify those parts of the forward-looking strategy which are already being implemented and, of those remaining, to focus on those that can realistically be achieved. Two meetings of the group have taken place and I can assure the House that, through this forum, Departments will examine carefully policies which impinge on women's interests.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I promise to make my intervention short. What is endearing about the Minister is that he is so embarrassed that he obviously wants to finish. How many people on the working party are women, or would that be too revolutionary?

Mr. Lee: From memory, I believe a substantial proportion.

I would like to conclude by saying that I listened very carefully to the hon. Member for Barking's criticisms of the Government's record on the whole subject of equal opportunities and their attitudes to women. I do not, of course, agree with her and am grateful for the opportunity to show the House that the contrary is true. This Government, in fact, have a very good record in this area.

We have, as I have said, considerably widened the scope of sex discrimination and equal pay legislation. We have given women the right not to be compelled to retire before male colleagues. We have freed them from outdated restrictions on the hours they may work. We have given them the right to equal pay not only for the same work but also for the much wider concept of equal value.

We have also played our part gladly and proudly in both European and worldwide discussions of women's issues and how women's opportunities can be improved. I commend our achievements to the House.

8.3 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I listened with interest to the Minister's speech, which was well put together. Has that anything to do with the quality of the back-up departmental team that he has brought with him tonight? I shall make him an offer in public; I shall give him a Scottish £5 note every time the ministerial advisers' Bench is manned by women to the extent that it is this evening.

I pay tribute to the work done by the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) over many years on this issue. I want to look at the issue from a broader perspective. I read with interest some of the information that Professor Halsey collated and co-ordinated in a recent edition of "Social Trends". Over a 40-year period, embracing Governments of all political views, there has been clear evidence of a profound change in the division of labour. In the mid-1970s he found evidence of a distinct end tc the

post-war trend of increasing prosperity. Since then there has been increasing economic retrenchment and polarisation.

Statistics show that more women, particularly married women, are now working, more so in part-time work. There is less childbirth but more illegitimate childbirth, more divorce and conversely more remarriage. There are more single-person households of which a woman is the head. Incidentally, we must also remember that there are now more men inactive economically and spending more time at home.

All the evidence leads me to the conclusion that there have been profound changes since the war in the inter-relationships between the family, the workplace and the functions of the state. The changes in society have been moving far ahead of changes in the attitude of people towards women. I regret that the Minister referred only casually and in passing to the fact that we were interested in trying to change people's attitudes. That is the right long-term approach. If I may mildly criticise the motion, it tends to deal only with symptoms. As the hon. Member for Barking rightly said, we will not get to the root cause of all the problems until we find a way of altering people's attitudes.

Obviously, the Government have a role to play. No Government since the war have tackled the problem properly. I accept that it may be fiendishly difficult. The two Ministers taking part in the debate have got different and widely varying responsibilities. The question I put squarely to the Government is: where is the co-ordination of all the useful small but significant improvements that the Minister has outlined in his speech? How can the House have confidence that the Government are tackling the wider issues in the difficult problem of trying to change social attitudes?

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) has taken part in the campaign to try to stop the publication of silly, sensuous photographs in the tabloid press. There are different ways of doing it. One way would be to ban them by Act of Parliament. The most effective way is to give women more economic clout so that women can become responsible for placing substantial advertising contracts with the tabloids, they could then say, "If you do not face facts and remove those offensive pictures our advertising will be removed." That would be the best way of solving that problem. We must tackle the fundamental problem, not the symptoms.

While we should discuss the need to increase economic and educational opportunities, until we manage to change the hierarchy, structure and fabric of society to give women more sway and influence directly in their own right, the problem will still be with us, and we will be having debates about it for the next 40 years.

We must of course in the meantime face the shorter-term issues. On security, women, particularly elderly women, are victims of vicious crimes because they are more vulnerable than men. Again, I use the crime of rape to illustrate my point. One can fulminate, quite rightly, about the inadequacy of some of the sentences that have been dished out. I agree with that and do not want to give any other impression. But we shall not begin to tackle the problem of rape until we start to look at the fundamental reasons why inadequate men seek to dominate and control women. In my view, it is a question not of sexual gratification, but of the inadequacy of the men concerned, who are driven by the uncontrollable urge to brutalise and dominate women. That is the principal motivating force behind rape, and unless we start to look at and understand the deeper psychological reasons and causal forces operating in society we shall never contain and diminish the incidence of rape.

We cannot simply deal with the symptoms and confine ourselves to ameliorating the maternity situation without also looking at the whole question of paternity leave. It is very important that we involve the father as much as the mother in the early days after childbirth. Neither do I see any reason at all why we should not accept anything less fundamental than a 50 per cent. representation for women appointed to public bodies such as quangos, some of which do very important and effective work. We should follow the example of other countries, such as the Scandinavian countries. They are showing a clear lead to the rest of the European nations in the fundamental approach they take. We in the United Kingdom are now lagging very seriously behind.

I want to say a word too, about the specific issue of employment. Nursery education, child minding and respite care are absolutely vital in a context, to which the Minister alluded, in which more and more women are entering the work force. According to my figures, 70 per cent. of women with children now work part time. Against that background the most immediate and effective thing that the Government can do is to look at nursery provision, provision of official child minding and respite care for these working mothers. Nothing would give them a better chance of flourishing in the workplace.

I am very disappointed that the Government have for the past two years set their face against the EC directive that would legally oblige employers to give part-time workers pro rata conditions. There is no justification at all for the Government's blocking that move. Part-time workers often have no annual leave entitlement—that is my experience locally in my own constituency—and are rarely considered for proper further training. That is regrettable. I hope that the Government will continue to scrutinise and review the position that they have to date adopted on that matter.

I am also very worried—this has been mentioned before—about the provisions contained in "Building Business . . . not Barriers". This also needs to be looked at again by the Government, and I hope that they will do so.

I served as a member of the Standing Committee that considered the Social Security Act 1986, and I confess that I am seriously concerned about some of the impact that Act will have particularly on maternity grants and allowances. Perhaps the Minister will say a word about that in winding up. I freely acknowledge the value of the work of the maternity emergency campaign launched by the maternity alliance in trying to make that issue a matter of public concern and debate.

The Government's record with regard to maternity and paternity rights is appalling, particularly when compared with the situation in Sweden where women can have up to one year of maternity leave, in Denmark where they have six months and in Italy where they have 11 months. Furthermore, two of those countries allow people to receive full-time pay during such leave.

With regard to employment, a lot more could be done by the Government in terms of encouraging career enhancement. I came across an instructive example of this quite recently in Bradford, where a training course was

[Mr. Archy Kirkwood]

being run for cleaners to be upgraded to caretakers, and many of them have now been employed as caretakers. That may seem a very small step, but in terms of career enhancement for the people involved it was a significant one.

Provision by the Department of Health and Social Security for cervical cancer screening and some of the very important preventive measures that cannot at the moment be undertaken for lack of resources, such as the establishment of well-women clinics within the National Health Service, the provision of better care for women, support, counselling and health education, are long overdue. I have high hopes that the hon. Lady who will be winding up will, in her time in the Department, try to ensure that great priority is given to these matters.

I was pleased that the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) mentioned transport, which is a very important issue. Only 31 per cent. of women have a driving licence and only one third of those who have, have exclusive access to a car. I come from a rural constituency where there are special problems because of the longer distances that have to be travelled. In an urban context, however, there is now a real problem of security and giving people the right and the freedom to move about in the hours of darkness. I believe that in the fulness of time the privatisation of the bus services undertaken under the Transport Act 1985 and the withdrawal of subsidies will have a very adverse effect on that situation. The Government are failing to ensure freedom for women to lead their own lives and travel in security. The Transport Act will be responsible for much fear in that connection in the future.

I believe that the Government should consider the possibility of setting up specialist transport groups, even if they are voluntary groups. I know that in Stockwell, for example, a women's lift service has been started, which is an exclusively women's service. I can understand the problems with making public services available exclusively for women but I think it is quite right that in certain circumstances there should be support for groups which with their own cars provide a service which gives confidence to local people and enables them to travel about. That is a very important concept which the Government should consider.

At the end of the day we have to keep an awareness of the context of the argument in the long term. I fully accept that legislation can never be the whole answer. The insidious discrimination that will always apply on a personal level will be a constant problem, but the Government could do more than they are doing at present in terms of framing a broader strategy and trying, in the longer term, to co-ordinate activity in all these areas to try to get a better deal for women.

8.18 pm

Mrs. Marion Roe (Broxbourne): It is now more than 10 years since the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 passed into law. In that time the position of women in society has changed markedly in many respects and surprisingly little in others. The truth is that, as has already been said, legislation cannot change attitudes overnight. While it may sometimes come about because people's views demand it—witness council house sales—it is fair to say that a significant proportion of the population, both male and female, still have very fixed opinions about what they see as the proper role of men and women.

That is a matter for their personal choice, but for the House it is important that we remove those remaining blocks to proper freedom of choice for women and at the same time ensure that opportunities for women are known and taken up. I do not believe that this can be done by coercion. To follow the route that has been advocated by some Labour councils—setting up women's committees on the model devised by the Greater London council—seems to me to be too adversarial.

Women have always played a substantial role within the life of local communities. Fundamentally that will not change, because the needs of children make particular demands upon mothers, but new technology in the home, new technology at work and the increasing involvement of men in child care present opportunities which we as a society certainly should not miss.

Britain needs to develop the full potential of its citizens, and in that respect education is vital. Real progress has been made, but we must face the fact that although girls tend to do better at school, they still gravitate away from the sciences. The technical and vocational education initiative and the youth training schemes are big steps forward, and so is the news that the number of women studying engineering and technology in higher education has doubled in the past 10 years. In employment terms that is important. For people to realise the full scope of their opportunities they need to perceive that no area of employment is barred to them. The figures suggest that changes are under way.

The professions — not long ago entirely male dominated — reflect the changes. A quarter of the number of general practitioners, and those training to be accountants, and 40 per cent. of those entering the legal profession, are women. As my hon. Friend the Member for Pendle (Mr. Lee) said, over 500,000 women found employment between March 1983 and December 1985. More than 60 per cent. of women are in employment.

International comparisons are perhaps complicated by other factors, but that is a high figure for Europe. The Department of Employment has certainly assisted in this regard. I refer to the extension of the Sex Discrimination Act 1986 to cover small firms in industries such as mining, and the small but influential "wider opportunities for women" courses run by the Manpower Services Commission. Yet, despite a wealth of flair and good ideas, only 2 per cent. of company directors are women.

Management is often criticised for its failings—less so now than in the past, I am glad to say — but it is indefensible that the talents of half the population should be under-utilised. It may be that the boardroom has resisted change for reasons of caution, or simply that few women have put themselves forward, but one cannot escape the strong feeling that the underlying cause is bias against women. In part, the answer is for women to demonstrate that they are equally capable in business. Entrepreneurial ideas are certainly not restricted to men. I am particularly encouraged by the drive led by my hon. Friend the Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier), the Under-Secretary of State for Employment, to increase the number of women entrepreneurs.

There can be no doubt that the problems that women face in setting up small businesses are, more often than not, the same as those faced by men. Nevertheless, it is not

difficult to see that, if old attitudes creep in, it could prove to be a big hurdle. For example, bank managers are reluctant to lend money because they perceive projects devised by women as inhererently larger risks. I welcome the Department's initiative in jointly funding a research study to examine the problems that women may face.

Two further economic statistics are important. First, over the past 10 years the percentage of women granted mortgages has doubled every year. They form half of our first-time buyers. Secondly, the stock exchange has published research showing that 42 per cent. of shareholders are women. It will be interesting to know the figures for British Telecom, TSB and British Gas. The conclusion must be that women have a substantial and increasing involvement in capital ownership. That is a welcome development.

The tax system still acts as a large disincentive. Married women have no privacy in tax matters and are still treated as their husbands' chattels by the Inland Revenue. Without entering into a discussion on the disincentive to marriage that this provides, with the Sex Discrimination Act over 10 years old, it is certainly high time that changes were made. The proposals outlined in the Government's Green Paper on the reform of personal taxation need to be implemented as soon as possible. They seek to place individuals on an equitable tax footing and to affirm within the tax regime the importance to society of marriage, without placing women in a second-class status.

The diverse activities of women in local communities —frequently in addition to their role in child care, and often doing voluntary unpaid work, such as looking after dependent relatives or neighbours, for example—leads me to believe that the transferable allowance system favoured by the Government is the right way forward rather than increasing the child benefit the application of which, in my view, is too narrow. The progress of the past 10 years has been particularly encouraging. Let us hope that in 10 years' time we shall be able to say the same.

8.25 pm

Miss Betty Boothroyd (West Bromwich, West): My hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) has demonstrated just how much the quality of women's lives depends on a good and effective social system. She has shown how the Government's callous and careless neglect of the Health Service, and of other public services, too, and their mean and mediocre provision for social benefits have brought unnecessary strain and hardship to family life. I shall try to follow my hon. Friend's analysis in relation to the Health Service which, of course, is of special importance to women.

First, I shall reverse the argument. I remind the House of just how important women are to the National Health Service. It depends on women's work. The *Employment Gazette*, in the employment category headed, "Medical and Health Services" shows that late last year just over 1·25 million people were employed full time in those services. Of those 1·25 million, over 1 million are women. More than 80 per cent. of those employed in medical and health services are women. If we add part-time employees in the Health Service, the proportion is even more striking. There are 485,000 part-time employees in the health services, of whom 452,000 are women; that is over 93 per cent. of part-time employees are female. It is an enormous percentage.

The overall figures show that nearly 1·5 million women work in the medical and health services of this country. They form 84 per cent. of all employees and they do every kind of job, with one exception. The one job that women do not perform in the Health Service is that of management. Two weeks ago a comprehensive survey of women's careers was published in the *Health Service Journal*. It reported:

> "Despite legal bars to discrimination on the grounds of sex, women in management in the health service still fare worst, they are held back by persistent myths about their abilities, potential and commitment."

So women clean hospitals, cook food, prepare and store medical records, nurse patients, take X-rays and medical samples and analyse them. They work as physiotherapists chiropodists and speech therapists, and a few women diagnose illness and some perform operations, but they do not manage in the Health Service.

According to a Government document published by the Cabinet Office Management and Personnel Office, called "Public Bodies 1986", the DHSS appoints 123 public bodies to give it advice or to discharge executive functions. It seems that, in his wisdom, the Secretary of State for Health has appointed 115 men, but only eight women, to chair these bodies. The Department appoints tribunals to judge people's claims to health and social security benefits. It appointed 650 men, but only 80 women, to chair those tribunals. If, therefore, a women comes before a tribunal, she can expect her claim and needs to be judged predominantly, perhaps even exclusively, by men.

If we look further at the Government's appointments to regional and local health authorities, we find that they have appointed 228 men to chair them, but only 38 women, so the National Health Service, which recruits more than 80 per cent. of its labour from women, recruits its senior managers almost exclusively from men. That is quite ludicrous.

Apart from the work of women who are directly employed in the NHS, the nation's health depends upon the skills of women and upon the daily application of those skills in countless other ways that are of value to their families and to the community. Ante-natal and baby and child care takes place in the home, and care and attention are provided mainly by women to elderly members of the family. In many instances women give support to and help the elderly and the sick in the neighbourhood in which they live.

Women make daily choices about medicines and treatment for a huge range of personal and family illnesses. They determine the standards of hygiene for the family and the action to be taken over dental health and the prevention of disease. Furthermore, along with teachers, they are on the alert for signs of drug abuse among the young, and women typically have responsibility for the choice of children's shoes. Many hon. Members may think that it is ridiculous to cite children's shoes as an example, but shoe manufacturers and chiropodists do not think that it is ridiculous to do so. They readily acknowledge that this fact, more than any other, determines the foot health of the nation. Women are in the front line, too, when emergency treatment is needed by a member of the family or by a neighbour. More often than not, it falls to women to summon expert help when the situation gets beyond them.

[Miss Betty Boothroyd]

Those are just some of the ways in which women contribute to health care, yet those factors are ignored in the Prime Minister's world of market economics. No account is taken of them.

Another public service sector that is sustained by the jobs of women is education. It is the largest single employer of women. Last September, 1,026,000 women were full-time employees in that service; that is, 68 per cent. of all full-time employees in education were women. In addition, the service employs 559,000 women part time. If we include the part-time employees, we see that women make up nearly three quarters of the labour force in education.

Besides the women directly employed in the service, women contribute an essential service to our nation's education every day of their lives. Outside school, they teach children good manners and self-discipline, they help with homework and projects, they sew costumes and make props for school plays, they find jumble for school sales and they find books for libraries. Education is clearly another vital public service that depends on the work of women both outside as well as inside the professional structure.

Despite education being the largest single employer of women, not one woman has been appointed by this Government to chair the 29 committees within the education sector. The chairs of all 29 of the public bodies that are listed in the Government's own publication have gone to men, and the membership of these advisory and executive committees consists of 507 men, but only 71 women.

Put together, women's daily contribution to health care, education and other areas of public policy represents a colossal economic and social asset, upon which the nation manages to place no value at all. Furthermore, no Government have attempted to elevate the status and role of women on a non-commercial basis. This has led to two major weaknesses in our national life, and it has helped to sustain taxation and social policies that are unfair discriminatory or downright stupid.

Other hon. Members have referred to the taxation system. I want to refer to it, too. First, our tax and social security system treats married women not as free individuals, with lives of their own, but as chattels of men. The system not only denies married women equality in taxation benefits, but denies them privacy in taxation. This Government have shown that they do not intend to reform the system. That is a great pity, because, both as a working married woman and as a tax barrister, the Prime Minister must be very familiar with these problems. I should have thought that a Government headed by a Prime Minister who has some expertise in these matters would introduce reforms.

Mrs. Llin Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): That just shows what a nice person my hon. Friend is.

Miss Boothroyd: How kind. I know that the incoming Labour Government are committed to the principle of independent personal taxation of men and women. We shall match that, over time, by the provision of social security benefits for women in their own right.

The second weakness in the system relates to our social policy. The nation expects women automatically to shoulder the burden of care for children or elderly relatives, yet it provides no financial help if they are forced to make alternative arrangements to cope with an emergency. If, therefore, a single parent—nearly always, though not always, a woman—becomes too ill to care for the children, she has to rely upon the good will of relatives or friends. No financial help is provided to pay for someone to care for those children in their own home. She is expected to put them into care. That solution is not only most upsetting for children and mothers alike but is also the most expensive solution for the nation to have to bear.

There is another more general loss to the country from the failure of successive Governments to place a value on women's work. It means that Governments have been working in the dark when they have tried to assess the cost and values of their policies. By placing no value on women's work, they have cut out of their analysis the essential economic and social activities of more than half the population.

The first task of an incoming Labour Government should be to prepare a proper national economic audit of the value of women's unpaid, everday work. That audit would give national recognition to the value of women's work in the community and it would also be of considerable assistance in the development of policies to support that work.

Finally, I turn once again to this enlightening and illuminating Government publication. I recommend it highly; it ought to be on the reading list of every hon. Member. It sets out those who are appointed to public bodies. Under the heading "Cabinet Office", which includes the Management and Personnel Office, six major commissions report to the Government. As many hon. Members would expect, the chairmen of five of those commissions are men. A women has been appointed as chairman of one commission, but there are no prizes for guessing which commission that is. It is the Women's National Commission. Even the Prime Minister does not have the gall to appoint a man to that position.

According to this publication, the Government have appointed 36,000 men to public bodies, but they have seen fit to appoint only 8,500 women to those same public bodies. I cannot but be reminded of the words of John Stuart Mill in "The Emancipation of Women". He said:

> "There is not such an abundance of talent about in the world that we can afford to restrict our area of choice to one half of the available supply."

Although he wrote those lines about 150 years ago, they still hold true today. This Government need to be reminded of them.

8.39 pm

Mrs. Anna McCurley (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): As the only Scottish woman in the House of Commons, I hope that the House will forgive me if I initially narrow my area of argument towards north of the border.

I am confident that the Government are making steady progress towards caring for the specific needs of women, particularly in the Health Service. As I am speaking about Scotland, probably one of the reasons for that progress is that we place more emphasis on that issue in Scotland because we have a relatively better and more efficient general practitioner service. There are more female GPs available for women in Scotland. Indeed, we are moving towards a 50:50 intake of female representation in Scottish

universities medical faculties. There is no sign of any discrimination against women entering medicine in Scotland.

The important point is that the Government have increased spending on the National Health Service in Scotland by 20 per cent. in real terms since 1979. The Scottish health education group is working on health programmes specifically designed for women. Once again, that is probably because we have more efficient general practitioner services which are frequently based in modern health centres and provide information leaflets about the health risks that women face and how those problems can be tackled.

The Opposition frequently cite prevention as the Cinderella of the Health Service. There is considerable evidence that the Scottish Home and Health Department has been highly conscious of the economics of health and has directed resources towards that.

The Scottish cervical cancer counselling service has been reviewed by the Scientific Services Advisory Group and evidence in those matters is being updated. There is no doubt that cervical screening is an exceptionally useful and effective form of prevention. The figures speak for themselves. In Scotland in 1979, there were 252,000 smear tests. In 1985, there were 356,700.

Screening for breast cancer is a slightly more difficult issue. The trouble is that, unlike cervical screening, where the pre-cancerous cells can be more readily detected, some doubts have been cast on the efficacy of screening and self-examination. Therefore, in Edinburgh we have been involved in major trials along those lines and 30,000 women from GP practices are involved in one trial at an initial cost of about £300,000 which has been overseen by Professor Sir Patrick Forrest, who was the chief scientific adviser to the Scottish Home and Health Department.

I do not really want to concentrate on Scottish systems, but I believe that the Scottish education system, which has been maintained over the years principally by women, has produced some interesting statistics with regard to high and low grades. The findings clearly show that, the difference in ability of women over men is beginning to demonstrate itself clearly. The figures show that, although there may be more passes for boys in examination results, the better grades are established by girls. That is clearly shown when the top marks in the examination system are considered.

The Scottish Education Department has done much to avoid the gender stereotyping and there is a positive move to encourage girls to enter the engineering and scientific professions. More women are now engaged in legal training in Scotland than men.

I believe that no other constituency Member is better qualified to discuss women in work than I. In my constituency and particularly in Inverclyde, because of the high concentration of micro-electronics, women are very much in demand for work and particularly for part-time work. I have been astonished at the fact that, while there is a huge demand for nursery facilities in that area, there is complete inequality of provision in certain areas and especially in my constituency. That is probably because the Labour-controlled Strathclyde council makes it virtually impossible to establish nursery or playgroups other than those controlled by the council. Time after time, women have asked at my surgeries for increased nursery provision and have even offered to take on the role themselves. However, they find the local authority unsympathetic and thoroughly unhelpful. That is a strange attitude for Socialist authorities to take. They should welcome the support that these women would give to that vital service for women out at work.

Just before Christmas, I sponsored a seminar in the House for the British Federation of University Women. They discussed ways to expand women's horizons in work. We must never forget that most women have two full-time jobs. We must ensure that stress does not become a major health risk for women. It is unpleasant to consider that the life expectancy band is narrowing. Women used to have a far longer life expectancy than men. However, life expectancy for men is increasing, while the comparable rate for women is slowing down. I believe that that is due to stress diseases.

More women are falling foul of coronary heart disease and alcoholism. One of the worrying statistics is that women, because they are under increased stress, are taking to the weed. An increased number of women are smoking. We must pay strict attention to that.

It appears that there are minuses in the equation of giving women equal opportunity. It appears that we are giving women the equal opportunity to die earlier. That is probably why I support the availability of part-time jobs for women. These jobs would ease the strain for the many women who want part-time jobs. Part-time jobs should not be condemned by the Opposition, as they are on many occasions. However, it is a fact that someone who is bored is open to more stress. Some jobs that women are required to do are the very soul of tedium. It is very important that education for women is stressed and encouraged at a high level than at present.

I want to refer to a point made by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) and the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson). I could not agree more that women have grave problems in maintaining their personal security these days. I know that it is a terrifying experience after leaving the House late at night to enter a sparsely populated area in poorly lit streets. I do not welcome that nightly event. We must not simply encourage better street lighting, although that is one answer. As the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire said, we must get at the root of the problem and discover why there are so many sexual attacks, why rape is on the increase and why women are the targets of that most disgusting form of aggression.

I do not want to assume the role of Anna Freud, but I believe that some attitudinal changes are highly necessary. The Scottish poet Burns was once quoted as saying:

> "Then gently scan your brother man,
> Still gentler sister woman".

Self-respect and mutual respect between men and women nowadays are sadly lacking. My next sentence will be heresy to the Opposition. Sometimes women's attitudes nowadays might just scare the pants off men. Basically, it comes down to the home, and irrespective of what the Opposition believe, the majority of women are still the home-makers. Women are still the stable, nurturing element in the life of children. If there are any financial inducements to enable women to remain at home, they should not be cast aside or dismissed as a cheap way of reducing the unemployment figures. In terms of employment, for women's health and for the benefit of women, we should offer them the choice of remaining at home or going out to work.

Several Hon. Members *rose——*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. The wind-up speeches are expected at about 9.30. Four hon. Members wish to speak. If they feel able to restrict themselves to 10 minutes each, it will be possible to call all of them.

8.51 pm

Mrs. Llin Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): My hon. Friends have said that women are the cornerstone of the nation. Who could disagree with that? Their influence is strong because of their role in the family and their contribution at work and in the community. It makes sense for Government to provide support for women, to allocate money for nursery care, nursery education and materity rights and to provide for care of the disabled, the mentally handicapped and the elderly. It makes sense to provide reasources for training and retraining for women.

The contribution that women make throughout their lives at home and at work should be recognised by all. The Government do not recognise it. After a battle, women are at last able to claim invalid care allowance — if the person for whom they care can pass the stringent test for attendance allowance.

I have a letter from a woman in my constituency whose father died after a long, painful illness. His wife was 83 years of age and felt his death very severely. Her caring daughter decided to give up her job and care for her mother. When she did so last July, she decided to apply for invalid care allowance. The application was turned down because her mother was not getting attendance allowance. It will come as no surprise to hon. Members to learn that she did not manage to obtain attendance allowance either at the beginning or on appeal.

The old lady is proud. She will not apply for constant attendance allowance again, because her pride will not let her. That is because she sees the allowance as charity. The pride of many women stands in the way of their entitlement to claim the £5 heating allowance. One elderly disabled woman said to me: "I need £536 in the bank for my funeral. That is what I have. I cannot manage on any less to bury me and I cannot allow anyone to pay for my burial." She could not get the heating allowance. How can the Government claim to be a caring Government? Do they not see, do they not listen or are they so concerned with those who have that they cannot give time to those who have not?

It is well known that women live longer than men. To reward them with the single rate of retirement pension provided by the Government shows a complete lack of appreciation of their true worth to society. How can women avoid the loneliness and fill the vacuum of widowhood when they constantly worry about keeping a roof over their heads? Surely they should have sufficient pension to avoid that feeling of insecurity. It is to the Government's shame that they will not even provide them with a free television licence.

The women in my constituency are proud and hard-working. They ask not for charity but for a fair share of the nation's wealth which they helped to create. Under this Government, they are not getting their fair share. The role of women is undervalued. They are used and often abused. No political grouping is better at that than the alliance, as I know to my cost from my experience in the Newcastle-under-Lyme by-election. What dirt could the alliance find to use against me — that I was too Left-wing, that I belonged to a loony Left council? No, it could not throw those things at me, nor could it throw at me that I had not already fought for the people of Newcastle-under-Lyme and understood their problems. Could the alliance throw at me that I did not know anything about what the job involved? No, it could not. It decided to attack me on the only thing that was so obvious that I could not deny it — that I was a woman and in their eyes could not become a candidate unless I had the help of a man.

The alliance did not care that from beginning to end its campaign was based on degrading women. Did it care that its campaign denied the entitlement of a woman to her own life, to be able to make her own contribution? No, it did not. The alliance did not care that its campaign was an insult to all women. All it cared about was winning the seat, and it did not care about what it did or how it insulted women so long as it enabled the alliance to get another man into Parliament.

The Government may not pay much attention to the needs of women, but at least they do not publicly insult them, like the alliance. Women need to get into public life and all politicians and political parties should support them. We should encourage and support women because we need them in public life. Women still have a long way to go to reach equality, and it is a long and lonely way.

8.57 pm

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): The hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) launched a powerful attack on her alliance opponents. *[Interruption.]* I am not sure that the members of the alliance are friends. All of us who had to fight the alliance know the dirty tricks that it uses and that is regrettable. The hon. Lady spoke movingly about the role that women play in public life. We all echo that, but the Labour party will be in severe difficulties in the next election if it tries to approach these problems from the standpoint of positive discrimination. We do not believe in discrimination for or against women. We believe in equality of opportunity for all.

The tax treatment of women is monstrous, especially in the way the tax system discriminates against mothers who wish to stay at home. Motherhood at home is one of the most demanding and difficult of all professions. Women should be rewarded and not discriminated against, as under the present tax system.

It is interesting that our present tax system is based on an 1806 statute when married women were considered to be an appendage of their husbands in property terms. Few married women worked. The first world war saw a considerable increase in the number of married women working, although it is interesting that by 1921 only 10 per cent. — *[Interruption.]* I did not catch what the hon. Gentleman said. If he wishes to intervene, I shall be delighted to let him.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): The hon. Gentleman must mean that few upper-class women worked. Working-class women have always worked in the factores, on the lines, in services and elsewhere.

Mr. Leigh: I was talking about married women. I was not talking about either upper-class or working-class women. The statistics that I was just about to quote, which come from a Government paper, show that by 1921 only

10 per cent. of married women, whether working-class or not, were working. The number increased substantially to 44 per cent. in 1971 and to 52 per cent. in 1980. Many more married women are now working, but the tax system is still based on the work system that operated in 1806.

It is unfair that, if a married man and a married lady are working, they receive two and a half times the single person's allowance. If only one partner is working, they receive one and a half times that allowance. It is monstrously unfair that the tax threshold for a married man in work is ludicrously low, at only £3,655, whereas if both partners are in work it is £5,900. He therefore pays a high marginal rate of income tax.

The burden of the present tax rate falls especially hard on the married working-class man, who may be on a relatively low income and whose wife is at home, perhaps looking after a large family. Under the present tax system, he is very much discriminated against. I know that the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) believes in married life and in giving working-class wives real opportunities. It is unfair that the system discriminates against them in the way that it does.

Another interesting statistic is that as many as one in 20 of all families—750,000 people—would receive 80 per cent. of the income they currently receive if they did not work, because the marginal rate of tax and benefits is so high.

Everything that I have said points to the clear need for reform. I follow what my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) said, in that whatever Government are returned in the next election — of course, I hope that it will be a Conservative Government —they must look carefully at the proposals in the Green Paper which was published last year. Those proposals are interesting and, contrary to what the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) said, the variable allowance proposals have received considerable support. She misquoted Dame Shelagh Roberts. The House of Lords Select Committee on the European Community states:

> "Others were in favour of transferable allowances. Dame Shelagh Roberts commented (Q 252) that transferable allowances would be consistent with the European Parliament's view that the system should be neutral as between one or both spouses working".

Other witnesses who spoke in favour of the transferable allowances mentioned in the Green Paper, were the National Board of Catholic Women, the British Federation of University Women, the Institute of Taxation and the National Federation of Womens Institutes.

There is a considerable body of support in favour of transferable allowances. I follow my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne in speaking very much in their favour. What needs to be done is simple. The single person's allowance has to be raised from £2,325—if we are talking about the present tax year—to £2,995. If only a married man is earning, his allowance has to be raised to £5,990 and if a married man's wife is working too, their allowances would be £5,990, so there is no discrimination against women under the variable allowances which are mentioned in the Green Paper, if they wished to stay at home. Why should women be forced to go out to work as they are under the present system? They should be given an absolute right either to stay at home or to go out to work, as they wish.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) was present during a debate that I initiated last year on the integration of taxation of benefits. He tells me it was a good debate. It is nice to be congratulated by the alliance spokesman. We agree that we must move much faster towards integration of the two systems if we are to iron out the sort of problems that I have mentioned. I should like to move faster than the Government, but proposals contained in the Green Paper are a step in the right direction. I commend them to the House.

9.4 pm

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): I suggest to the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) that there is another way of looking after the interests of married couples and couples with children—abolish the married man's tax allowance and tax men and women who are married or who are not married equally, but increase child benefit so that those who have children to care for have more financial support. That is Labour's policy and the desirable way forward in considering the interests of families with children who are one of the poorest groups in society. That is a better approach than considering the taxation interests of some extremely well-paid women. Those are the women about whom the hon. Gentleman is probably more concerned.

My hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) outlined the enormous damage that has been done to women's interests by the Government. That damage clearly shows that the token number of women in positions of power who do not represent the interests of all women is not an advance. The Prime Minister is devastating example of that. Everything for which she stands, everything that she advocates and the way in which she has changed our society have been damaging to the interests of women.

Polls on the issues that concern women reveal interesting points. Women are massively in favour of getting rid of nuclear weapons in Britain—much more so than men. Women are not as attached as men to the notion that, if someone else has a gun or a bomb, they have to get one, too. Women are concerned about the escalation of the arms race and the risk of nuclear war increasing. There is an enormous well of support among women for nuclear disarmament and Labour's policies on it.

Women are enormously concerned about the effects of and damage to health caused by nuclear power. That concern was heightened at the time of the Chernobyl disaster and, more recently, by the evidence that families living around nuclear power stations are likely to suffer illness in greater numbers than other families. Worrying figures suggest that leukaemia occurs more often in those areas. That issue concerns men and women, but disproportionately women. Women are interested in getting rid of nuclear power and finding safer forms of energy that are not damaging to health.

Women have a major interest in preventive health care, to which a number of hon. Members have referred. We cannot move our Health Service on from its present position, with the battering that it has received lately, into prevention if it is chopped up and privatised. Preventive care cannot be organised in a system that relies on private medicine—BUPA and so on. We must group everyone together and start screening for all sorts of illnesses. That would prevent illnesses. For example, if we could improve

[Ms. Clare Short]

the coverage of vaccination against rubella, the number of disabled children born in Britain who must be cared for would decrease.

Women are in favour of better care for children, partly to relieve themselves of the burden of having to care all the time for children, partly so that they can go out to work and increase the family income and partly because it is good for children. Evidence shows that good child care and pre-school care are good for the development of children. Providing such care on a universal basis throughout society can only be done through the public sector; yet the Prime Minister and the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security—the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie)—are anxious at every turn to cut public services, and to privatise and go for individually bought services. This means that the quality of pre-school care for children, which is demanded by many women, cannot be improved.

Women are concerned to improve care for elderly people. About 70 per cent. of care provided for elderly and disabled people is provided by women at home. We need to give more help and support. It is obviously a better form of care than building old people's homes where people will be lonely. If the burden is to be carried by the women in the family, let us employ more people to go into and out of households to give support and help. This would generate jobs and improve the quality of life of those women and the elderly people for whom they care.

Women are massively and overwhelmingly low paid. The Government have deliberately set out to increase inequality and to push down the wages of the low paid. They have taken a series of measures, which were mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Barking—most recently and most disgracefully, weakening the powers of the wages councils to protect the wage levels of some of the lowest paid people in society, who are overwhelmingly women.

The issues that concern women and the policies advocated by the Government—who are, ironically, headed by a woman—move in opposite directions. Women want less spending on nuclear weapons and nuclear power, better public services, better standards of employment for everybody, the elimination of low pay and decent, well-paid work options for everyone.

Women are on the move. They are grouping together throughout society. They are not just saying that they want things from Government; they are moving forward and organising things for themselves. On the matter of rape, the group that has moved forward to provide a service for women who have been subjected to rape—women locally—has had little support from the Government. It has had to fight for a few resources to provide a centre where women who have been raped can come together; a centre where women who have been battered can come together; and a crisis telephone line. Groups of women up and down the country are providing a service for women who have been raped.

I have been enraged by the comments of Tory Members and the Prime Minister following the Ealing rape case. The only suggestion that they had to make was that sentences should be increased for the tiny number of rapists who are caught. They outbid each other in the call for longer and longer sentences to give a pretence and a token of concern about rape.

What do we know? We know that the overwhelming majority of rapes are never reported to the police—rape crisis centres up and down the country tell us that. That is because of insensitive policing and humiliating treatment by the police of women who have been raped, which makes it too fearful a prospect.

We have seen the humiliation of rape victims in the courts. The enraging thing about the Ealing rape case was the comments of the judge—which are typical of the comments that are made over and over again by our judiciary—that rape is easily overcome, that the woman had done well to get over it so rapidly and that now the victim was OK. The suggestion was that aggravated burglary was a more serious crime than a vicious and vile rape. The Government and the Prime Minister cannot escape from that by calling for longer sentences. The guidelines in our system place more emphasis on aggravated burglary as a more serious crime than rape. That is the judgment of our system.

If we want to prevent rape, rather than to pretend to women that we are concerned about rape by calling for longer sentences for the few men who are caught, what sort of measures should we adopt? We should approach the rape crisis centres and ask the women who work with victims of rape what the answer is. They will tell us that a transformation is needed in police procedures. There have been some calls for that by the Government, but they could go further. Women should not be intimidated or humiliated by the police if they report a rape.

We need to re-educate the judiciary. The judiciary should undergo a compulsory course that includes a session with women working in rape crisis centres before being allowed to hear more rape cases. We need more women judges.

Conservative Members talk about the increasing numbers of women coming into the legal profession. There is an overwhelming majority of women teachers, as my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, West (Miss Boothroyd) said, but there are very few women head teachers. We cannot assume that just because many women are entering the legal profession as junior solicitors, there will be a lot of senior women judges in the future.

We should change the law. It is not an offence for a man to rape his wife; there is no such thing as rape in marriage. That is typical of how our system values rape. If a woman is married, she can be raped and the man will never be charged. That law should be changed to give equality.

We should get rid of porn in our daily press and the culture that that generates about women—that they are there to be lusted after, groped and taken by men.

The hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) has talked about women who have been raped as being soiled for life. What an insult that is to the women who have survived rape and managed to be brave and strong enough to put their lives together. The hon. Gentleman appeared on page three of *The Sun* with his favourite page three girl, yet he tries to pretend that he is concerned about women's rights and the humiliation of rape.

We should get rid of porn in the daily press, provide more support for rape crisis centres throughout the country and establish a commission of women who are working in the area, particularly women working in rape crisis centres, to look at international experience and make all the necessary changes in terms of safety, public attitudes and the law so that rape can be prevented. It is

not good enough to call for longer sentences in the minute number of cases where someone is convicted of a rape offence. That is to pretend to care, but not to demonstrate any real concern.

9.15 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): There are many ways in which women have to face intolerable burdens. One of the basic securities should be that of being safe in one's own home from crimes of violence.

About 14 months ago in the House I raised with the Home Secretary the then sentencing policy for rape, which was quite incredible and was leading to shorter and shorter sentences being imposed for the most heinous crimes. At that time a junior Minister at the Home Office told me that it was his intention to introduce guidelines. That he did, circulating them to the judges. Therefore, it was all the more devastating when recently there appeared to be a classic case of the judiciary deliberately ignoring or at least misunderstanding, the straight instructions that it was getting from the House of Commons and the Home Secretary as to the way in which the offence of rape should be dealt with.

I am afraid that I learnt long ago that the House of Commons becomes indignant in great bursts and then forgets any of the basic problems that should concern it. Some time ago, before the recent appalling case in Ealing, I tabled a series of questions yet again on the same basis to the same Department. The answers that I received were revealing. I asked what had happened since the last time I questioned the Home Office about setting up rape crisis centres. I asked how much money and support were provided for them. There is no point in hon. Members saying that they are concerned about those social problems if they are not prepared to put their money where their mouth is.

In reply to my questions I was told that the training of police officers, which is fundamental, is a matter for chief constables. That is so worrying that a young copper had enough common sense to write in to his own police newspaper this week saying that when faced with a rape victim on his own in a station he felt totally inadequate and unable to cope. That boy had enough common sense and intelligence to realise the gap in his training and to make it specific. That was the response of the Home Secretary and the Government, who care so much about the role of women. That was the answer that I received nearly 14 months ago.

Following that answer, I wrote to nearly every chief constable in Britain asking what their response was going to be. I asked about their training programmes, how many of them had victim examination suites and how many were prepared to back up the sort of problems that they envisaged with some sort of specific working party to ensure that they were doing something about the problem. The answers were revealing. Some chief constables could hardly bother to answer, some sent back highly intelligent and sensible letters, putting the matter into context in their own counties, and some pointed out to me that the Women's National Commission had already done a considerable amount of work in looking at the question of rape.

I looked again today at what the Women's National Commission has had to do. I asked whether it had received any request from the Government to follow up or do any additional investigating on the subject of violence against women. I was told that the Metropolitan police are trying to follow up the report and that some

> "members from the WNC are planning to meet with the chief soon to discuss any findings."

Even though the Home Office has produced a new set of guidelines for the police, as far as I can see it has not set up a working party within the Government or talked to the other relevant Departments. The Department of Health and Social Security, which has responsibility for counselling and research projects on rape, said:

> "The London Rape Counselling and Research Project . . . the only centre financial supported by this Department, is in receipt of a 3-year grant of £22,000 per annum payable with effect from 1 April 1984."

It also said that it has some other grants. In effect, because of inflation, that represents a cut every year in it existing moneys. The Department says that that is meant to help only with national publicity and promotion work. No funding has been given for the training of counsellors, for the setting up of the proper professional rape crisis centre help, or for the proper training processes for those who have to deal with rape victims.

The Metropolitan police proposed eight examination suites for London. I went to see one when I originally started this investigation. Three have now been opened. They are in Brent, Hendon and Barkingside. The next one to be constructed will be located in south London, and the building on that should begin later this year. Others are planned, but they will not be in operation until 1988. Other police forces have made specific efforts to see the work that is being done by the Metropolitan police and are overhauling their own training methods, but those measures are not enough.

The House must learn that it cannot just talk about rape when there is one specific nasty case that upsets the sensibilities of some Conservative Members. The House must be concerned about rape every day. Hon. Members must be concerned about what happens to women when they leave this building and have to travel home on public transport late at night with drunks and the people who may attack them, and without adequate support staff on the stations. Hon. Members must also be concerned about those who have responsibility for training police officers, and they must find the money to create proper support systems. Above all, the House must stop talking about the problems of women as if we are pets to be thrown a little bone.

We have been given one debate, which has been introduced by the shadow Cabinet, which, if I may say so, has nothing to be proud of, because it does not contain any women. When one considers what there is on the Government side of the House, one can understand the problems it faces in including women politicians.

We should not discuss this matter other than in a serious manner. Women are grossly under-represented in the House and throughout our public life. Women are still treated by the House of Commons as if they are creatures who can be trotted in for the odd debate that is held in some spare parliamentary time when they will not cause too much trouble, and when only women Members will be allowed to take part. That is a disgrace and the Minister made his embarrassment about that clear. I sympathise with him on that. However, these matters will come up again and again. Women will be content only when they have equality of treatment and, above all, the equality of real respect.

9.23 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): This has been an extremely interesting debate and one of the most interesting that we have had in the House for some time. It was the intention and the wish of my hon. Friends to explore as wide a range as possible of the matters that affect women and are affected by women, and that has happened in the debate. Every speech has been different and has dealt with a different area, and each speech has been well-informed, cogent and has made points of considerable importance to women and, thereby, to our position in the country.

As many of my hon. Friends have said, it is unfortunate that we have seen the independence and freedom of most women steadily eroded under a Government who are led by our first woman Prime Minister. Sadly, the Prime Minister is typical of a certain type of woman. This type of woman — and there are many men like this too, especially in the House—thinks that having climbed the ladder she should pull it up after her. That philosophy is consistent with the entire outlook of the Prime Minister and, indeed, with that of many, if not all, of the members of her party.

When hardship and discrimination are experienced, as they are to a greater or lesser degree by all women, there are two alternative reactions. The first is to say, "That is not going to happen to me again." The second is to say, "That should not happen to anyone. What can I do, or what can we do together, to see, not just that I avoid a repetition of that hurt, but that it is not inflicted on others?" Those different reactions are fundamental and form the basis of the opposing philosophies and policies that we see reflected in the House. Conservative Members, especially the Prime Minister, appear to suggest that as long as he or she makes it, it does not matter whether anybody else is given the same opportunities. The Opposition's reaction is that there is a need to help others to be as fortunate as oneself, and particularly to help others who are not as fortunate.

When we examine the lives of most women compared with those of men, we observe that they have greater family responsibilities, greater difficulty gaining promotion on equal terms, lower pay and, sadly, all too often, an assumption of male superiority, for which the evidence is all too clearly lacking. Those disadvantages which women have long faced have all been exacerbated under the Government. Low pay is not low enough for them—they press for it to be reduced. Part-time work is not incurred under sufficient handicaps—they must be increased and rights weakened. Single parents on supplementary benefit struggling to get training or to keep jobs will see their last chance removed when the Government stop them offsetting expenses, such as child care costs, against income for the purposes of supplementary benefit. Carers have seen the demand and need for community care increase, while the support services that may help people to cope are cut and cut again. The DHSS may press for more spending, but the Department of the Environment demands less and blames councils which try to maintain their services for increasing rates when in reality reduced Government support is the biggest single cause of that increase.

Nursery schools and places are cut and in some places day nursery places close and disappear all together. Free school meals are cut, and will be even less widely available. Under the Social Security Act 1986 many low-income families will face substantial costs because of the removal of even those free school meal facilities which now exist and there will be greater pressure, again principally on women, to provide from an already inadequate income.

Even the taxation changes that the Government are considering will, it is widely believed, most benefit women who unlike any of us who are fortunate enough to be in this place, choose or are pressured to stay out of the labour market. Those changes are likely thereby to increase that pressure on women. If women leave the labour market, the Department of Employment will harass them with demands for assurances that they can instantaneously arrange child care, irrespective of whether jobs are available, in an attempt to make quite sure that even if they want or need work they do not show up on the register of the unemployed.

Several references have been made to the recent rape case, and my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) has highlighted clearly the great disparity in this place between words of horror and actions which may help to alleviate some of the problems. One of the most appalling things about this case—I do not apologise for returning to it briefly—was that the horrendous personal violence against the woman was regarded less severely than the offence against property. We have come a long way since women were automatically regarded as property, but it is a sad commentary on how far we still must go that there are men in high positions whose respect for women ranks below their respect for property.

Sadly, continued pressure from the Government for cuts in public transport has increased the danger for women who need to work, large numbers of whom must travel on public transport, often at hours when there are few other travellers and little protection. Several hon. Members referred to the changes likely to come on London Transport. I recall my hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) some time ago asking how that would affect women.

Ms. Clare Short: We have all slipped into the danger of talking about rape as if it always happens in dark streets by inadequate, funny men — *[Interruption.]* I am not trying to suggest that the Minister is inadequate. He talked about inadequate men committing rape, but in reality a woman is more likely to be raped by someone in her family or a man with whom she has had a relationship. Rape occurs in all classes and backgrounds and we must not talk as though it is committed on the streets only by inadequate men. Society is riddled with it. All sorts of well-placed men indulge in rape.

Mrs. Beckett: My hon. Friend is right. Rape and other crimes of violence do occur, and I am surprised that Conservative Members, and especially a woman, find that amusing. My hon. Friend is correct. Violence often occurs within a family. These acts are exacerbated by the lack of any support services to which women in such difficult circumstances can turn.

It is a sad commentary on our society—although I welcome the initiative, despite the problems that may occur—that it falls to a television journalist to highlight the problems that children face. They are also subject to the kinds of attacks to which my hon. Friend referred. I

accept my hon. Friend's point. It is also right to stress the dangers that are likely to follow because of the pressure that Government cuts are causing in public transport.

My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) referred to the cut in the numbers of conductors and conductresses. I am not suggesting that the presence of a conductor is always sufficient to deal with problems that may arise—we all recognise that that is not so—but support is derived from the presence of another human being, rather than that human being watching a remote-controlled camera and who may notice something happening in enough time to say — "Look, Fred, someone is being attacked on platform 4." That is not very reassuring for either men or women who will be faced with the increasing frequency of cuts in public transport provision in the way that is intended.

The Government have claimed, and will no doubt continue to claim, that they do not have a bad record on the range of policies that have been covered by this debate. That claim does not stand up to examination and I should like to give some evidence to prove that. Yesterday, the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, who will reply to this debate, was asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Barking to list the actions that the Government have taken in the past seven years, through the Department of Health and Social Security, that have been of benefit to women. The answer was a list of half truths. I use that description, not just in the pejorative sense — although it is justified — but because it is a literally accurate description. It was a list of half truths and it enables one to understand the value of the maxim that, in court, one should give the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, rather than merely edited items that may be convenient.

The answer that my hon. Friend received suggested that there are more doctors and nurses in hospitals and the community. However, I would have thought that the Minister was aware that those statistics are highly dubious and reflect a reduction in the hours normally worked rather than an increase in the numbers employed. The answer suggested that hospitals are dealing with more cases, but there is growing anxiety about the speed of discharge from hospitals to enable them to cope with more cases. Hospitals are under pressure to increase their efficiency and to cut overheads, and that results, far too often, in an increase in hardship and pain to many patients. In some cases it means an increase in costs for further medical treatment for those who must return to hospital because they were discharged too early because of the pressure for beds.

The answer referred to the work of the Maternity Services Advisory Committee and the fact that it has produced three reports on aspects of maternity care. I do not recall that that committee advised the Government when they decided to change the pattern of maternity grants and maternity pay which resulted in 93,000 women losing their right to maternity grant.

The answer referred to the Asian mother and baby project. As far as I can recall, that project operates in only two or three areas on a pilot basis, and I believe that I am right in saying that the cost of this project falls on the district health authorities rather than on the Government.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): I am grateful to the hon. Lady for giving way. May I gently correct her regarding the Asian mother and baby link project? It is not operating in two or three areas, but covers a substantial number of areas, and I believe that 13 different projects are under way.

Mrs. Beckett: I think I am right in saying that it covers only two or three health authority areas. I shall refresh my memory later with the information sent to me from both the hon. Lady's and my health authority. Wherever else the scheme may operate, it is not in our health authorities. Indeed, I understand that my health authority is eagerly awaiting a reply from the hon. Lady on how speedily we can expect the scheme.

The hon. Lady said in her answer that health authorities have been required to install computerised call and recall schemes for cervical smear tests. Indeed, that has been required, but health authorities have not been given the money to do it. They have not, in fact, received any assistance other than exhortation from the Government. I think that we can suspend judgment on the Forrest report, although we are still awaiting it, until we know the Government's reaction to it.

The hon. Lady was reduced to listing the health education booklet that has been published during the past few years, ending—more or less—by taking credit for the fact that there has been greater equality of treatment in benefit claims between men and women. However, once again she failed to mention—I do not know why—that mostly that has involved a levelling down of entitlement rather than a levelling up. Therefore, whichever sex was receiving the worst treatment, that became the norm, or, at best, some intermediate point between the two. I can certainly say with confidence that on no occasion was there a levelling up so that everybody gained the same improvement in benefit.

The hon. Lady, like all her hon. Friends, makes much of the fact that under compulsion from the EEC there were improvements such as the award of invalid care allowance to married women. She passes over, without any mention, the fact that the losses of benefit to women as widows, mothers and retirement pensioners—all of which have taken place during the past few years, and are particularly evident in the Social Security Act 1986—have passed by the hon. Lady and those who drafted her reply.

The truth is that many of the problems that face our society are harder to resolve because of lack of experience of the voice and of the contribution of women when decisions are being made. My hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, West (Miss Boothroyd) superbly highlighted, in the many areas that she quoted, the way in which women are not represented in the seats of power, even where those women are the backbone and the cornerstone of the industries or the services that are being controlled. I stress the plural. It is the contribution of women that is lacking, not just the one token woman, who is expected to express the full range and views of all of her sex, although I hasten to add that even one token woman is better than none.

The fact is that women continue to suffer disadvantage, and under this Government their position has become significantly worse. The need is for a Labour Government to reduce and to remove the extra disadvantages that are in place, and that becomes daily more urgent.

9.37 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): I agree with the

[Mrs. Edwina Currie]

hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) that this has been a most interesting short debate, which has covered a wide range of topics. It is a pity, therefore, that so few Opposition gentlemen have bothered to come to support their ladies in the excellent job that they have done. I counted four hon. Gentlemen at the start of the debate, there were none in the Chamber by 8.10 pm and there have been only two for the majority of the time since then—one of whom was the Opposition Whip, who has just returned to his place.

I was pleased to hear the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe), many of whose points are being taken into account. I was also pleased to hear the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mrs. McCurley), who was right to suggest that, in many ways, Scotland was giving the lead in health care. I have an invitation to visit Edinburgh to see what is being done——

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Oh, no.

Mrs. Currie: Yes, I intend to take up that invitation soon.

The hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde mentioned the high intake of medical students in Scotland. I wish to put her right by pointing out that in Great Britain as a whole, the intake of medical students is now 46 per cent. women, and some 1,800 women a year are now entering medical school. The percentage of doctors who are women has risen steadily year by year, both in and out of hospitals. We look towards good service from those very capable people.

I wish briefly to respond to some of the comments made. I am not sure that I quite understand the point made by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) so, if I may, I wish to write to him on the issues that he raised about maternity provision.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) was very concerned about rape, and that requires an immediate response. We all share her concern about rape, and many of the comments that she made about it not always happening in dark corners and not always being carried out by strangers were absolutely right.

I think that many of the hon. Lady's critical remarks about the police are very out of date. It is worth pointing out, for example, that the victim in the Ealing vicarage case particularly praised the care and consideration that she received from the police. My Department funds a number of voluntary rape crisis centres and other organisations in this field, including the Women's Aid Federation, which is a national umbrella organisation that helps and supports refuges for battered women and their children in England—and I am due to meet that federation next week. We also fund the rape counselling and research project. So we are trying to do our bit in that area.

As to the remarks of the hon. Member for West Bromwich, West (Miss Boothroyd) on appointments, I say to her, please watch and see how we make progress on that, but I am not prepared to recommend in my Department the appointment of women for the sake of having more women—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I am only prepared to recommend that we have women who can do a proper job in exactly the same way as anybody else.

Ms. Richardson: What makes the hon. Lady think that most women in this country cannot do a job?

Hon. Members: She did not say that.

Mrs. Currie: I share the feelings of hon. Ladies opposite who do not like token women. I am not going to appoint them.

Could I go on to the remarks of the hon. Lady for West Bromwich, West on the alleged lack of equality for women in claiming social security benefits? The only significant areas of social security where differences now remain are beneficial to women. We have a lower pension age, but we get the same pension on our own contributions. We receive widows' benefits although there are no widowers' benefits. The married women's pension is paid to a woman in her own right on her husband's contributions even if she has never paid a penny of contributions.

If the hon. Lady wishes to abolish benefits based on deprived rights—which I think is what she is saying—then she would be disadvantaging millions of women both above and below pension age. As for the various things that we have managed to do in terms of social security, I listened with amazement to the criticisms being made about the introduction of invalid care allowance for married women. What we did was abolish a particularly nasty little piece of discriminatory legislation which was left over from the last Labour Government. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Lady says that that happened because the EEC told us to. It is nice to see her conversion to supporting our membership of Europe. I wish we heard it more often.

We have received in response to our introduction of the invalid care allowance for married women more than 100,000 claims. We have also gone further and abolished residual effects of the married women's half test for pensions. More than 35,000 women have benefited directly from that. Another 42,000 women have a new tax advantage. That was something else that was left over and it was a pure piece of discriminatory legislation against women brought in by the last Labour Government. Some of the smaller changes in the Social Security Act and previous legislation, such as removing discrimination and allowing either partner to claim—when before it was men only—will benefit many women and their families.

Let me pick up one of the points made about violence to staff. We all share and deplore the anger of women and indeed of men against violence towards all staff, male and female, in the Health Service, the social services departments, social workers, home helps, meals on wheels workers, nurses—everybody. Last December my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State convened a conference of representatives of management, staff and the professions in the NHS, social security and the social services. Following this conference, the DHSS committee on violence was established under the chairmanship of my noble friend, the Baroness Trumpington.

The aim of the committee, which had its first meeting on 6 February, is to pool the knowledge and experience of all three services to ensure that effective preventive measures are taken. We will do all we can to put matters right. We look to the support of the Opposition in all the legislation that we are trying to bring in against violence and criminal acts, so as to put peoples' minds at rest and at peace.

Let me take on the main theme of this debate on health and well-being. It is a matter not of half truth but of fact,

that this Government have spent record amounts on health and welfare, that this Government have employed and are employing record numbers of people in the Health Service, and that this Government are looking after record numbers of patients.

Women, who are the main consumers of health care since we live longer than men, have been substantial beneficiaries all round. When we took over in 1979, we found that in Great Britain the Labour Government, for all their talk, had been spending less than £8 billion a year on the Health Service. This year, we are spending nearly £19 billion. We have just been allocated another £1 billion. Next year it will be £20 billion. *[Interruption.]* In real terms, that is a jump of a quarter. If I may put it in more simple language for some Opposition members, for every £4-worth of service, for every £4-worth of drugs and for every £4-worth of treatment that the Labour Government bought, we are buying £5-worth. We are making every pound work much harder, and that is right.

Employment in the Health Service has also leaped. We have some 60,000 more nurses and midwives in the Health Service. Less than half that increase is due to the changes in hours. It is to the credit of the Government that we were prepared to fund the changes in hours that are to the benefit of the staff concerned. We have some 5,500 more doctors and dentists, and that number is not affected by the changes in hours. We have more physiotherapists, more occupational therapists, more speech therapists, more community nurses and more community psychiatric nurses; we have more of just about everything.

Opposition Members should acknowledge all that. Most of all, we have more patients. In 1978 in England alone we looked after 5 million patients. Last year there were 6 million in-patients; we must add to that another 1 million day patients and 37 million out-patients. That is what we have been doing.

Ms. Clare Short: Everyone in the country knows that the Government are very good at fiddling figures. Surely the Minister agrees that the quality of our health care has to compare with the demand for care. If we have an aging population, we have to provide more care. All over the country there are longer and longer waiting lists for hip operations and wards are being closed for periods of time. She knows the children's hospital in Birmingham; we recently had that problem there. She cannot pretend to the nation that there have not been cuts in the quality of the Health Service in proportion to the need and the demand.

Mrs. Currie: The hon. Lady clearly has not heard the announcement that was made today about waiting list moneys, some of which will affect her constituency.

Let me give the hon. Lady some figures that we did not draw up. These are the results of a joint survey by Marplan for the National Association of Health Authorities and the *Health Services Journal* which was done last year about attitudes towards the Health Service. Of those questioned, 75 per cent. said that they felt that the Health Service in their area was good, very good or extremely good; 87 per cent. said that they were satisfied with the service that they were getting from hospital, and 88 per cent. said that they were satisfied with the service that they were getting from their general practitioner. That means that we have 6 million satisfied customers in the Health Service, and 6 million satisfied customers cannot all be wrong.

It all has to be paid for. One danger that the country would run if the Opposition got in and had the opportunity to try to run the Health Service, is that they would immediately lose £500 million from a reduction in charges. Of course, they would then have to try to explain that away, as they brought in cuts such as I saw as a health authority member back in the 1970s — the last time Labour was in control.

In October last year I was asked to take responsibility for women's health. The House might like to know what we have been doing since. This was the first time ever that a United Kingdom Government had decided that women's health needed special attention. I have set up a group of senior officials within the DHSS to pool the whole range of issues covered by the Department which affect women's health, and to advise Ministers. The core of the group, which includes two deputy secretaries, is a small team of medical, nursing and administrative staff, but it also draws on others throughout the system when necessary to provide expertise on a whole range of matters. They have done an enormous amount of fact finding and I am most grateful to them. We do let the men in. I do not believe in discrimination.

The group's role is, first, to identify health matters which affect women and to develop an awareness of those health needs which are specific to women; secondly, to explore gaps in provision and, I hope, to promote good practice; thirdly, to develop links between individual projects and services to ensure that they are seen as part of a whole, not just a series of pigeonholes—as we have heard in the debate tonight—and not just in a reactive way, responding simply to the demands of pressure groups because I think that we can do it a lot better than that; and, fourthly, to encourage women to take a more positive approach to their own health, for example in taking up screening programmes, and thereby to encourage them also to realise their role in the promotion of the health of their families.

Mr. Laurie Pavitt (Brent, South): Will the hon. Lady now say exactly what further she is going to do on exfoliative cytology for carcinoma of the womb and also what extra steps are being taken to avoid mastectomies? Is there going to be some further screening for other age groups than those at the moment?

Mrs. Currie: If the hon. Gentleman will bear with me, I will come to some of those in a moment. Let me touch briefly on one or two health issues which I think are of importance to women.

On perinatal mortality, for example, we have seen an astonishing achievement. In 1979, 10,000 babies a year were dying at or near their birth time. Now, it is just over 6,000 and the percentage of live births of babies that die within the first week of birth is now dropping. That is a major achievement. Among the poorest groups in our society, the perinatal mortality rate now is better than it was on the average of the last Government. So there is a tremendous success there.

The position is similar regarding immunisation and vaccination, which have been briefly mentioned. We seem, thank goodness, to have avoided a whooping cough epidemic this winter because a substantial number of babies and children are now protected. In 1978 the take-up of that vaccination was 31 per cent. Now it is 65 per cent. and we see the results in the children who do not get sick.

The rates of acceptance for some vaccination programmes are as high as 85 per cent. and I am delighted

[Mrs. Currie]

to say that the highest rate of all the acceptance rates is 86 per cent. for rubella vaccination among teenage girls. That will avoid them having to suffer the misery of that infection and will help to protect their babies as yet unborn.

We have mentioned briefly the main issues of breast and cervical cancer. My group has established that in preventive terms we need to look at three cancers—breast, lung and cervical. We have received the report of the Professor Forrest group. It is undergoing detailed consideration and we hope to make some announcements soon.

On lung cancer, I hope that we can raise women's awareness, for we are extremely concerned. The number of women dying from lung cancer is up 20 per cent. since 1979. It is now killing 10,000 women a year in England and Wales. The risk of heart disease and strokes among women who are both on the pill and smoking is ten times the risk when those factors are absent. *[Interruption.]* We therefore look forward to the active support of the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody), who is shouting out, in all our campaigns to get women—Labour, Conservative and everybody else—to give up smoking as their menfolk have.

On cervical cancer, I have heard a load of sanctimonious rubbish from the Opposition. If they believe all that, why did they not do something about it when they were in power? Cervical cytology has been available in this country for more than 20 years. It took a Conservative Government in 1971 to decide to introduce a national call-recall system in Southport and it took another Conservative Government in 1981 to decide that we could do better and that local schemes were the way to do it.

I have some successes to report. Barnsley family practitioner committee, which introduced its scheme in January 1985, tells us that it has a 75 per cent. response rate. Gloucester FPC, whose schemes have been in for nearly two years, has an 84 per cent. response rate. Devon FPC, whose schemes have been in for two years, has a 78 per cent. response rate. There are now 49 schemes up and running—that is more than half—covering 106 district health authorities. We have a tremendous amount of progress to report.

I shall refer to one of the most telling comments that have been made. The hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) said that Labour would have a Ministry for women because "women should have a voice in everything". That is absolutely right. That is just the point. That is why women should not be shunted off into a separate Ministry. It is all a load of humbug. The Labour party does not really believe it. The leader of the Labour party is a man. The whole of the shadow Cabinet, as the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich knows, are men. Not one women was elected by the PLP. There are two hon. Ladies present who—*[Interruption.]* Out of a total of 24 principal spokesmen in the Labour party, 24 are men, and the only one who is on the list is the hon. Member for Barking, and she is stuck with women's issues.

It goes right through the Labour party. I have the Labour party's glossy new booklet, entitled "Investing in People", that came out in September. It says wonderful things such as:

"We'll support the wider provision of Well-Women clinics and greater access by women to female doctors."

Hon. Members should look at the picture of the doctor they show he is a man.

I have made one small mistake. I said that the leader of the Labour party is a man. I wonder whether that is true. A woman with strong views has been going around the country making speeches about what the Labour party will do if the nation ever re-elects it. She has been in my constituency, too. She is a passionate supporter of the CND and a committed opponent of the country's defence strategy. But she is not a Member of the House or of the shadow Cabinet, and she has never stood for election as anything such as a councillor or a trade union representative.

Mrs. Dunwoody *rose*——

Mrs. Currie: I do not mean the hon. Lady. The Labour party is being led by a woman, but she has not been elected to anything. She is the lady who makes the breakfast in the Kinnock household. That is who is leading the Labour party, and she is leading it by the nose.

Our view about the role of women is different from the Opposition's view. It is closer to that of the bulk of our people. Women are citizens, first and foremost. We have the same interests and the same needs as everybody else. We are just as interested in tax cuts, controlling expenditure, getting interest rates down, the cost of fuel—we help to pay the bills—the building programme for roads, the standards in our schools, and what Mr. Gorbachev is getting up to. We are not a different species and we are not a problem. We have rights, but we have obligations as well. We have heard precious little tonight about the obligations of women as citizens and their responsibility to make a contribution to society.

Mrs. Dunwoody *rose*——

Mrs. Currie: If the hon. Lady, who is shouting at me, is an example of what the Labour party thinks about the higher standards of womanhood, I am not surprised that she got the sack from the Labour Front Bench.

It is wrong to split society in the way that the Opposition would. It simply ossifies distinctions, creates differences, and makes more of a gap and not links. The Opposition's policy is a load of innacurate nonesense.

Mr. Derek Foster (Bishop Auckland) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

Question put accordingly, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House proceeded to a Division:—

Mrs. Dunwoody *(seated and covered):* On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall take it when the noise dies down.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I understand that I must remain seated, Mr. Speaker, to raise a point of order at this time. Is it in order for a Minister to make a totally unacceptable attack upon someone who is not present in the House, who is not a Member of it and who has no way of repudiating very personal attacks from that Dispatch Box?

Mr. Speaker: I repeat what I said this afternoon, that I am not responsible for what is said in the House, as long as it is in order. The Minister was in order. Clear the Lobbies.

The House having divided: Ayes 185, Noes 240.

Division No. 94] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley, N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ray Powell and
Mr. John McWilliam.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Grist, Ian
Hayes, J.
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hirst, Michael
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Irving, Charles
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*

Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Mather, Sir Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stokes, John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones and
Mr. David Lightbown.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MR. SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House welcomes the contribution which Government policies have made in meeting the needs of women, particularly through the increased level and range of health service provision and the encouragement and help given to them to play a fuller role in the community and in employment.

Tamils (Removal)

10.13 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will recall that earlier today there was a private notice question to the Home Secretary about the removal of applicants for refugee status in Britain. You may well be aware—but, if not, I am glad to tell you—that judicial review applications have been lodged on behalf of all those people and that they have now been allowed by the Home Secretary to remain in this country so that their cases can be properly heard. In view of the statements made today by the Minister and his extreme reluctance to accept that there should be proper consideration of these cases, could you now arrange for him to come back to the House and say that he has a duty to consider these matters rather than to attempt to throw people out of this country before they have had a chance to exercise their legal rights?

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Is this on the same point of order?

Mr. Nellist: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker —*[Interruption.]* I hope that we can have a bit of quiet from the racist tendency in the Conservative party. That is a general comment. I do not name any individual hon. Member.

Within the last half hour the Press Association has reported that the forced removals—information about which was given to you, Mr. Speaker, by the Minister of State, Home Office this afternoon in reply to the private notice question of my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs)—have been deferred.

My point of order is that during debates last year on the introduction of the visa system for Sri Lankan and especially Tamil refugees, clear indications were given that the rights of Members of Parliament to telephone the Home Office about cases of asylum would not be affected by the regulations. This morning I telephoned the Home office on behalf of at least two families whose relatives are constituents of mine in Coventry. To say that I received a brush-off from the officials at the Home Office is to put it mildly.

All I am asking it whether it is possible for the Minister of State to explain how, given the fact that some officials in his Department take 18 months to decide whether a refugee case is genuine, the Secretary of State can decide within 72 hours that not one of 64 cases is genuine, yet this evening those removals have been prevented. The House is at least entitled to a full explanation from the Minister of State of that enormous U-turn on those cases.

Mr. Speaker: None of that is a matter for me. It is not the role of the Chair to monitor matters of that sort. As I said earlier this afternoon, what is said from the Front Bench, provided that it is in order, is not a matter for me.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Having heard exactly what you said, may I very briefly, through you, ask the Leader of the House, or an hon. Member on the Government Front Bench to take back to the Leader of the House a request, for a statement later this evening or tomorrow on a matter of justice in the light of the court case?

Mr. Speaker: I am sure that that request will have been heard.

Social Security

10.17 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Nicholas Lyell): I beg to move,

That the draft Social Security (Payments on Account, Overpayment and Recovery) Regulations 1987, which were laid before this House on 4th February, be approved.

These regulations replace those which were laid by negative instrument on 17 December last. For reasons which are somewhat detailed and related to part II of the Social Security Act 1986, the regulations should have been laid as affirmative measures. This has now been done. That is why we are here tonight. The previous instrument was on sale for only four days. Arrangements have been made to ensure that anyone who bought a copy will be entitled to receive a copy of the final instrument without further charge.

On the matters of substance, I know that the House will welcome this opportunity to debate the several advances in principle and practice which have been achieved by means of this instrument. The first and most important of these advances is in the important area of harmonisation. One of our primary objectives has been to seek ways in which one can make life a little easier for the average claimant to find his way through the benefits wood.

The first objective has to be to identify rules which could be made common to all benefits and to combine the several tracks which have been carved out of the wood by means of the piecemeal introduction of individual benefits over the years. These regulations bring together in a single instrument various items of legislation that had previously been scattered across a wide range of instruments. The House will observe from the number of regulations, from previous enactments that we have been able to revoke in part I of the schedule to these regulations, that we have achieved considerable success in our pursuit of harmonisation. An assortment of about 15 regulations from four different Acts have been combined in one set of regulations under the 1986 Act.

Secondly, our aim has been to simplify, in a complex system of benefits such as has evolved in this country over a long period, a person's rights and obligations. Those rights and duties under one set of benefit rules may conflict with those which apply to some other benefit to which a beneficiary may also be entitled.

This is typified by the differences between the tests for recoverability of overpayments under the Supplementary Benefits Act 1976 and the Social Security Act 1975. The differences exist for largely historical reasons. Under the 1975 Act, the test applied by the adjudicating authorities is whether the claimant exercised due care and diligence in obtaining the benefit. For supplementary benefits, the adjudication officer must find that the person misrepresented or failed to disclose a material fact. Both tests have their own case law and where overpayments occur involving two benefits — for instance unemployment benefit and supplementary benefit — the application of different tests is confusing and may produce different results.

There is now to be a single test, and the argument for a single test is, I think, overwhelming. The test is to be the one now applied to supplementary benefit — that is, of misrepresentation or failure to disclose, and the provision of the test by way of section 53 of the Social Security Act 1986 was debated fully at the time that the Bill passed through the House. It was chosen as a single test for three reasons. First, it is less subjective and easier to understand and operate than the alternative test of due care and diligence. Secondly, it is the far more commonly used test — local offices deal with eight times as many supplementary benefit overpayments as the combined total of overpayments of other benefits. Finally, while use of the failure to disclose test provides some small savings from additional benefit recovered and rather more by way of staff time and other administrative costs, adoption of the due care and diligence test would result in substantial additional costs arising from extra staff time and administrative expenses.

No other changes arise from the adoption of the common test. Appeal rights remain unchanged. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will continue to exercise his discretion sympathetically in considering the extent to which recovery should be pursued. In considering how and whether to effect recovery, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will, as now, give due weight to factors such as the age and health of the beneficiary and the general financial circumstances of the family.

Turning to matters of individual regulations, the items which I shall be covering in detail are: interim payments, the sterling equivalents of payments made by foreign social security organisations, the diminution of capital, the recovery of one overpaid benefit from another benefit and changes arising from equal treatment of male and female claimants to benefit.

Regulations 2 to 4 deal with interim payments. Hitherto, interim payments have been made on an extra-statutory basis and, with these regulations, we have taken the opportunity to spell out the circumstances in which they can be made when we are unable to process and pay benefit in the usual way.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): Slow down a bit.

Mr. Lyell: I am sorry.

The sterling equivalents of payments made by foreign social security organisations — regulation 11 — are of particular fascination. As our links with Europe expand, this calculation is, and will increasingly become, a factor which has to be taken into account.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye) rose——

Mr. Lyell: As a European enthusiast, the hon. Gentleman will recognise that.

The need for a provision in the 1986 Act arose from a social security commissioner's decision. We have provided a solution which avoids any sophisticated calculations relating to exchange rates and making assessments of what would have been obtained by shopping around the banks —the sterling equivalent will be the actual net amount of sterling actually received by the claimant from the bank after paying any charges. This, then, will be the amount which is taken into account for offsetting purposes when calculating supplementary benefit entitlement under part IV of these regulations. That will be welcomed, even in Ross and Cromarty.

Mr. Kennedy: And Skye.

Mr. Lyell: And Skye.

Regulation 15 relates to a subject which was debated in Committee on the Bill when the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) tabled amendments on the assessment of diminution of capital. For the benefit of those less well versed in the darker corners of social security, the context is a person who has been overpaid supplementary benefit because he or she has failed to declare some or all of the capital assets. In calculating the overpayment, we assume that if we had not paid the benefit, the capital would have been eroded by similar amounts. Where the result would have taken the capital below £3,000, there would have been no overpayment and thus the amount repayable is limited.

In Committee, my hon. Friend the then Minister of State—the hon. Member for Braintree (Mr. Newton)—said that we would substitute for the present week-by-week recalculation of capital, which arose from case law, a regulation which provided for annual calculation. In the event, we thought that recalculation at yearly intervals would be unduly harsh and have made it a quarterly calculation. It will save a great deal of time working out the sum each week. It will affect very few people. Only when the overpayment period ends with a number of weeks less than 13 will the capital not be calculated as diminishing. But this will only have an effect on the much smaller number of cases where, during those few weeks, the capital would have fallen to below £3,000. So we only use this estimate of diminishing capital where it was not disclosed in the first place, and that is the reason for the overpayment. The solution that we have provided gives officials some respite from very detailed weekly calculation. The effect on those who have been overpaid will be negligible. Recovery of one overpaid benefit from another benefit is dealt with by regulation 16, which ensures, generally, that an overpayment of one benefit incurred by a person can be recovered from another benefit payable to him, except when it is paid to him on behalf of a child.

Finally, perhaps appropriately, in the context of this evening's earlier debate, equal benefit treatment of male and female claimants is covered by regulation 18. Regulation 18 is a consequence of equal treatment changes which enable partners to choose who shall be the head of the household for the purposes of claiming supplementary benefit or FIS. This regulation provides that, if partners switch eligibility in that way, any obligation to repay an overpayment will be similarly switched. The regulation is confined to supplementary benefit and FIS and does not provide for recovery from other benefits payable to the other partner.

I have tried to highlight some of the regulations that have attracted earlier attention during the passage of the 1986 Act from which they derive. The change to a single test for recoverability and the dropping of the due care and diligence provision created a number of interesting discussions in committee. The principle was, however, accepted and these regulations simply put the recovery process into context against the background of the single test which section 53 (1) of the Act provides.

For the rest, we have largely gathered together some scattered provisions relating to individual benefits. In the process we have tried, where possible, to present the regulations in plainer English, insofar as the powers in the Act permit. I commend the regulations to the House for approval.

10.26 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): I listened with interest to the Minister's recitation. It is not always given to the Opposition to see chickens come home to roost so speedily and thoroughly. This time last year, and for many weeks thereafter, we consistently warned the Government of the dangers of passing an enormous and unwieldy enabling Act, such as the Social Security Act 1986. Over and over again the Under-Secretary benefited by being absent from that Committee. We warned the Government over and over again of the dangers of leaving as much detail and policy as they were doing to the regulations, rather than submitting them to the greater scrutiny of the Standing Committee and of another place.

Indeed, so concerned were we about the inadequacy of the procedures for the amount of material that the Government were trying to force through that we offered them, towards the end of the Committee stage, a solution which they rejected in haste, but which I suspect they will repent at leisure. Indeed, we will all repent at leisure. As the now Minister may remember, we offered him the idea of amendable regulations, which he dismissed rather contemptuously as being an outdated notion inappropriate to this measure.

It has long been clear that this Government, more than any other in living memory, need amendable regulations. Time after time the Government put effective regulations before the House, and although I congratulate the Under-Secretary on the smoothness with which he passed over it, time after time they put illegal regulations before the House, as they have on this occasion.

The first set of regulations that the Government put before the House were ultra vires and had to be replaced by the regulations that we are debating tonight. What is interesting is that although the Government rejected the thesis of having amendable regulations, they have, in effect, through their continued incompetence, devised their own weird method of introducing amendable regulations. The regulations that are before us tonight, although they replace the set that were ultra vires, have been amended—only in comparatively minor ways—and, presumably, as the Government see it, improved from the first draft that was put before the House in December. It is a rather strange method of proceeding to introduce one set of regulations which were ultra vires and then hastily introduce a fresh set which are improved as we go along.

I have bad news for the Government. We fear that this second set of regulations may be defective, and I have a number of questions to put to the Minister. *[Interruption.]* I hear the Minister say "Oh, God". Regulation 3 allows an interim payment to be deducted either from benefit calculated later to be due or from the payment later made. I should like to draw the Minister's attention to regulation 3(b), which appears to suggest that if an interim payment has been made, and if it has not been subtracted from the money calculated to be paid, it must be deducted—the regulation says, in so many words, that the Secretary of State "shall" deduct it from benefit when it is paid—or —this is the new rule that the Government have introduced in the amending regulations — when next benefit is paid, which is sub-paragraph (ii).

It seems to us that perhaps this means that if someone receives an interim payment but it is not reclaimed at once, whatever the reason for that, it will be reclaimed the next time that benefit is claimed and awarded, even though that

[Mrs. Margaret Beckett]

may be in five years time. It is certainly an alteration from the provision that the Government submitted to the House in the first place, and I would be grateful if the Minister could tell us why the change has been made, because it might cast some light on the way in which we read it now.

Regulation 4 deals with the repayment of any overpaid interim payments. It appears that the effect of regulation 4(2) is to apply to all overpayments of an interim or advance payment the same regulations which, in other circumstances, apply only to an overpayment due to misrepresentation, whether fraudulently or otherwise. In other words, only an overpayment which has an effect, semi-deliberately or without due care and attention, is subject to the test under normal circumstances, but every interim overpayment seems to be subject to this test, which rests on someone misinterpreting or failing to disclose a material fact. That seems to be a little harsh and perhaps to be particularly inappropriate. An interim payment by definition, is made before the claim is fully completed or determined at a time when a person may not realise that a particular fact is material and is less in a position to be accurate about the representations being made. Can the Minister give the assurance that in practice an overpaid interim payment will not be so recovered unless it is clear that the failure was deliberate and not a consequence of the fact that an interim payment was being claimed?

I deliberately asked whether the Minister can give the assurance, rather than whether he will just consider it, because the other thing that appears to be the case with regulation 4 is that it seems that sums recovered under this regulation are not, as the regulations are drafted, excluded or exempted from action under regulation 3. It has been suggested to me that the interaction of regulations 3 and 4 means that the Secretary of State could still be under an obligation under regulation 3 to deduct money which in practice has already been recovered under regulation 4. I leave that thought with the Minister.

Regulations 5 to 12 seem broadly to reproduce the existing provisions——

Mr. Frank Field: Do we not know the answer to that? Although the Minister, at great speed, may have confused the House by saying that he was bringing different parts of Acts together, what the Government are doing is codifying it on the Social Security Act 1986, which made a major change, in that it disadvantaged claimants as no other group in the country. The rest of us can plead, often successfully, in court that we are unaware that we are breaking the law, but from now on, under the 1986 Act, claimants cannot do that and can still be found guilty. That is now being extended to all the other parts of the legislation that are covered by these regulations. Presumably, to the interim payments the answer will be no, because the Government want the new rule to be applied in a universal way to poor people in a way that it is not applied to anybody else.

Mrs. Beckett: My hon. Friend may be right in respect of one of the questions that I have raised with the Minister, in that it may be deliberate policy to decide to apply the same stringent test to interim payments. However, as I hope I have argued, in that case it is particularly inappropriate and even more unsuitable than in normal circumstances. However, I am not entirely sure, if we are correct in the way in which we read the regulations and there is an interaction of regulations 3 and 4, whether the Government had the intention that I have described, all the more so because they have amended regulations 3 and 4 between the regulations first being made in December and the second set being made in February. Clearly they were not happy with the regulations as first drafted. Whether they are happy with them as they have ended up is another matter, and one on which I am glad to say I do not have to pronounce.

Regulations 5 to 12 seem, as far as we can see, broadly to reintroduce the existing provisions. However, again I have a question for the Minister about regulation 13. Section 53(4) of the 1986 Act states that an overpayment is not recoverable unless the decision on which it was based has been revised, except where regulations provide. I presume that regulation 13 is that to which reference is made. In the regulation it says that that should not be the case except

"where the fact and circumstances of the misrepresentation or non-disclosure do not provide a basis for reviewing and revising the determination".

It is not clear why this exemption is thought to be necessary or in what circumstances it could apply. If the Minister can give us information about that, it would help us to understand why that regulation has been so drafted.

In regulation 14 the Government seem to have decided to enshrine in statute the decision of a tribunal of commissioners, so that if both an overpayment and an underpayment have occurred, one can be offset against the other, except where a potential underpayment may have occurred through a potential entitlement under the urgent cases regulations. That seems to mean that someone who may not have an entitlement ordinarily, but who would have an entitlement under the urgent cases regulations, will lose. That seems to be unfair. If it is necessary to look at the regulations for the third time, as may be the case, will the Minister consider that question?

Apart from the queries about the interaction of regulations 3 and 4, it seems that regulation 15(3) has its problems. I welcome the regulation itself. The Minister rightly identified it as coming from the work on the treatment of capital done by both sides in Committee. In paragraph (3) the definition given to a quarter seems to apply only to the first quarter of any overpayment period. Therefore, I question whether that is what the regulation is supposed to say. I note that even the amended schedule, which the Minister quoted with such pride, includes further items on the second set of regulations, one of which is defective. I take it that it is a printing error in column (2) on The Supplementary Benefit (Determination of Questions) Regulations. Apart from that, I see no further problems with the regulations.

I should like to seek one last assurance from the Minister. He referred to codifying all these changes and having one rule for a whole series of benefits. Whatever our reservations about that may be. We understand that that is the Government's intention. My hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) correctly identified that, unfortunately, the Government have chosen unquestionably the more stringent test, although we recognise, for the reasons that the Minister gave, that it is more widely used. I draw to the Minister's attention the report of efficiency study to his Department, which recommends that there should be one rule—this rule. However, the report also states:

"The main criticism of the test is that it is stringent and inflexible and takes no account of a beneficiary's personal circumstances."

In other words, the regulations set out how a repayment may be made, but take no account of whether it is reasonable in all the circumstances to call for a repayment on the scale that may be decided. That could be taken into account in the alternative test.

The report continues:

"There is in fact provision to take a beneficiary's personal circumstances into account, it exists in the form of the Secretary of State's discretion on whether or not to recover an amount overpaid. This discretionary power is, in our view, not being exercised as fully as it ought to be."

We endorse that. I hope the Minister can assure us that in view of the way in which these regulations are intended to have effect the Secretary of State's discretionary power will be recommended to officers and that they will be encouraged to take account of individual circumstances.

I end by quoting from a report by the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders on the "Enforcement of the Law Relating to Social Security" which draws attention to the fact that the claimant

"has the right to review, on grounds of hardship, not only at the time but also later, while deductions continue . . . We believe, however, that some of the tests applied are too stringent."

We endorse that and we understand the Government's wish, although we may be anxious about whether they have attained it in practice, to simplify this aspect of the operation of the social security system. We hope they recognise the difficulties that it will cause claimants and are prepared to encourage some ameliorative action.

10.39 pm

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): I wish to make a brief contribution to the debate. I do not wish to disappoint the Minister, but I doubt whether people will be dancing in the streets of Ross, Cromarty and Skye as a result of these regulations. I listened with care to the Minister's complex and detailed speech, and I congratulate whoever was responsible for drafting it. It must have been a tortuous exercise.

The regulations, according to the original Green Paper, "Reform of Social Security", are intended to make

"social security legislation much more compact, clear and manageable."

The problem facing the Minister was summed up in an article by Tony Lynes in *New Society* in 1985. That article, which appeared in the "Welfare Watch" column, entitled "Overpaid and under informed", stated:

"Ever since the ministries of health and social services were merged in 1968, the DHSS has looked and behaved more like two government departments than one. From a social security claimant's viewpoint, it can look more like seven or eight, each dealing with one part of the benefit system. And there is the added complication that the local unemployment benefit office does not belong to the DHSS but to the Department of Employment."

We should have some sympathy for Ministers when faced with that institution reality, but in many respects it is unsatisfactory. The regulations attempt to deal with some of the difficulties and confusions that result from the continued maintenance of the present system. That system goes against the stated intentions to simplify and clarify it.

When the Government, in their Green Paper, discussed their sensible desire to simplify the system, they said:

"the Government believe that more can be done to provide common rules for common, general purposes and that there is scope for greater consistency and overall simplification. This will assist staff, by making it easier for decisions to be taken more quickly and correctly. It will help claimants, by removing many perplexing oddities between benefits. It will make it easier to computerise the benefit system."

The Minister has suggested that fuller computerisation is likely to reduce some of the genuine errors that occur. Given the reports about the chaotic events that have attended the attempts to computerise the Inland Revenue, what progress has been made to computerise the social security system?

Some years ago a committee examined the concept and practicality of integrating tax and benefits and computerising those systems. The gentlemen in charge of the Inland Revenue said that the crucial practical matter was the selection of the computer configuration. What configuration has been selected? The evidence of the committee suggested that if a certain configuration was adopted, it would be impossible to change it on a subsequent date. In view of the unsatisfactory nature of ministerial division of responsibility across this whole front, that would make it impossible for any subsequent Administration to carry out what might be a very desirable integration of tax and benefits. I should be grateful if the Minister would clarify that, because, although slightly tenuous, it is a very important point and germane to the issue before the House. I refer to the efficiency study of 1983 on the recovery of overpayments of benefits and the rule which has been adopted. The report from the scrutiny team states:

"The result is that the line between 'due care and diligence' and the exercise of discretion by the Secretary of State has become blurred. The position may be reasonably satisfactory from the beneficiary's point of view but from the point of view of the Adjudication Officer, it is not: the question whether there has been 'due care and diligence' presents him with a complicated legal test to apply to variable facts, many of them not easily ascertained."

Does the Minister think that tonight's resolution will help in resolving that particular problem?

10.46 pm

Mr. Lyell: I congratulate the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) on the perspicacity of his observations, and the hon. Lady the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) on the perspicacity of her questions.

I agree that no one will dance in any streets if they have to read these regulations. They do have a certain fascination, they are important, and I did take them fairly speedily because they did not seem to be gripping the mass of the House. Nevertheless, important questions have been raised and I shall do my best to answer them.

The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye referred to the Department being divided up, in a sense, and said that the unemployment benefits officers act as our agents in the payment of benefits. That is well understood and has been working quite well in practice and does not give rise to difficulty.

The hon. Gentleman spoke about tax and social security benefits and computer configuration. I am venturing an answer off-the-cuff to some extent, but I fully understand the importance of these questions. I am responsible for what is known as the operational strategy for the computerisation of the entire system. I have had the pleasure and burden of looking in some detail into this issue, and the very question asked by the hon. Gentleman has been asked by me. As of this moment, and subject to correction, I have no reason to think that those, of

[Mr. Lyell]

whatever party, who might wish to seek to make greater integration between tax and benefits will find themselves frustrated. The lines are open.

That leads me into something at the root of the hon. Lady's questions, but I may be entirely wrong. The lines of inquiry outlined in the hon. Lady's perspicacious questions seemed familiar. Dealing with them in order, the important point about regulation 3 is that it sets out more clearly the way that interim payments have been brought to account in the past. Either the adjudication officer will deduct such a payment from the actual award or the Secretary of State will deduct it from payment for the same period, or, where that is not possible, from a later payment arising from the same claim.

The point that I wish to make on regulation 4(2), which I think bears on the hon. Lady's question, is that an overpayment of an interim payment will be recoverable if the claimant fails to disclose, or misrepresents, a material fact. This contrasts with the recovery of an interim payment under regulation 2(2), whereby any correct interim payment is repayable. It is important to stress this, because nobody will have to make a repayment unless there has been a misrepresentation or a failure by him to disclose.

I am sad that the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) has had to leave the Chamber, because he raised an important question which, if it were misunderstood, might trouble people more than it need. He suggested that here, uniquely, one would be unable to plead ignorance of the law and that one would find oneself faced with a test that one finds nowhere else. There are two tests, and we had to make a choice between the two. I hope I can say with confidence that we made the logical choice which anybody would have made, although I can understand the arguments against it.

There is nothing unique about this. It is far less harsh than other tests that are applied elsewhere. As will be well understood, ignorance of the law is not an excuse. I shall not go more deeply into that. Perhaps more pertinently, we might consider the position of the Inland Revenue. Overpayments or underpayments of tax are dealt with on a wholly no fault basis. There is no question of there needing to be a misrepresentation or a failure to disclose. If a person has not paid what he is required to pay, he is required to pay it, and there it is. The treatment here is not so bare or broad brush. That ought to be understood.

Mrs. Beckett: I should like the hon. and learned Gentleman to come back to what he was saying a moment ago about the purpose of regulation 2(2). If I understood him correctly, he said that it is the Department's view that the overpayment will be recovered in these circumstances if there has been misrepresentation, which would put the recovery of the overpayment of an interim payment on the same footing as the overpayment of any other benefit. That was how we first read the regulation. On re-reading it, we came to the conclusion that while that may have been, as we assumed, the Department's intention, we do not believe it to be the effect of the regulation. I think I ought to put that on the record. We think that the effect of the regulation as it is drafted, as opposed to what was intended, is to subject all interim payments to recovery in the same circumstances as apply under section 53.

Mr. Lyell: I shall repeat what I said. An overpayment of an interim payment will be recoverable if the claimant fails to disclose or misrepresents a material fact. This contrasts with the recovery of an interim payment under regulation 2(2), where any correct interim payment is repayable.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): This causes concern. I have a case to which I do not want to refer in detail because it has gone to appeal. The case that I have in mind involves the overpayment of a pension for some years before it was noticed by the Department. There is great concern about how much will be docked from the couple's pension. As I said, I do not want to refer to the details. At the end of the day I may bring it to the Minister's attention. It is accepted by everybody that no mis-information was given by the people, but that a genuine mistake was made. Now the old couple may have £6 or £7 per week taken from their pension for a considerable period. I hope that my hon. and learned Friend can reassure me that allowance can be made in such a situation.

Mr. Lyell: My hon. Friend will appreciate that the adjudicating and appellant authorities are entirely independent. Therefore, it would be inappropriate if I were to comment on a particular case, and he has rightly not done so. I shall refer back to one passage in my original speech which may be helpful to my hon. Friend. I referred to the fact that appeal rights will remain unchanged, and went on to say:

> "The Secretary of State will continue to exercise his discretion sympathetically in considering the extent to which recovery should be pursued. In considering how and whether to effect recovery the Secretary of State will, as now, give due weight to factors such as the age and health of the beneficiary and the general financial circumstances of the family."

I intend to be extremely careful not to say whether that applies to the case cited by my hon. Friend, but it falls within the context of my speech.

Turning to the questions raised by the hon. Lady, the point about regulation 13 is that, in general, an adjudication officer can consider an overpayment only when he is reviewing an award of benefit. Sometimes, however, there is nothing to review, but there is a need to consider misrepresentation or failure to disclose a material fact when a claimant has had an overpayment. This regulation simply provides for the adjudication officer to consider the overpayment question separately where the facts and circumstances do not allow for a review; for example, where the award had terminated at the time the overpayment came to light.

The key point to emphasise here is that no overpayment will be recovered, by definition, unless somebody has actually been overpaid; that is, paid something to which he had no entitlement. And it is not as bare and broad brush as that. Before there can be recovery of an overpayment, it must have happened, not because of a fault in the Department, but because there has been either misrepresentation or failure to disclose.

That is the position as it applies in the overwhelming majority of supplementary benefit cases and it is, in my submission, a reasonable test to apply and there are great benefits from commonality.

I commend the regulations to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Social Security (Payments on account, Overpayment and Recovery) Regulations 1987, which were laid before this House on 4th February, be approved.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102 (Standing Committees on European Community documents).

Semi-conductor Products

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 4133/86 on the legal protection of original topographies of semi-conductor products, and the Department of Trade and Industry's un-numbered explanatory memorandum of 22nd October 1986; endorses the importance attached to the protection of topographies; recognises the need for early decisions to ensure continued protection in the important American market; and supports the Government's decision to agree to the adoption of this instrument in the light of the undertaking by the European Commission that it will keep under review developments on reverse engineering and make proposals for further legislation as a matter or urgency as necessary.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Question agreed to.

SOUND BROADCASTING

Ordered,

That Mr. Gerald Howarth and Mr. Gregor MacKenzie be added to the Select Committee on Sound Broadcasting.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

NORFOLK AND SUFFOLK BROADS BILL

Question put,

That Mr. Robert N. Wareing be discharged from the Select Committee on the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Bill and Mr. Dave Nellist be added to the Committee. — *[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Objection taken.

To be considered tomorrow.

Breast Cancer Screening (Bolton)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now Adjourn.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

10.53 pm

Mr. Tom Sackville (Bolton, West): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise the subject of breast cancer, the cancer to which women are most vulnerable. It leads to 15,000 deaths a year and many lives—perhaps up to a third of those in the 50 to 70 age range—could be saved if an effective screening programme were provided and if those women who are most at risk could be persuaded to take advantage of it.

The interim report of the Forrest committee has confirmed that there is an urgent need for a screening programme and that mammography is the technique most likely to succeed. The final report of the Forrest committee and the Government's response are anxiously awaited. What I hope to hear is that the Government are able to provide funding for a number of health districts to run their own pilot schemes, but I also expect that Forrest's call for caution will be reflected. To attempt to run full tilt into schemes all over the country in health authorities which are not adequately prepared would lead to serious problems, of which cost would be only one.

Mammography is a sophisticated and specialised treatment. As Forrest says, it would not be sensible to introduce mammographic screening on a United Kingdom basis without providing the necessary back-up services to assess the abnormalities that would be detected.

My principal purpose tonight is to show why Bolton can provide the necessary back-up services and does fulfil the other criteria to run one of the pilot schemes. I believe this for the following reasons.

First, we have the expertise in Bolton to run a scheme. We have radiographers who are used to mammographic techniques, radiologists who are experienced in the interpretation of mammograms, surgeons and radiotherapists who are experienced in the management of breast disease, and pathologists who are experienced in the interpretation of needle biopsies and the localisation of minute breast tumours. For an authority which is not a centre of excellence or a teaching district, to have such a wealth of experience is rare.

Secondly, Bolton has access to substantial charitable funds, partly the balance of a highly successful charitable appeal started in 1985, mainly through the energies of my constituent Mrs. Lena Pickford — the Bolton breast scanner appeal — which resulted in the purchase of a breast scanner for the Bolton royal infirmary. I was persuaded by Mrs. Pickford to jump out of an aeroplane 2,000 ft above Blackpool airport to raise money for the appeal.

I am told that there are sufficient funds to equip a unit with most of the essential hardware. Space has been identified and only a limited amount of capital expenditure would be needed. I am also assured that many Bolton people and organisations have shown a willingness to contribute substantially to a charitable trust to offset part of the running costs of the service.

Thirdly, one of the spin-offs of the appeal and the massive publicity in the Bolton *Evening News* surrounding it is that women in Bolton are extremely aware of the problem of breast cancer and the need for vigilance. This is reflected in the increased attendance at the local breast

[Mr. Tom Sackville]

clinic. It is widely recognised that no screening programme is likely to succeed unless it achieves a 75 per cent. attandance. Otherwise it is unlikely to make a significant dent in the problem. It would be a pity to allow this heightened awareness to dissipate. Now is the optimum time to introduce a scheme in Bolton.

Fourthly, I emphasise that the introduction of a mammographic screening scheme in what might be called an ordinary district such as Bolton would be a most practical and cost-effective way of testing the Forrest report's recommendations and the practicability of its proposals before their wider application. If only centres of excellence are used, little will be learnt in a management sense and many of the problems that have occurred in trying to introduce a workable national cervical cancer call and recall scheme will be experienced yet again.

The chairman and members of Bolton health authority are highly motivated and involved. Under our general manager, Victor Peel, who is surely one of the most professional and forward-thinking managers in the NHS, the authority has gained a solid track record in encouraging, managing and monitoring new policies and clinical innovations. For example, Bolton runs one of the largest and most successful resettlement schemes for the mentally handicapped. Bolton has started to make sharp reductions in hospital waiting lists by using facilities in outside authorities and in the private sector. Bolton is a training district for new general managers and is one of the three training centres in England specialising in training staff to deal with AIDS.

In 1985, 78 women in Bolton died of breast cancer. There are more than 13,000 women between the ages of 50 and 60 in Bolton, the age group which would benefit most from the screening programme. Through the success of the appeal and in other ways, people in Bolton have shown that they are willing to do their bit to fight this dreadful disease. I appeal to the Minister to ensure that the Government recognise this achievement and designate Bolton as one of the pilot areas for a mammographic screening scheme.

11.4 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): I begin by congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville) on his success in the ballot and on raising this most important subject on behalf of his constituents. He is a determined and doughty fighter for his constituents in Bolton and he has shown a great interest in all health care matters. Correspondence on similar topics has also been received from my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham). I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, West will be happy if I acknowledge that fact.

The statistics on breast cancer that were produced by my hon. Friend are accurate. There are 15,000 deaths a year from breast cancer, and 24,000 new cases each year. It is the major premature killer of women in middle age. We think that lung cancer will soon catch up, but at the moment breast cancer is the major killer. However, my hon. Friend might not know that about 100 men die each year from breast cancer, so it is also an important issue for men.

Mass screening has not been introduced in the past because of serious scientific doubts about the effectiveness of the various methods. In 1979, therefore, the Government started to fund a long-term research programme that is still under way. The objectives of the United Kingdom trials have been to test the effectiveness of different methods, which have been funded to the tune of some £5 million in total—around £750,000 a year—and 250,000 women, aged betwen 45 and 64, are being looked after in eight centres round the country. I had the privilege recently of visiting one of those centres in Surrey. We are expecting a comprehensive report on those trials in 1988.

In 1985, a Swedish study was published that removed many of the doubts about the value of screening by one particular method—mammography, to which my hon. Friend referred. As a result, the then Minister for Health, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke), on behalf of other United Kingdom Health Ministers, set up in July 1985 an expert working group under the chairmanship of Sir Patrick Forrest, the Regius professor of surgery at Edinburgh university.

The remit of the Forrest group was, first, to review the available evidence and to consider the extent to which that evidence suggested that there should be a change in United Kingdom policy and, secondly, to set out the policy options, their costs and benefits and overall implications for the Health Service. They were briefed to do more than just look at the screening system. They were briefed to look at all the implications of introducing such a system and what this might mean in terms of treatment and other resources.

The interim report of the Forrest group was received in January 1986 and copies are in the Library of the House. The conclusions of the interim report were:

"There is a convincing case, on clinical grounds, for a change in United Kingdom policy on the provision of mammographic facilities and the screening of symptomless women"

aged 50 and over. The report made it quite clear that

"it would not be sensible to introduce mammographic screening on a United Kingdom basis without providing the necessary back-up services."

I think that answers my hon. Friend's point.

The final report, which sets out policy options, their costs and benefits and the implications for the Health Service, was presented to Ministers in November 1986. We are giving it the most careful study and we hope to respond shortly.

The trials that are under way have already produced a considerable amount of worthwhile information. The response rates to invitations to mammographic screening have been between 60 and 70 per cent.—Guildford 69 per cent and Edinburgh 64 per cent. The registers that are in use, which are based on the family practitioner committees' population registers, can never be completely up to date, so it is possible that the true response rates are higher. However, I picked up with interest an element in a letter from the district general manager of Bolton, Mr. Peel, in which he carefully said, and I think he is absolutely right:

"In starting such a screening programme it is important to recognise from the onset that at least 75 per cent. attendance rate must be obtained to show any significant improvement in the population. In view of the exceptionally successful Breast Scanner Appeal last year with considerable helpful local media coverage, Bolton is very 'breast conscious' as is

reflected in the increased number attending the breast clinic and now would be the best possible time to introduce such a scheme."

It is immensely encouraging that the health professionals in Bolton are aware that a screening system will not work unless a higher response rate is achieved.

We also know from experience with the cervical cancer programme that GPs have a key role to play in encouraging women to be screened, supported, of course, by appropriate health education. I was delighted to learn of the interest shown by GPs, as well as by women patients in Bolton, which suggests that all concerned would accept their responsibilities in that way.

The Forrest interim report drew attention to a most important constraint. It stated:

"To assess mammographic abnormalities and to reduce biopsies to a manageable number, expert diagnostic services are necessary. These include clinical examination, additional mammography, untrasonography and fine needle aspiration and cytology. These require the availability of a multidisciplinary team including, surgeons or other clinicians, radiologists and histopathologists skilled in the management of women with early cancers. These expert services are not generally available in the National Health Service at the present time."

For that system to be successful, screening and subsequent assessment and diagnosis and treatment would require expertise of a very high standard. We should need to build on the existing expertise, and I note Mr. Peel's assertion in his letter from which I have already quoted:

"We have the expertise in Bolton to run such a scheme."

I am delighted to learn that Bolton believes that it has experienced staff in the relevant disciplines. Indeed, Bolton has a Health Service of which it can be very proud. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, West mentioned, more in-patients are receiving care at the moment. In 1982, some 32,500 in-patients were cared for. That figure had risen to 35,289 in 1985, and that represents an 8 per cent. increase. Day cases have risen in that time from 3,900 to 4,400 and day patient attendances have risen from 16,900 to 21,900. Similarly over that period, out-patient attendances have increased from 174,000 to 200,000 and that is a 15 per cent. increase.

Those increases have occurred without an enormous increase in resources. The allocation of gross revenue expenditure in 1982-83 was £32,719,000. The figure this year is about £38,700,000. That is not an enormous increase, especially considering the demands on the Health Service in an area such as Bolton. The Bolton area has done extremely well with the money that has been allocated.

I listened with great interest to the suggestion made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, West that an inexperienced district health authority might be linked to an existing centre of excellence. In his letter to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, West, Mr. Peel stated:

"We would suggest a phased introduction of a mammography scheme using Bolton as one of the pilot Districts, would be the most practicable and cost effective way both of testing the Forrest Report's recommendations and practicability prior to wider application. We would strongly suggest that if only 'centres of excellence' are used then little will be learnt in the management sense, and many of the problems that have occurred in trying to produce a workable national cervical call and recall screening service would be experienced yet again."

Mr. Peel continues in his letter to state:

"There are 13,600 women in the 50-60 age group in Bolton which means approximately 100-120 mammograms a week using single oblique view only. If linking the Bolton district to another 'specialist centre' for the purpose of the trial would help the learning process we would be more than happy to do this."

I have made informal inquiries of the regional health authority which would be the appropriate body to decide these matters. The RHA praised the excellent work that has been done in connection with the appeal which involved my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, West falling out of an aeroplane, as he said earlier. The RHA informed me that for approximately the past two years there has been an appeal in the Bolton district to raise funds for equipment for breast cancer screening. The lady who launched the appeal originally suffered from that disease. It was anticipated that the campaign would raise approximately £25,000, but due to public interest, and press and media support, approximately three times that amount has been raised.

One mammography unit, a Mamex DC, was purchased in 1985 at a cost of about £26,000. It is intended to purchase a Mamex DC Mag, a rather more expensive version of the DC. The Department has evaluated this unit and eight others, and the working party will report in April.

I am sure that my hon. Friend would wish me to say how much everybody appreciates the enormous effort that has been made by all the people in Bolton. On behalf of all the people concerned—clinicians, professionals and local people—I congratulate the people of Bolton on raising this considerable sum of money—three times more than was expected. I know that they are continuing their fund-raising efforts. We are delighted to see how much support local people are willing to give to the Health Service. By so doing perhaps they express the gratitude that many people feel for the service that they get from our hospitals, clinics and other units.

The region goes on to say—and this must be the last word—that due to public support the clinicians in the district have been prompted to carry forward their interest to start a local mammography scheme. As the public interest is already founded in the district, they feel that they are in a good situation for a pilot scheme. However, the district health authority is concerned about starting the scheme not knowing from where future revenue moneys could be obtained and it is therefore awaiting the recommendations of the Forrest committee.

We shall take carefully into account what my hon. Friend has said. We are delighted to see his commitment and that of all his constituents and the professionals working in the Health Service to the Health Service. It is nice to see people who want to do more and do better for the Health Service by helping to raise the money. I am delighted that we have had this opportunity to discuss this important subject and I shall ensure that the issues raised are taken carefully into account when decisions are made.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at sixteen minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 18 February 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Brazil

1. **Mr. Jim Callaghan** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will seek to pay a visit to Brazil.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Eggar): My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans at present to pay a further visit to Brazil. However, my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office will visit Brazil from 19 March to 23 March.

Mr. Callaghan: I thank the Minister for his reply. Is he aware that Brazil has the largest foreign debt in the world —£104 billion—and an internal inflation rate of 450 per cent.? Is he further aware that if Brazil defaults on its payments it will create havoc in the world's banking and trading system? Given that our Chancellor is the hardest of all hawks in relation to Third world countries, what advice or assistance can the Minister give to help Brazil to stabilise its financial and trading affairs with the rest of the world and with this country in particular?

Mr. Eggar: We are, or course, aware of the debt problem that Brazil faces, but we welcome the strenuous efforts that have been made by the Brazilians to meet their repayment obligations. We are entirely convinced that an IMF agreement offers the best route to long-term economic recovery. We are, of course, confident of Brazil's long-term economic potential.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: On this crucial matter, will my hon. Friend bear in mind that it is pointless to ask Brazil to pay a rate of interest higher than 6 per cent. on its debt, because a higher rate would be wholly incompatible with the minimum growth rate required to provide a degree of economic opportunity for its population, without which democracy cannot be sustained?

Mr. Eggar: I recognise my hon. Friend's great knowledge of the problems that Brazil faces. I am not sure that I go all the way with him in his assumptions about the maximum interest rate, but we have, of course, welcomed the accord on official debt that was reached at the Paris Club meeting of Brazil's creditors in January.

Mr. Foulkes: Does the Minister agree that Brazil represents a great opportunity for British trade and investment, particularly in view of recent reports that the Arabs are about to pull out? Will he confirm that he has received representations regarding the lack of Export Credits Guarantee Department cover? Have he and his colleagues been able to persuade their colleagues in other Departments to consider restoring this important element in our trade with Brazil?

Mr. Eggar: I welcome the importance that the hon. Gentleman attaches to inreasing our trade with Brazil. As I am sure he is aware, Brazil is already our largest market in Latin America, but we need to increase our market share even further. As a result partly of the Paris Club meeting in January and the agreement to which I have referred, we are giving close attention to how that agreement affects our policy on export credits.

Hong Kong

2. **Mr. Sims** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects the new Governor of Hong Kong to take up his post.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Sir Geoffrey Howe): Sir David Wilson will take up his duties as Governor of Hong Kong on 9 April.

Mr. Sims: Will my right hon. and learned Friend assure Sir David that when he takes up his duties he will carry with him the good wishes of the many hon. Members who are friends of Hong Kong, particularly at this difficult stage in Hong Kong's history? Will my right hon. and learned Friend also consider easing Sir David's path as he takes up his duties by taking an international initiative to ease the problem of Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong, a problem that has existed for many years and is imposing upon the people of Hong Kong a burden of £10 million per year, not to mention the human suffering and misery involved?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I shall be glad to convey to Sir David Wilson the good wishes and support of the whole House as he embarks upon his difficult task. I know that he, together with Her Majesty's Government, will consider the particular problem of the refugee camps that has been raised by my hon. Friend. It is right to say that this long-standing problem, which has given rise to a great deal of difficulty and personal hardship, has been getting better over the years. Even last year, the numbers in the camps dropped by about 1,400 to a figure just in excess of 8,000 —itself much lower than the 12,000 some four years earlier. Nevertheless, we are actively considering what more might be done to help in that respect, and it is certainly a matter that can benefit from international consideration.

Mr. Faulds: Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman accept that all parties in the House wish Sir David all the very best in his new job, realising that he is just one of a distinguished line of recent governors? Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman please take very carefully to heart the fact that Britain is in duty and in honour bound to do considerably more than she has been doing to help relieve the difficult and intractable problem of the suffering of the Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I welcome what the hon. Gentleman said in the first half of his question, and I take note of the emphasis that he places on the importance of addressing ourselves to the problem under discussion.

Sir Peter Blaker: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that, despite recent political changes in China, the policy of the Government of China towards Hong Kong remains the same as it has been—that is, the policy set out in the joint declaration and agreement of two years ago? Will he confirm that he expects that situation to continue and that there is therefore every ground for continued optimism about the future of Hong Kong?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am glad to be able to respond to my right hon. Friend in the way that he would hope. I think that the whole House will have welcomed the statement of the Chinese Prime Minister, Mr. Zhao Ziyang, that China's internal and external policies will not be affected by recent events. In particular, a number of Chinese Government spokesmen have emphasised that China's policies towards Hong Kong will not be affected.

Mr. Anderson: Sir David will know that he carries with him the good wishes of the whole House. On the question of direct elections, will the Foreign Secretary state what construction he places on the warnings, both by senior officials and in magazines, that direct elections, if implemented, might be halted after 1997? Will he reassure the people of Hong Kong that if the internal consultation process in Hong Kong this year shows a clear majority in favour of an element of direct elections it will indeed come about? Will he also make it crystal clear to Beijing that although we shall, of course, work very closely with the Chinese Government, we in Britain remain in effective control of the territory until 1997?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand, of course, the importance that the whole House and, indeed, the Government of the People's Republic of China attach to the maintenance of Britain's responsibility for administration until 1997. As the hon. Gentleman knows, direct elections are one of the issues being considered in the review by the Hong Kong Government of the further development of representative government. It would not be right for me to try to anticipate the outcome. It is a genuine and objective review, in which the views of the Hong Kong people will be taken fully into account. I am equally confident, in this as in other respects, that it is possible for the British and Chinese Governments to take full account of each other's concerns as well as those of the people of Hong Kong.

Poland

3. **Mr. Stevens** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's relations with Poland.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Tim Renton): Recent contacts with Poland have included a meeting between my right hon. and learned Friend and the Polish Foreign Minister at the United Nations General Assembly in September, and my visit to Warsaw from 5 February to 8 February. We intend to continue an active dialogue in which human rights and the need for national reconciliation in Poland will play a major part.

Mr. Stevens: I thank my hon. Friend for that encouraging reply. Does he regard today's news that the United States Government are to lift some economic sanctions on Poland as encouraging? What are the prospects of the Polish Government ceasing to jam broadcasts to Poland by the BBC world service?

Mr. Renton: I raised this matter specifically with Mr. Olechowski the Polish Deputy Foreign Minister, during my visit, and this morning in the course of a discussion with Mr. Urban, the Polish Government press spokesman. It was denied that the Polish Government jammed BBC broadcasts in Polish, but I was assured that it was not the Polish Government's intention to "disturb" BBC broadcasts. I use the word "disturb" deliberately because that is the word that was used. Mr. Urban told me that on his return to Poland he would investigate the sources of any disturbance and would take steps aimed at ending it.

Mr. Freeson: Did the Minister discuss with the Polish representatives the recently revealed shameful policy of successive British Governments since 1948 in failing to pursue Nazi war criminals who carried out terrible acts on Polish territory and the revelations that we assisted the departure of war criminals responsible for such conduct in Poland and other territories to safe haven in the United States? Is that why the Mengele file was not published, for sensitive reasons, a year or so ago?

Mr. Renton: The hon. Gentleman has made wide-ranging allegations that go far beyond any evidence that has ever been put before this or any other Government. He has raised matters of great seriousness and if he cares to write with full details to me or to other Ministers we shall consider very carefully what he says.

Mr. Galley: Does my hon. Friend see any prospects for the development of further democracy in Poland and for improvements in human rights? On the latter point, the amnesty on political prisoners last year was very welcome, but a number of opponents of the regime are still held on minor, supposedly criminal, offences. Perhaps the most celebrated case is that of the Krakow leaflet bombers. Does my hon. Friend believe that there is now a more enlightened attitude on human rights issues in Poland?

Mr. Renton: During my visit to Warsaw I raised specifically the question of the 18 prisoners who are still detained, following the release of substantial numbers of political prisoners last autumn. In the case of those 18, there certainly seems to be evidence of a political nature either in the charges brought against them or in the sentences that they have received. The Polish authorities have promised to send me full information about those 18 cases, which I will examine further when I receive it.

On the more general question, I believe that Poland is at the crossroads, as so often in the history of that troubled nation. The Polish authorities have released many thousands of political prisoners, but it is hard to detect any true democracy or pluralism as we see it emerging either in the Polish trade union movement or in the new consultative council. These are developments which, with our long-standing friendship with the Polish nation, we shall be watching very carefully.

Strategic Defence Initiative

4. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his assessment of the policy implications for the United Kingdom of an early deployment of the strategic defence initiative; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The policy implications of deployment would include those identified in the agreement reached by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and President Reagan at Camp David in 1984. Meanwhile, the strategic defence initiative remains a research programme. No early deployment of strategic defences appears to be in prospect.

Mr. Wallace: Given that the Foreign Office is reported to have said that the United States is willing to continue consultation with its European allies on arms control issues, including any possible conflict between SDI and the anti-ballistic missile treaty, does the Foreign Secretary of State not think it important that Her Majesty's Government should clarify their position as to the interpretation of that treaty in relation to deployment and to testing and development? Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman take this opportunity to say that the Government support the narrow interpretation of the treaty?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The House will understand the importance which Her Majesty's Government and the Alliance attach to the ABM treaty. The interpretation of it—I emphasise the word "interpretation"—is a matter for the two signatories to the treaty. The way in which it has been applied is a matter of importance, quite apart from whatever the lawyers may say. The House will recollect the statement made by Secretary of State Shultz to the North Atlantic Assembly in October 1985 drawing attention to the distinction between the broad and the narrow interpretation. He then said:

"our SDI research program has been structured and, as the President has reaffirmed last Friday, will continue to be conducted in accordance with a restrictive interpretation of the Treaty's obligations."

That is the basis on which the research programme has been conducted heretofor. Yesterday, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said:

"If they change what has hiterto been understood to be the interpretation, yes, we do ask for consultation because that has considerable effect upon the arms control negotiations that are taking place in Geneva".

Thus far, quite apart from the lawyers' analysis, the programme has been conducted on the basis of the narrow interpretation. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has made it clear, as I have done—she said this at the Anglo-Italian summit last week—that

"our main message to the United States is please consult your other allies in NATO on this matter of vital importance to us all."

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that may of us who support the concept of anti-missile defence and the need for Britain to take part in the research programme have grave reservations about the way in which President Reagan launched this initiative and are extremely cautious about early implementation without the widest possible consultation within the NATO Alliance?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand that the programme gives rise to a wide divergence of views on both sides of the House. The one thing about which there is unanimous agreement is the importance of the ABM treaty and of consultation about any change in the way in which it is applied.

Mr. Deakins: Do the Government oppose the early or subsequent deployment of the SDI? If so, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman explain why?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As was agreed between my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and President Reagan at the first Camp David meeting, deployment

"would in view of treaty obligations have to be a matter for negotiations."

As I said in my original answer, deployment is not a matter about which any decision has been taken. No decision is imminent or likely to be imminent for a considerable time.

Sir Anthony Kershaw: Will my right hon. and learned Friend impress upon the American Government the importance of having an agreed interpretation of the treaty? Should we rely upon Mr. Shultz's interpretation, or on that of Mr. Adelman, who is now temporarily in charge?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It has been made clear that because of the importance of the ABM treaty as part of the framework within which arms control negotiations are being conducted there should be agreement about the interpretation or at least the basis on which the treaty is being applied and interpreted.

Dr. Owen: As the Foreign Secretary knows, the Secretary of State for Defence has already made the Government's position clear. He said:

"we very much welcomed the US commitment to pursue its SDI research programme in accordance with a strict interpretation of the ABM treaty".—[*Official Report*, 19 February; Vol. 92, c. 336.]

Why is the right hon. and learned Gentleman so shy of reaffirming the view that he, the Foreign Office and the Secretary of State for Defence have constantly put forward, namely that the strict interpretation is being applied? The United States has already told the Soviet Union in Geneva that it wishes to change the interpretation. Why will the Foreign Secretary not say that that is a retrograde step and a retrospective interpretation of the treaty, which the British Government do not support?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The right hon. Gentleman need not go as far back as 1986 or to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence to seek affirmation of our endorsement of the President's application of the narrow interpretation. I made the same point in my speech to the International Institute a fortnight ago.

I repeat what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said to the House yesterday:

"If they change what has hitherto been understood to be the interpretation, yes, we do ask for consultation because that has considerable effect upon the arms control negotiations that are taking place in Geneva".—[*Official Report*, 17 February 1987; Vol. 110, c. 764.]

Dr. Owen: A change has been made.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It is wrong for the right hon. Gentleman to assert that a change has been made. Some are arguing for change, but it is clear that no change has been made. It is equally clear that it is important that consultation should take place.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Does my right hon. and learned Friend recall the speech that he made on SDI to the Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies in 1985, when he raised a number of doubts about SDI and, in particular, about the instability that might result from deployment of a partial defensive system? Has my right hon. and learned Friend had answers to the important questions that he raised in that speech, particularly with

regard to the possible vulnerability of our continent of Europe if a defensive system were to be deployed by the United States?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I well remember the important speech that I made—it was rather a good one—and I made another on the same topic two weeks ago. Clearly, those important questions still require consideration as the SDI research programme proceeds on both sides of the iron curtain. For that reason, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister agreed with President Reagan that SDI-related deployments should be a matter for negotiation because of the importance of the ABM treaty.

Mr. Healey: Does the Foreign Secretary agree that Mr. Shultz said that the United States believes that the broad interpretation of the ABM treaty is justified, even though for the time being—he said this some time ago—the United States will, in its conduct, adhere to the strict interpretation? Has the right hon. and learned Gentleman made any response to the gratuitous insults that were heaped on him by Mr. Perle and Mr. Adelman every time he suggested that the Reagan Administration should stick to the undertakings that they gave the Prime Minister at Camp David? Why has the Prime Minister consistently undermined the right hon. and learned Gentleman's efforts and those of the Secretary of State for Defence to persuade the United States to adhere strictly to the terms of the ABM treaty? The right hon. Lady said yesterday that she had no right to have a view on this because she had not read the negotiating record. Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that if the United States were to carry out tests in its star wars programme in outer space it would violate the ABM treaty and seriously jeopardise all hopes of disarmament?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The right hon. Gentleman is right to remind the House, as I think I did earlier, that the United States—not only Mr. Schultz, but others—has contended that the broader interpretation is one that can be upheld. It also said that it would continue to conduct the SDI research programme within the narrower interpretation—*[Interruption.]* The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) persists, rather uncharacteristically, in interrupting from a sedentary position. I must tell him that the White House spokesman has made it clear, and it has been reaffirmed since, that no decisions have been made on development and deployment. That has been affirmed today by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence after his meetings in Washington yesterday. It is a matter of importance about which consultation is clearly necessary and will clearly be forthcoming.

As for the allegedly insulting observations of Mr. Adelman and others, after 12 years in opposition to the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) I am well inured to resisting absurd and insulting remarks of every kind. I brush them aside with the contempt that they deserve.

Arms Control Talks

5. **Mr. Nicholas Baker** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to be able to announce further developments in the Geneva arms control talks.

7. **Mr. Soames** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the latest progress in arms control talks.

Mr. Renton: The current round of the Geneva nuclear and space talks began on 15 January and has several weeks still to run. The negotiations for a comprehensive ban on chemical weapons resumed on 3 February. In December last year we and our NATO allies proposed distinct negotiations on conventional arms control, one on confidence building, the other on conventional stability in Europe.

Mr. Baker: Will my hon. Friend ensure that the closest attention is paid to the inclusion in any agreement arising from these talks of provisions for detailed verification? Will he draw to the attention of the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Heeley) Mr. Gorbachev's recent rejection of a policy of one-sided disarmament? Does my hon. Friend agree that if any Government were so misguided as to adopt that policy the continuation of these talks would be unlikely?

Mr. Renton: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Proposals on detailed verification are essential to all the arms reduction talks that are currently in train. During the Vienna talks on mutual and balanced force reductions in December 1985 the West made proposals for force reductions, to which were attached detailed proposals for verification by on-site inspection. It is regrettable that so far the Warsaw Pact countries have failed to reply to those proposals.

Mr. Soames: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is important for the cohesion of the Alliance that no new negotiating positions are taken by the Americans without the fullest and frankest discussion with their NATO allies?

Mr. Renton: In recent months the Americans have consulted widely with their NATO allies about the proposals that they are putting forward in Geneva and in the other forums. There has been a sign of the Americans' willingness — indeed, instinct — to carry their NATO allies with them as we move on in 1987, a year which obviously could be crucial for arms control talks. To make these talks succeed, which is our earnest hope, the United States wants fully to consult its NATO allies.

Mr. James Lamond: With regard to the negotiations on the reduction in chemical weapons, to which the hon. Gentleman referred, will he tell us whether the Americans agreed to have on-site inspection of chemical weapons manufacturing plants, including those that are privately owned?

Mr. Renton: Yes. The Americans have tabled the most comprehensive proposals for challenge inspection, including on-site inspection, of any party to the conference on disarmament and the chemical weapons discussions in Geneva. The British proposal, which we tabled last July, is also a stringent regime on verification. In essence, it modifies some of the American proposals, while insisting on a very stringent verification regime. The Americans, as part and parcel of this regime, have accepted that there should be on-site inspection of the civil chemical industry.

Mr. Wilkinson: Does my hon. Friend agree that an important element in the overall arms control equation is the balance in short-range nuclear delivery systems? Does he agree that the Soviet Union is continuing to deploy an

increasing number of SS21s, SS22s and SS23s, which directly threaten the south-eastern corner of this country and much of western continental Europe? Will my hon. Friend confirm that, unless these systems are withdrawn, it should be the policy of the Government with their NATO allies to deploy anti-ballistic missile defences—ATBMs—to counter this growing threat?

Mr. Renton: As my hon. Friend, who is a considerable expert on these subjects, knows well, obviously this is of great concern to countries in central Europe, such as the Federal Republic of Germany. For that reason, in bringing forward suggestions for an agreement that would essentially remove the long-range intermediate nuclear weapons from Europe—an agreement which we believe could be achieved this year and which is certainly worth going for—we and our NATO allies have insisted that parallel constraints must be negotiated on the short-range weapons.

Mr. George Robertson: On the subject of the chemical weapons negotiations, will the Minister confirm that yesterday the Soviet Union accepted much of the British proposal for a chemical weapons treaty at Geneva, especially in regard to on-site inspection, but that so far the United States of America has rejected the British compromise proposal which was tabled last year, as the hon. Gentleman said? Last week, Mr. Richard Perle launched a major attack on the British position following the attack on the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary for "his mealy-mouthed evasions". Who precisely is on Britain's side in trying to get an agreement on this vital and critical issue in Geneva?

Mr. Renton: I have also seen the proposals, or rather the newspaper reports of the proposals, that the Russians tabled yesterday. In terms of inspection of the chemical weapons sites that produce the weapons, those proposals look interesting and worthy of closer examination. I remind the hon. Gentleman that the United States' proposals on challenge inspection, which are at the heart of the verification procedures, are more radical and stringent than those of any other country. The question now is whether the proposals that we have put forward, which will none the less demand a stringent inspection regime, but give the challenge country an opportunity to satisfy the challenger by other quick means, form a basis on which a ban on chemical weapons can be achieved.

I also remind the hon. Gentleman that, at Camp David in November, President Reagan and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made as one of their points the insistence on a chemical weapons ban. This is one of their priorities. I do not think that in his remarks in London the other day Mr. Perle was speaking for the United States Administration.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend agree that in any arms control talks the research and development of a new generation of weapons or of anti-weapons systems become an increasingly important element in negotiations? Does he agree that one will not get any give from the other side unless one has tabled something to get it, and that that is one area in which SDI and other developments could become more important as time goes on?

Mr. Renton: Yes, that is obviously a point for argument. One could follow on from that and say that the NATO countries' decision in 1979 to deploy cruise and Pershing missiles in the western European countries was what had brought the Soviet Union to the negotiating table today.

Italy

6. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the current state of the United Kingdom's relations with Italy.

Mr. Eggar: Anglo-Italian relations are excellent. The summit meeting in London on 11 February was constructive and friendly. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced on that occasion that President Cossiga has accepted an invitation from Her Majesty The Queen to visit this country from 17 to 20 November 1987.

Mr. Janner: On that occasion, were there discussions between Her Majesty's Government and the representatives of the Italian Government about the apparent differences in the ways in which Italy and the United Kingdom deal with terrorists? In particular, were there any discussions and, if so, what was their result, about the reported release of a terrorist called Hindawi, who is the brother of the terrorist who is in prison in this country?

Mr. Eggar: There was a re-affirmation of the commitment to the anti-terrorist measures agreed by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and by Signor Craxi at the summit. There is effective multilateral and bilateral co-operation with Italy on terrorism.

Turning to the hon. Gentleman's specific question about Mr. Hindawi, we understand that he was released from prison at the end of January because of a lack of evidence to substantiate the charge against him of membership of an armed band. He is currently on bail pending the consideration of evidence against him relating to lesser charges that include the possession of explosives. It is not known when or whether charges will be brought against him.

Mr. John Mark Taylor: Does my hon. Friend agree that while it is of the highest importance to be on good terms with Italy, it is also necessary to be vigilant about the unfair import penetration from that country, and necessary to stiffen the resolve of the European Commission to police it?

Mr. Eggar: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Skinner: When the Minister meets the Italian representatives he may notice their jauntiness, especially regarding the state of their economy in relation to Britain's. If he asked for a look at the books he would discover that Italy's foreign convertible currency reserves are greater than Britain's after seven years of Thatcherism, and that the lira is stronger than the pound on the forward exchange markets. Does that not say more about Britain's policy, economic and foreign, than almost anything else?

Mr. Eggar: No, it shows the hon. Gentleman's fundamental misunderstanding of economic statistics.

Mr. Skinner: It is all in the *Financial Times*.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The House will be interested to hear about the wide range of the hon. Gentleman's reading.

Conference on Security and Co-operation (Vienna)

8. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement of progress at the current Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe review conference in Vienna.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Vienna meeting has now moved on from the review of implementation to discussion of new initiatives. On 4 February, together with the other Western countries, our delegation tabled an ambitious three-stage action programme designed to ensure concrete progress on human rights, not only at Vienna, but thereafter.

Mr. Atkinson: Although we must all be encouraged by what Mr. Gorbachev has been saying recently, does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the true test is the full implementation by the Soviet Union of the Helsinki Final Act, not least its human rights provisions? Will he consider tabling further initiatives at Vienna to allow for the guaranteed protection of Helsinki monitoring groups and for citizens of all the participating states to have the right of individual petition to a human rights commission within the Helsinki process? That would show that Mr. Gorbachev means business.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I welcome and understand my hon. Friend's endorsement of the importance of the Helsinki monitoring groups. Like him, we look for action to deliver the consequences of the words spoken on human rights by the Soviet Union. The proposals that we have tabled at the Vienna conference contain ideas to deal with the problems to which my hon. Friend referred. The first stage would provide arrangements whereby Governments and other interested groups could raise individual grievances along the lines that my hon. Friend has in mind.

Mr. Beith: Is it not important that there should be a positive response from the West to the limited, but nevertheless very important, actions which have been taken by Mr. Gorbachev in pursuit of his words, if only to make it clear to those who might challenge what he is doing that the achievement of real progress on human rights, while there are still thousands in prisons and psychiatric camps for reasons of conscience, is fundamental to the West's perception of whether we can do business with the Soveit Union?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The whole House will agree with the hon. Gentlman. There has been a widespread welcome for the decisions and actions that have taken place in the direction of improving respect for human rights and setting individual people free on a significant scale, but we must always remember that that is only a small portion of the much larger problem with which we want the Soviet Union and its allies to deal.

Mr. Lawrence: Although we all appreciate and welcome the improved intentions on human rights from the Soviet Union, on implementation, is there any evidence that the Soviets are allowing more refuseniks to leave the Soviet Union, that they are releasing prisoners of conscience from imprisonment and that they are allowing greater freedom of religion and religious culture in the Soviet Union?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It is a matter of making a careful judgment. There has been some improvement in respect of the treatment of individual cases. There has been an improvement, for example, although in a different area, with the ending of the jamming of the BBC Russian service. But all this takes place from a wretchedly low base. Massive abuses still exist. The January figures for Jewish emigration remained modest. There is vast room for improvement in all these matters, including attitudes towards religious and political dissent, and we await with interest a fulfilment of the promises.

Mr. Winnick: Should we not warmly welcome the progress that has been made during the past few months, with the apparent release of 140 prisoners? One hopes that the Soviet Union will follow this with the release of all those who have been imprisoned because of their political or religious beliefs. Would not the views of Conservative Members be taken more seriously if their anxiety about human rights was not confined to Eastern Europe, but included countries such as Chile?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Having started off not too badly, the hon. Gentleman relapsed to his customary form at the end. Let us draw together both sides of the House on this. Of course we all welcome the fact that individuals are being freed and that there is some movement in the direction of more respect for human rights by the Soviet Union. We do not yet even know that all the 140 people identified to be freed have been freed. Let us welcome what has happened, but let us never cease to remind the Soviet Union that there is a great deal more to be done.

Mr. Sackville: Does my right hon. and learned Friend welcome the announcement last night of the release of Dr. Anatoly Koryagin? Does he agree that the release of a small number of prominent dissidents and political prisoners, and their consequent removal from Western news bulletins, does not of itself denote a real alteration in the stance of the Soviet Union towards dissidents?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It is right to be both welcoming and wary. It is good in human terms that some releases have taken place, and it is good if they foreshadow much bigger change, but the changes have a disproportionately large impact on media reception in the West. Let us welcome what has happened, but let us go on pressing for a great deal more of a much more fundamental kind to happen.

Central America (Mr. Madrigal)

9. **Mr. Rogers** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response the Government gave to Mr. Madrigal, Foreign Minister of Costa Rica, when he visited London to discuss his proposal for a new initiative in Central America.

Mr. Eggar: When Senor Madrigal called on my right hon. and learned Friend to explain Costa Rica's position, he reaffirmed our strong and active support for a political solution to the problems of the region.

Mr. Rogers: At the recent Contadora conference only four EC Ministers out of 13 turned up. Does that not show the level of priority that is accorded to peace in Central America, or have we just been told by the United States to keep our nose out?

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Gentleman is misinformed. All the EC countries were represented by senior Ministers. The fact that senior Ministers were prepared to travel to Guatemala from Europe for an important two-day conference shows the tremendous importance that is attached by EC Ministers to the Contadora process.

Mr. Key: Will my hon. Friend do all that he can to continue the strong and independent line by the British Government in pursuit of the Contadora process? Does he agree that one of the biggest problems is that the very size of the Nicaraguan army is a cause for fear amongst many neighbouring Latin American countries?

Mr. Eggar: We are deeply concerned about the situation in Central America and we are working constructively for peace, democracy and economic development. But we have to point out—it is regrettable that the Opposition do not join in pointing this out—that the Sandanista military forces are currently around 70,000. They receive considerable support from the Soviet bloc and they have a significant number of Cuban military and security advisers. That is not a way to promote peaceful evolution in the area.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Did the Minister discuss with the Costa Rican Foreign Minister the reasons for the size of the Nicaraguan forces? In particular, did he discuss the pivotal role of the United States in funding the Contras in their campaign of loot, rape and pillage, both against innocent civilians in Nicaragua and the Sandanistas?

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Gentleman is extremely selective in the way in which he refers to the position in Nicaragua. I wish that he and other Opposition Members would share our desire to establish a full pluralist democracy with Nicaragua and would join us in urging a reduction in the massive quantities of Soviet weaponry already supplied, in urging Nicaragua to reduce subversion in neighbouring countries, in urging the Sandanistas to respect fully human rights and in urging them to restore full civil liberties, including a free press, the right to strike, the return of exiled Church leaders and full implementation of a new constitution.

Mr. Bowen Wells: Will my hon. Friend give the result of the recent visit of Baroness Young to Guatemala in progressing the Contadora process, which was under discussion?

Mr. Eggar: The conference served the useful purpose of bringing together all the Central American Foreign Ministers and their European and Contadora colleagues. The joint communiqué, with which my hon. Friend will be familiar, reaffirmed support for a peaceful negotiated settlement on the basis of the Contadora objectives.

Mr. Flannery: Does the Minister accept that, in addition to having a freely elected Government—that is a fact—Nicaragua has a population smaller than that of Yorkshire? The idea that it is a menace or a threat has been thought up by the ailing President Reagan, who is sending armaments on a grand scale. I wish that the Minister would listen to what I am saying and make it clear to the Americans that we have nothing in common with the comments of Mr. Shultz, who said the other day that he thought that eventually America would attack Nicaragua.

Mr. Eggar: As usual, the hon. Gentleman is highly selective in his views of events in Nicaragua. For instance, Nicaragua has adopted a new constitution—that is quite correct—but why, within hours, did it suspend civil rights and guarantees for human freedoms?

Mr. Wilkinson: Did the Costa Rican Foreign Minister discuss with his British counterpart the oppressive treatment of the Miskito Indians by the Sandanistas? Did the Costa Rican Minister welcome the presence of Her Majesty's forces in Belize and suggest that they remain there notwithstanding the resumption of diplomatic relations between London and Guatemala?

Mr. Eggar: Those matters were not raised on this occasion, but of course they are raised in normal diplomatic discussions.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the Minister tell the truth about the position in Central America and admit that the cause of the conflict, the war and the suffering, is the obsession of President Reagan and his Administration to destroy the process of social improvement and social revolution that is occurring in Nicaragua? President Reagan is frightened of the example that that will set to other poor and starving people throughout Latin America. It is time that the British Government came off the fence and properly supported and recognised the democratic Government of Nicaragua.

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Gentleman is displaying the normal blinkered way in which he approaches matters on the international stage. The blinkered look that he has adopted towards Nicaragua is the same as that which he has adopted towards Afghanistan when he has welcomed the so-called regime's peace initiative and condemned the actions of the Afghan resistance——

Mr. Corbyn: I did not mention Afghanistan.

Mr. Eggar: —as the hon. Gentleman has done in early-day motions on the Order Paper.

Mr. Foulkes: Does the Minister not accept that while this elaborate tangle of talks takes place innocent civilians —women and children—are dying directly as a result of United States-funded terrorism? Will the British Government have some guts for once and use their undoubted influence with the Americans to stop this war, which is increasingly seen as being waged to humour an increasingly dangerous and senile President?

Mr. Eggar: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will pause and reflect on the terms of that question. It is extremely serious for an Opposition Front Bench spokesman to make an accusation and use such words.

With regard to Central America we continue to advocate a political solution while, at the same time, expressing our concern at the direction of the Sandanista Government and their unwillingness to reach a peaceful conclusion to the problems in Nicaragua.

Soviet Union

10. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will seek to arrange discussions on disarmament with representatives of the Government of the Soviet Union.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton), had extensive discussions on arms control during his visit to the Soviet Union in January. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will also discuss arms control, among other issues, during her forthcoming visit to the Soviet Union. I see no need to arrange further specific talks in the meantime.

Mr. Canavan: In view of the recent statements by representatives from the Soviet Union that they would

welcome more constructive bilateral talks with the British Government on disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament, will the Secretary of State give more urgent consideration to the distinctive and constructive role that Britain could play, instead of the British Government always seeming to act like a puppet of Ronald Reagan, who does not seem to be all that serious about nuclear disarmament, test-ban treaties or anything else that might help world peace?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I certainly believe that the United Kingdom can and should play a substantial role in advancing the cause of arms control internationally. It is a role that we have been playing consistently under this Government. I have had more than a dozen meetings with my opposite number in the Soviet Union, and when I go with the Prime Minister in a few weeks' time it will be my fourth visit.

The point that must be made clearly is that we are exercising that influence because of the responsible and straightforward policies followed by the Government. If the irresponsible policies advocated by the hon. Gentleman had been in effect there would have been no Camp David agreement, no meaningful consultations and no role for Britain other than that of the whingeing bystander so often represented on the Opposition benches.

Mr. Latham: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that if there are to be important discussions with Mr. Gorbachev and other Soviet Ministers they will be properly prepared, because we do not want any more disasters such as Reykjavik?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I do not think that the performance of Her Majesty's Government, and most of all the agreements reached at Camp David on two successful occasions, suggest that missions undertaken by the Government are anything other than well prepared. I agree with the importance of that.

Mr. Healey: Is the Foreign Secretary aware that the Government's behaviour after recent discussions with Soviet representatives led the spokesman of the Soviet Foreign Office, Mr. Gerasimov, to complain that the Foreign Secretary, the Prime Minister and the Minister of State had misrepresented those discussions in "self-advertisement for election purposes"? Is he aware that if he and the Prime Minister continue to treat Soviet discussions in that way they will damage British interests and set back the prospects for peace?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Her Majesty's Government and their representatives need to take no special action to advertise the importance and significance of what we are doing in the search for progress on arms control. On the matter of self-advertisement for electoral purposes, we need no lessons in that from the right hon. Gentleman.

Albania

11. **Mr. Ron Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has received recent representation calling for the restoration of diplomatic relations with Albania; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: We have not received any representations recently. We offered in 1980 to establish diplomatic relations with Albania unconditionally, and that offer remains open. Unfortunately the Albanians have not so far taken it up.

Mr. Brown: Is it not time that we had direct links with Albania? Perhaps the sticking point is the returning of Albania's gold, which was seized by the Nazis at the end of the war and ended up in the Bank of England. Surely that should be returned. If there is any dispute about the so-called Corfu incident, that can be sensibly dealt with. An indiscretion by a small country is nothing compared to the activities of Germany, Japan or Italy. Let us make amends and return the gold so that we can have direct links with that small but important country.

Mr. Renton: The House will wish to congratulate the hon. Gentleman on moving on from Afghanistan to Albania. Afghanistan is perhaps in danger of becoming too revisionist for him. The fact is, as the hon. Gentleman knows, that we cannot act unilaterally with regard to the Albanian gold. That can be done only by unanimous agreement of the Tripartite Commission for the Restitution of Monetary Gold—*[Interruption.]* I am not making excuses. We are anxious to resolve all the outstanding problems, but there still remains, for example, the Albanian refusal to settle the Corfu channel claim. That must be dealt with.

Sir Anthony Kershaw: Is there any point whatever in having diplomatic relations with these ruffians?

Mr. Renton: I sincerely hope that my hon. Friend was not speaking about the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Brown). If so, that would be unparliamentary language.

Gambia

12. **Mr. Freud** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the consequences for United Kingdom-Gambian relations of the proposed confederation between Gambia and Senegal.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): The Senegambian confederation was established five years ago, on 1 February 1982. It was created by the decisions of two independent and sovereign states. We enjoy excellent bilateral relations with both states of confederation. The enduring links that we have with the Gambia, a fellow member of the Commonwealth, have not been affected.

Mr. Freud: I am grateful for that reply. Will the Minister tell the House that in the case of a complete creation of Senegambia she will take the most careful note of the concern of Gambians about the continuation of Commonwealth status?

Mrs. Chalker: Yes, of course. As I understand it, there will be no need for such a change. I can give the hon. Gentleman the assurance that he seeks.

Mr. Grist: Will my hon. Friend give an undertaking that any economic assistance that may be agreed with Senegal, which is a high tariff area, will not reflect on the Gambia, which is a low tariff area?

Mrs. Chalker: I understand my hon. Friend's concern about this matter. Obviously this is a matter for further discussion, but in no way would we seek to disadvantage the Gambia if it decides to go forward with confederation.

Tamils (Removal)

3.30 pm

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East) *(by private notice)* asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he would make a statement on the position of the 58 Tamil refugees who were to be deported from Heathrow airport yesterday.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Waddington): As I informed the House yesterday, 64 Sri Lankan Tamils arrived here on Friday, having travelled from Malaysia via Bangladesh without visas. They were either carrying forged passports or had destroyed them in transit. When their claims to asylum were examined and found to be baseless, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary decided that they should be returned to Bangladesh without delay.

Accordingly, arrangements were made to effect removal of 58 of the passengers by the Bangladesh Biman flight scheduled to leave at 5 pm last night. However, the flight was delayed by an apparently organised demonstration by those who were due to be removed. At approximately 7 pm the United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service informed my right hon. Friend's Office that it had obtained a High Court order staying removal action until Monday 23 February. Immediate instructions were given to comply with the order and to make arrangements for the passengers' accommodation or detention until the matter was resolved.

We shall take steps to contest the order and any application for judicial review. The Government remain of the view that the group has no claim to refugee status. If firm action is not taken against abuses of this kind, a potentially disastrous gap in our immigration control will be opened. We will make every effort to prevent this happening.

Mr. Nellist: No doubt the House will be grateful for that deferral, but we are not grateful to the Minister for his court action to challenge the grounds for that deferral. It is not the generosity of the Minister that is responsible for the deferral because he and his Department ignored the normal convention whereby 85 per cent. of those arriving in this country and seeking political refugee status are referred to the United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service.

The Minister's Office usually takes 18 months to two years to deal with a single application for political asylum. In view of that, how can the minister convince us that in 72 hours the Secretary of State went through the cases of 64 people and became convinced that each one of those people is not entitled to refugee status? Were there not co-ordinated and organised attempts by the boat people and by the Jews in the 1930s who, without passports, visas or other documents, left the countries in which they were being persecuted? Does the Minister intend to send these 58 men, women and children back to their deaths in Jaffna?

Mr. Waddington: First of all, the hon. Gentleman referred to the referral system. That system was set up to ensure that those who had a claim to asylum were properly represented. The system clearly does not apply in cases where a bogus asylum claim is made simply as a means of evading our control. On the matter of the speed with which the applications were dealt with, I assure the hon. Gentleman that careful examination of the claims was made, but we must send out a clear signal to others that rackets like this will not succeed. It does no service to the victims of that sort of racket to keep them in detention for a long period before they are returned. There is always a risk in this sort of case of the country from which the people have come refusing to take them back. Those are the three reasons why it is important that such applications should be dealt with speedily.

The comparisons made by the hon. Gentleman are ridiculous or, to use an adjective oft used by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), odious. The truth is that Tamils in Sri Lanka have the opportunity of going to our high commission in Colombo. In the summer of 1985 we made it plain that if they could show that they had a connection with this country and were suffering hardship they could come here. It is unfair to say that our policy towards Tamils has been other than extremely generous.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a private notice question. I propose today to give priority to those hon. Members who were not called yesterday.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. and learned Friend say how many Tamils have been granted asylum since the emergency in 1985? Will he say how many are currently having their claims looked at, and will he briefly describe how a legitimate claim for asylum is brought about?

Mr. Waddington: I cannot give my hon. Friend the precise figures that he wants. I can assure him that a large number of Tamils have been granted exceptional leave to remain in this country and that a large number who arrived in this country before the visa requirement was imposed in the middle of 1985, as my hon. Friend knows, have all been granted exceptional leave to remain.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): No one wishes to see the system of refugee applications abused. I certainly have no wish to do so and I am not an apologist for racketeers of any sort. However, does the Minister accept that there is genuine concern on the part of a number of organisations such as the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, the British Refugee Council and others, including Amnesty International, which are deeply worried that if those people are returned they could possibly face persecution of some sort? Why should the Minister be opposed to a judicial review taking place early next week, through the courts, to determine whether those fears have any justification?

Mr. Waddington: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree that it would be a grave mistake if organisations such as UNHCR or UKIAS were to give the impression that they were not as determined as we are to stamp out such rackets. It would be a grave disservice to genuine refugees if the impression got about the place that UKIAS was determined to bend all its efforts to allowing racketeers to succeed.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the soundings that a number of Conservative Members have taken in their constituencies indicate that his statement today and his stand have overwhelming support in this country?

[Sir John Biggs-Davison]

However, in so far as there may be Tamil political refugees from Sri Lanka, would it not be natural for them to return to their former homeland in India? Will the Foreign and Commonwealth Office discuss that aspect of the matter with the Government of India?

Mr. Nellist: The hon. Gentleman is 2,000 years out of date.

Mr. Waddington: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for what he has said about the stand that we have taken. However, I want to make it plain that we are determined to honour our obligations under the United Nations convention on the treatment of refugees. We have always done so, and we continue to do so. It does no service to genuine refugees if rackets like this succeed. I cannot get involved in the other matters that my hon. Friend raised. I remind the House that we are talking not about people who came here direct from Sri Lanka, but about people who travelled from Sri Lanka to Malaysia and on from Malaysia to Bangladesh. We are talking about returning people to Bangladesh. We cannot possibly accept that we have any obligation, under the United Nations convention, even in the case of people who are found to be refugees, to take such people in this country when they have not been prepared to take refuge in the first country to which they have travelled after they have left the country to which they say they are frightened to return.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): How does the Minister's action yesterday accord with the discussions last week in Switzerland on the common European problem of asylum? Is not what is needed a constructive, compassionate and co-ordinated approach to refugees? Does the Minister accept that by yesterday committing a gross abuse of his own procedures and denying the opportunity of judicial review, representations by hon. Members, and an independent referral to UKIAs, his only honourable course is to resign and let somebody else do a better job?

Mr. Waddington: I never cease to be surprised at the opinions of the hon. Gentleman, but I do not believe that even he thought, when we were debating stops last year, that we were saying that we would allow people to remain in this country even when it was patently obvious on their arrival that they were abusing the asylum procedures and were in no way refugees. I agree that European countries should work together to tackle this problem, because, unfortunately, it is growing. Over the past year or so, more and more people have claimed asylum in countries in Western Europe when there has been no substance to their claims. Already, many European countries have reacted to that. Denmark, Sweden and Germany have all now started refusing to hear asylum claims at their borders when they come from people who claim that they are frightened to return to one country, but have come from another.

Mr. Anthony-Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Does not this country have an enviable record on genuine political refugees? Is not this a case of exploitation of pathetic people? My right hon. and learned Friend is right to resist this because many people have a much better claim. Does not this country have its own people to look after, and is it not the case that once people know that we shall be a lot better off?

Mr. Waddington: My hon. Friend is right. Apart from the fact that they have had to pay enourmous sums of money to racketeers, these people have been treated just like cattle. They have come out of Columbo in batches, have been herded together in other batches in Kuala Lumpur and have travelled from there to Dhaka and then on here.

Mr. Nellist: And they are now in prison in Brixton.

Mr. Waddington: My hon. Friend is right. We have an enviable record on the treatment of genuine asylum seekers, and every hon. Member knows it well.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): How can the Minister be so dismissive of the dangers that Tamils face in Sri Lanka when, on another case that I have put to him, a Tamil returned to Sri Lanka faces great danger, and his 14-year-old nephew was burnt alive by Sri Lankan troops, who set fire to his home? How can the Minister be certain that, if he returns these people to Bangladesh, they will not in turn be sent to Malaysia, and, in turn, sent back to danger in Sri Lanka? How can he be certain that refugees from a civil war should be expected to go to a high commission to ensure that their travel documents are in order? How are we expected to accept that these people are bogus, as the Minister frequently claims, when he, and nobody but he, has had an opportunity to test their claims? He has stopped them using the recognised procedures to test their claims.

Mr. Waddington: I certainly do not test their claims. The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that we have a highly skilled refugee unit that has always earned the respect of all hon. Members. I repeat that these people are not refugees. The hon. Gentleman is saying that anyone coming from that troubled part of the world should be allowed to stay here. We simply cannot accept that as policy. Even less can we accept the idea that people coming from a troubled part of the world can travel to a less troubled part of the world and then to here, and that we, and not the country to which they first travelled, should be expected to take them.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. There is a further statement after this and an important economic debate. I shall allow questions to go on for a further four minutes until 10 minutes to four.

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): Although there must be a degree of sympathy for these poor dupes, does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that we cannot have our immigration policy run by eastern spivs and racketeers? Will my hon. and learned Friend look at the operations of such agencies and determine whether they can be blacklisted from any future dealings with this country?

Mr. Waddington: I am not sure that the matter involves any dealings with this country. We do not have power to blacklist them. All that we can do is to send out a clear message from the House that rackets of this sort will not work. That is why all hon. Members should support the action taken by the Government. The action taken by the Government supports those who make genuine claims for asylum, and supports the work carried out by the UNHCR and by the UKIAS. Hon. Members who attack

the action taken by the Government undermine the important safeguards that operate in this country for genuine refugees.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On what basis was the British high commission in Colombo able to assure the Minister that these people would not be at risk if they returned?

Mr. Waddington: I am sure that the high commission keeps a close eye on events there. The hon. Gentleman is falling into the trap of his hon. Friend, the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden). The hon. Gentleman is now saying that, even if they are not refugees, we should not return them to Sri Lanka because of the general conditions there. I repeat what I said yesterday. There is no reason to suppose that people who have left Sri Lanka will be ill-treated on their return or that the Sri Lankan Government will take action against them. I am quite sure that our high commission in Colombo knows a lot more about that matter than does the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Michael Morris (Northampton, South): Is it not a fact that hundreds of Tamils have applied for visas through the British high commission, that they have been granted visas, that there are no queues, that the Tamil community has been contacted by the high commission and asked whether there are complaints, and that there are no complaints? Therefore, is it not extraordinary that these people chose not to apply for visas, unlike their compatriots who applied in the regular way?

Mr. Waddington: I gave the House the figures yesterday. Over 1,000 Tamils in Colombo have been granted visits, either for settlement or for visas here. In the face of those figures, it is quite impossible to mount the argument that we are adopting some sort of oppressive policy towards the Tamils. The figures speak for themselves.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Would the Minister care to remind the House that on Monday afternoon a number of his hon. Members sought stops on the removal of these people, that on Tuesday, after he had refused those stops, outside the terms of the representations agreed by this House, he was informed by the solicitors representing the people due to be removed that they were applying for a judicial review of their case, that he knew that that was going on but that he tried to circumvent the course of justice by hastening their removal from this country? Will he assure the House that in any other case of a political asylum application he will accept a stop from an hon. Member and that he will personally examine the case, as he is required to do, within the terms of the United Nations convention on the status of refugees?

Mr. Waddington: Every case was examined under the terms of the United Nations convention on the status of refugees. We made it quite clear in our statement last October that we would not accept stops in respect of visa nationals who arrived here without visas. We said that there was no change in the arrangements for asylum, but I do not believe for one moment that the House contemplated that a stop would be taken when a claim to asylum was manifestly bogus, and it was never envisaged that we should face the situation that we are facing now, with large numbers of people coming here as a result of well-organised rackets. Finally, far from our not having observed the order of the court, we very swiftly observed it, as the hon. Gentleman knows full well, and took the people who had been loaded on to the plane off it again.

Mr. Roy Galley (Halifax): My right hon. and learned Friend can be assured that the vast majority of the people of this country in all communities, including resident refugees, will support the action that he has taken. We cannot afford an open door policy. We cannot allow our immigration laws to be flouted. We must take the firmest possible steps against fraudulent means to try to enter this country. Will my right hon. and learned Friend assure the House that he will not be deterred on a future occasion, as a result of the irresponsible attitude of the Opposition and of UKIAS, from taking swift and decisive action in similar cases?

Mr. Waddington: I am sure that my hon. Friend is entirely right. As I said yesterday, at least until the middle of last summer, both parties in this House were supposed to be in favour of firm immigration control. There is not the slightest doubt that the overwhelming majority of the people of this country expect us to operate firm immigration control. We should be abdicating our responsibilities if, faced with abuse on this scale, we were just to say, "It is all too difficult; we must listen to the beseechings of hon. Members like those who have spoken this afternoon" and did nothing about it.

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): Will the Minister confirm that in the Government's White Paper of September 1985 the Government said that there were three safeguards that were relevant at the time to asylum applicants who were refused admission at points of entry — the representations of Members of Parliament, the UKIAS referral procedure and judicial review? Taking together the Minister's statement yesterday, which denied the representations of Members of Parliament and the UKIAS procedure in this instance, and the fact that the Government are seeking to prevent a judicial review, does this not represent a fairly significant change in Government policy, compared with two years ago? In that context, could the Minister say something about the 64 Tamils who arrived and the fact that 58 of them were to be removed yesterday? What has happened to the other six?

Mr. Waddington: They were granted temporary admission, and it was thought sensible to remove those who were in detention first. I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would be pleased with that decision. I have already said all that it is necessary to say about the representations of Members of Parliament. It was made absolutely plain last autumn that we would no longer accept stops in the case of people who arrived here without visas when they were visa nationals. We said that there would be no change in the arrangements for asylum, but I do not believe that the House contemplated for a moment that a stop would be made when a claim for asylum was manifestly bogus. I do not understand what the hon. Gentleman is saying about a judicial review. If an application were made for a judicial review and the application were granted, we have always taken the view that we should not remove people until the matter has been resolved. The hon. Gentleman now seems to be arguing that in every case when an application is made, before it is even heard, we should not take action. We cannot accept that.

Mr. Nellist: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I shall take it afterwards.

Local Government Bill

3.54 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a statement about the Local Government Bill.

As the House will be aware, the Government had announced that the Bill would include powers to control advanced and deferred purchase arrangements; new powers for local authorities to grant aid housing associations; improvements to the land register system; measures to secure greater competition for council services; measures to stop political abuses of the contractual process; and amendments to the publicity provisions in last Session's Local Government Act.

Due to the time taken to prepare the Local Government Finance Bill, work on parts of the Local Government Bill is running very late. If we were to wait until the last three measures mentioned were completed the Bill could not be introduced for another month or even more. The Government consider that to wait until then to introduce the Bill would make it virtually impossible to secure Royal Assent during this Session.

We have therefore decided, extremely reluctantly, to proceed only with the first three items — deferred purchase controls, local authority grants to housing associations and land register improvements together with minor amendments needed to the legislation governing advanced further education pooling arrangements. The Bill incorporating these items is being introduced this afternoon.

I much regret postponing our proposals for securing greater competition in the provision of local authorities services, for stopping abuses of the contractual processes which many Socialist councils practise, and for improving the legislation preventing political propaganda on the rates. I want to assure the many people who want these proposals enacted that we shall certainly press on with them at the first opportunity, either before, or after, the general election.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): Is this not the third local government Bill in six weeks to be introduced by the right hon. Gentleman? We welcome the fact that he has just announced the abandonment of three major Tory political promises. He has abandoned enforced privatisation of local authority services. He has abandoned legislation to end contract compliance in local government contracts and he has abandoned promises to prevent the use of advertising in the media by local authorities which wish to explain their policies and services to their communities.

Is it not true that a much larger Bill exists in draft form in the Secretary of State's Department? Does he recall authorising the speech by his hapless Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope), on 4 February which the Department described as "a keynote speech", in which the Under-Secretary of State promised that these very measures which have now been abandoned were soon to be introduced in legislation in the House? What has changed in the two weeks since the Secretary of State's unfortunate ministerial colleague had his speech approved by the right hon. Gentleman?

Is it not a novel technique of Government to blame the administrative incompetence for which the Secretary of

State is now notorious as a cover for the right hon. Gentleman's political misjudgments on these issues? Are not these rather lame and pathetic excuses for the abandonment of major items of Tory policy which the right hon. Gentleman promised to the Conservative party conference? Does the right hon. Gentleman recall saying at the conference:

"Our 'next move forward' is to make local authorities put about eight more services out to competitive tender . . . We will introduce legislation very soon."

Does he recall that these matters were promised to the House in the Queen's Speech? Does he also recall saying in the debate on the Loyal Address that it was his firm intention to legislate on these issues? What has happened to those and many other promises that he made both inside and outside the House to assuage the Right-wing of the Conservative party? Is not the real reason for this major political climb-down the fact that he and his right hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench are running scared of the electoral consequences of undermining thousands of jobs in local government by implementing policies that many of us, and even his Tory colleagues in local authorities, including councillor John Morgan, the Conservative leader of the Association of District Councils, have condemned? Has the right hon. Gentleman been forced to abandon these cherished Right-wing Tory ideas by his right hon. Friends the Patronage Secretary and the Leader of the House, who do not want the business of the House clogged up with contentious legislation?

Is this a recognition of errors of political judgment in local government policy? Is this a principled decision on the right hon. Gentleman's part or is it merely an election expedient?

Mr. Ridley: That long speech would have more sense if the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) were right in his main assertion that we have abandoned these measures. I made it clear in my statement that they are merely delayed or postponed. I do not want to intrude in the public gloom of the Labour party about its chances at the general election. We shall return to these measures either before the next general election or after it and, as I have said, we shall enact them. The speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen, (Mr. Chope), the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, and my own speech at the Conservative party conference, quite rightly presaged the fact that the measures will be on the statute book either before or after the election.

Mr. John Heddle (Mid-Staffordshire): Will my right hon. Friend accept that, following his statement, there will be widespread disappointment among many ratepayers because of the actions of local authorities that abuse their interests and their money by not putting out services to private competitive tender and waste their money in political advertising?

Has my right hon. Friend considered introducing the clauses in another place? In the meantime, will he ensure that direct labour organisations become more efficient and do not trade at a loss? Will he ensure that every encouragement and incentive is given to local authorities to sell their surplus assets and to enable the realisation of them, to benefit the ratepayers?

Mr. Ridley: I thank my hon. Friend for saying what many millions believe. I wish to assure them through him that the clauses will be brought forward. I think that my hon. Friend will agree with me that to have brought forward a Bill at the end of March that included all the measures that I have referred to with virtually no chance of it reaching the statute book by the end of the Session would have been to disappoint ratepayers even more. There will be widespread disappointment, but those who are disappointed that these measures will not be introduced immediately can have the consolation that supporting the Government will ensure that they come forward after a general election.

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): Will the Secretary of State rectify the one omission in his statement and give us the date of the general election? Will he take it from me that the Bill's housing provisions will be supported in many parts of the House if they do not put further constraints on local authorities by requiring the consent of the Secretary of State for further cash to come into housing? We shall wish to judge the housing provisions by the possible alleviation of homelessness. Are the Government not showing a lack of competence by being prepared to promise what will be in Bills that they cannot deliver at the end of the day?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman has asked me the date of the general election. According to the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), an election is imminent because Britain is on the verge of economic collapse. During the week in which he said that, the stock exchange rose 65 points, and since then it has risen a great deal higher. I think that later today my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury will be demonstrating that perhaps the economy can limp on for another few days, weeks, months, or maybe into next year. The hon. Gentleman must ask the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook when he thinks that the economy will collapse.

The hon. Gentleman will see the Bill when it is published this afternoon, and we shall be able to debate the detail of the housing clauses in Committee. I can assure him that the clauses will be favourable in bringing more houses into being for rent within the private sector.

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): Is my right hon. Friend aware that he will have the sympathy of most Conservative Members for the position in which he finds himself, which is largely not his own responsibility or fault? Is it not fair to say in the meantime to authorities that have not privatised or even tendered out for any service that that option is still open to them and that it would save some money? Secondly, will he confirm, in contrast to a statement made by an Opposition Member from a sedentary position, that far from the Government's policy being deemed unpopular, it is so popular that even NALGO was told recently by MORI that it should not campaign against privatisation because the public were too supportive of it and believed it to be good?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I confirm that local authorities can pre-empt the legislation by going ahead and putting their services out to competitive tender right now. If they do so, they will meet one of the other problems about which they have been coming to me a great deal. They have told me that they cannot live within their means without large rate increases, despite the high level of grant that has been paid this year. They will be able

[Mr. Ridley]

to square both problems by going out to competitive tender voluntarily. My hon. Friend is right when he says that NALGO has been advised to drop its campaign against these policies because it was becoming extremely unpopular. For my part, I rather hope that NALGO will continue its campaign.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): How can the Secretary of State justify dropping proposals for controlling local authority publicity on the ground that the necessary legislation is not sufficiently well advanced in preparation? The same proposals were introduced in a Bill in the previous Session only to be altered and defeated in another place and in this place. Cannot he reintroduce that legislation?

Is not the real reason for taking the course that the right hon. Gentleman has outlined his awareness that interference with freedom of speech in the way that was proposed after the BBC and *New Statesman* fiasco would be unpopular? Is he not clearing the decks to sacrifice Tory councillors for an election on 7 May? A differential turnout in a general election campaign that day would sacrifice Tory local government. It would seem that the Government have written off local government, including Tory councillors.

Mr. Ridley: The previous Bill dealing with political propaganda on the rates was weakened in scope by another place, and the Government undertook to set that right in further amendments. As I have said, those are the amendments that are not yet ready, but we shall proceed to publish the code of practice. It will be available for all local authorities to read and for ratepayers to consider from the point of view of putting pressure on their local authorities to abide by it.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his statement is as unwelcome to those on the Benches behind him as it is to himself? Bearing in mind his passion for free enterprise, will he look favourably upon the future efforts of those who sit behind him, who may seek to repair the omissions of the parliamentary draftsmen by bringing forward their own clauses that would give effect to his own first intentions?

Mr. Ridley: My admiration of my hon. Friend goes very far. If he can surpass even the skill of the parliamentary draftsmen on this occasion, I am sure that that will be extremely welcome.

Mr. Reg Freeson (Brent, East): Will the Secretary of State please tell us whether he intends to take powers to control and stop local authorities from guaranteeing that private finance will go to housing association schemes? It is a simple question; could we have an answer?

Mr. Ridley: We intend to take powers in the Bill to enable local authorities to make contributions to housing associations for projects based on private sector money where they wish to provide houses but cannot afford to do so without grant or at rents that tenants could afford. The right hon. Gentleman will see the details of this legislation in the Bill. He will find it a most valuable way of increasing private rented accommodation without increasing the public sector.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that unions should not oppose this measure, but should welcome it? The measure he has said that he will bring forward to the House in time, if not straight away—and that disappoints many Conservative Members—will lead to lower rates for the ratepayer and a better service throughout our communities. Will he condemn, along with many of my colleagues on the Government Benches, Derbyshire county council's scheme to fight these proposals — which will improve local services—when they come before the House?

Mr. Ridley: I agree with my hon. Friend about the disappointment and about the savings which can be made from competitive tendering. Between 17 and 22 per cent. has been saved in the cost of refuse collection in the areas where councils have taken that action. We have had to stiffen up on the operation of direct labour organisations, which are losing money. We are considering what action to take following a special report on Hackney. My hon. Friend announced today that further requests have been made for special reports from Lambeth and Burnley, and that in future we shall consider action after two consecutive financial failures instead of three. We must insist on higher standards of efficiency from local government, as the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) insisted in an article in a newspaper the other day.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Will the right hon. Gentleman answer the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts)? Are these clauses in draft or are they not? If they are, and the right hon. Gentleman thinks that they are so popular, why cannot they be published to enable the electors to make up their mind in the election of which he speaks?

Mr. Ridley: As I said in my original statement, the parts of the Bill that we are not proceeding with are not yet drafted and that is why we are not proceeding with them and that is why they are not in the Bill. They will not be drafted until a month from now. The only reason why we are not including them in the Bill is that they are not drafted. If they were, they would be in the Bill this afternoon.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): Does my right hon. Friend agree that if any heads should be put on spikes they belong to the parliamentary draftsmen? Conservative Member are becoming increasingly alarmed at their degree of incompetence, which knows no bounds. When we finally have the legislation, will my right hon. Friend give an undertaking that there will be a clause putting parliamentary draftsmen out to competitive tender?

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend is unfair; I take full ministerial responsibility. I said in the statement, and I repeat, that we did not know at the time of the Gracious Speech that we would have the problem of total expenditure which, as the House will acknowledge, proved to be an exceptionally complex and complicated matter. The truth is—I am not disguising it or blaming anybody —that preparation of the Bill took so much of the time of the skilled draftsmen that the clauses that we are talking about slipped, and that is the reason for our problem. It is not fair to blame the draftsmen.

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): Will the Secretary of State admit that the measures that he is deferring are not in the best interests of local government? His Department is more interested in attacking local government. It is the politics of local government with which the Government

are concerned, rather than its efficiency. The efficiency of local government is in serving the people that it represents, and it is far better at that than the Government. Is it not time that the Secretary of State changed direction in his Department, or took the honourable course of action and resigned?

Mr. Ridley: I cannot accept that local government performs efficiently in all cases. There are some extremely efficient councils, but some councils' performances are so grievously inefficient that the House is right to intervene and make them better on behalf of the ratepayers. I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would share that view, like his hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn. His attitude that it does not matter how inefficient local councils are is extraordinary. The evidence of that inefficiency is in many reports published by the Audit Commission.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): Does my right hon. Friend recognise that if he proceeded with clauses to stop propaganda on the rates, he would assuage the feelings, not just of the Right-wing of the Conservative party, but many of us who have to live with that propaganda in places such as Leeds? Ratepayers have been wanting this for a long time. We find it hard to understand why, if there is the will, there is not the way to provide civil servants to draft clauses which my right hon. Friend can bring forward — the necessary clauses, the mere amendments — and which satisfy the requirements that most of us placed on him when we considered the Bill last year.

Mr. Ridley: Those clauses will be brought forward. I say to the many millions of people who would like to see this abuse ended that the return of another Tory Government will secure the matter once and for all.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Will the Secretary of State now answer the question that was put to him? Does he or does he not intend to take powers to stop local authorities from moving private finance into housing associations? Has he not proved, once again, that the only fault with local government is central Government and the Department of the Environment?

Mr. Ridley: If the hon. Gentleman studies the Bill, he will discover that no authority is stopped from doing anything that it has done hitherto. In future, consent will be given, subject to certain conditions, for schemes where local authorities seek to assist housing associations or other bodies to provide further private rented housing. What will not be allowed is straight borrowing by local authorities to circumvent the capital controls.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, although there is considerable disappointment among Conservative Members that the legislation to control the abuses of Left-wing local authorities is not to be introduced immediately, there is, nevertheless, recognition that these councils have in the past left no stone unturned in trying to find loopholes in the legislation? Therefore, it is particularly important that the legislation should be developed carefully and in as watertight a fashion as possible. Can my right hon. Friend confirm that the drafting will continue on these clauses, that they will form a centre point in our manifesto at the next election and that they will be introduced in our first legislative Session in the new Parliament?

Mr. Ridley: I confirm all that my hon. Friend rightly asks me to confirm. That will be done. The Bill contains some carefully drafted means of stopping authorities from borrowing money to maintain a profligate style of life — often at the expense of other authorities and to the detriment of their ratepayers. These measures will do much to contain the extreme Labour councils that are becoming such a menace in our society.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is it not becoming clear, as a result of the exchanges in the past few minutes, that what this measure is about is stopping the work of local authorities, which somehow or other have managed to build a few houses in the public sector during the past few years — despite the Government's attacks, the cuts in rate support grant and all the other efforts that they have made to stop local authorities building bungalows for pensioners and disabled people? This action will prevent local authorities from doing the job that they have been doing on a minimal basis because of Government interference. They will be able to do less than before. Instead of being able to build to about the figure of 20 per cent. in the public sector — as opposed to 100 per cent. in 1979 — it will be down even further.

Mr. Ridley: On the contrary, what matters is the total number of houses. The measures in the Bill will enable local authorities to contribute to more houses being built by using private capital for the community.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Does my right hon. Friend agree that many Conservative-controlled authorities — notably Lincolnshire — have made considerable savings by contracting out? Does not this unfortunate slippage make it even more important for voters and ratepayers in Labour-controlled areas to work for a Conservative victory to ensure that the creative accountancy carried out by Labour authorities is not copied by a Labour Government intent on national bankruptcy?

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend is entirely right. I hate to put it this way, but the enactment of these measures would remove a major incentive for people to vote for another Conservative Government. We shall enact them as soon as Parliament resumes.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): A few moments ago, the Secretary of State sought to justify his incompetence and misjudgments in leaving these three major Conservative promises out of the Bill. Does he recall saying that he did not know at the time of the Gracious Speech of the problems of total expenditure? Does the right hon. Gentleman not recall that the Gracious Speech was on 12 November? He admitted to the House on 16 December and 12 January that he knew by the end of September of the problems of total expenditure and of the need for a local government finance Bill and that he had received the Attorney-General's advice on the matter by the end of October — a good fortnight before the Gracious Speech. In those circumstances, has not the Secretary of State just misled the House? Should he not withdraw what he said?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman is trying to make a great deal out of that. May I just take him through what happened? My right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General gave us his advice at the end of October

[Mr. Ridley]

that we would need to legislate. That is right. The process of drafting the Local Government Finance Bill took until the middle of December.

Mr. Straw: The right hon. Gentleman knew that.

Mr. Ridley: If the hon. Gentleman would let me reply, he would have better manners. It took six weeks to master the intricacies of what had to be done on the Local Government Finance Bill. The hon. Member for Blackburn and his hon. Friends will know how complicated the legislation was and how difficult they found it to understand the legislation. If I may pass Labour Members a compliment, I do not think that they understand it now. This shows how difficult the matter was.

At the time of the Gracious Speech, the sheer effort and complications involved in introducing the Bill, which, after all, was for the benefit of local authorities in the sense that they could not have received rate support grant without it, caused a delay—I admitted that in my statement—in the preparation of part of the Local Government Bill, with the consequent results which I have put before the House.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall call the three hon. Members who have been rising regularly. I ask them to be brief.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): Will my right hon. Friend complete this exhilarating, forward-looking and visionary statement by saying exactly how much might have been saved for ratepayers and taxpayers in a full year by the ending of a monopoly in these eight areas of local government? Can my right hon. Friend say when this legislation will be introduced?

Mr. Ridley: It is difficult to put a figure on the amount saved. The Audit Commission is to publish a paper soon which will give an estimate of the savings. In one service alone—refuse collection—there could be between 20 per cent. and 30 per cent. savings. Any local authority that wishes to make savings of that order can do so now, but many do not wish to do so. I cannot forecast when we shall be able to come forward with the other measures, but it will be as soon as there is a clear opportunity for them to proceed on to the statute book.

Mr. John Mark Taylor (Solihull): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the most important improvement required for the local government land register is that registration should be compulsory? Does he agree that the register will not work properly until it is?

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend will see in a schedule to the Bill the powers which are taken. I think that he will find that these will greatly assist my officials to ensure that land that is not used by local and public authorities is quickly brought on to the market.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): It will not have escaped my right hon. Friend's notice that the Labour party wants the country to believe that he is conducting a vendetta against the whole of local government. Will he confirm that he is after the crackpot councils, not the responsible ones, such as Stockport, which spend about half as much per head of population as neighbouring Manchester?

Mr. Ridley: I confirm that many local authorities are extremely well run. It is when the Labour party gets control of local authorities that the trouble starts. That is another reason why Labour will never win control and form the Government.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR FRIDAY 6 MARCH

Members successful in the ballot were:

Mr. Tom Cox.
Mr. John Carlisle.
Mr. Derek Spencer.

BILL PRESENTED

Local Government

Mr. Secretary Ridley, supported by the Prime Minister, Mr. Secretary Edwards, Mr. Secretary Baker, Mr. John MacGregor and Dr. Rhodes Boyson, presented a Bill to amend Parts VIII and X of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980; to authorise and regulate the provision of financial assistance by local authorities for certain housing purposes; to make further provision about the adjustment of block grant in connection with education; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 79.]

People's Right to Fuel

4.25 pm

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to stop the disconnection of domestic fuel supplies in cases of hardship; to introduce a comprehensive system of heating allowances and insulation grants; and for related purposes.

This is my fifth attempt to introduce such a Bill. Since my first attempt four years ago, domestic fuel disconnections have increased alarmingly, no doubt largely due to the increase in mass unemployment and the inadequacy of pensions and other benefits. Last year, there were 158,586 domestic fuel disconnections compared with 146,000 in the previous year—an increase of about 9 per cent. In the case of the recently privatised British Gas, the increase was 27 per cent. during the same period. As for the electricity boards, two of the worst offenders are the North of Scotland hydro-electric board, with an increase in domestic fuel disconnections of 28 per cent., and the South of Scotland electricity board, with an increase of 25 per cent. during that period.

Recently, the Policy Studies Institute conducted research on individual cases and estimated that 90 per cent. of the people who are suffering from the effect of disconnection are special cases which are specifically mentioned in the existing voluntary code of practice. Those special cases include families on low incomes, families on supplementary benefit and family income supplement, the unemployed, the elderly, the sick, the disabled and families with young children. Recently, considerable publicity was given in Scotland to the case of a 79-year-old pensioner whose electricity supply was cut off by the South of Scotland electricity board. Clearly, the existing voluntary code of practice is not working. These people require the statutory protection which my Bill would give.

The voluntary code would be replaced by a statutory code. Disconnections of domestic fuel supplies would not be allowed unless the electricity board gained a court order. Surely, if a landlord is not entitled to evict a person from a house without a court order, the electricity and gas boards should not be allowed to disconnect domestic fuel supplies without one. Of course, a court order would be issued only if it were proved that no hardship would arise from the disconnection.

That is the negative side of my Bill. On the positive side, I should like to tackle the root cause of disconnection—the growing incidence of fuel poverty which has been exacerbated by the escalation in gas and electricity prices since 1979, when the Conservative party took office—an increase of 134·8 per cent. in gas prices and of 94·1 per cent. for electricity. Those figures are considerably above the corresponding increase in the retail prices index.

My Bill proposes the introduction of a comprehensive system of heating allowances. There has been a lot of publicity about severe weather payments since the turn of the year. However, such a payment amounts to only £5 per week, which will scarcely buy a bag of coal. The present system is hopelessly inadequate because it helps only a tiny minority of the people who are in need. Under my Bill, there would be a much more generous and comprehensive scheme for all the recipients of supplementary or housing benefit. If that was done, the need for yet another means test would be avoided, but, at the same time, assistance would be targeted to those people who were most in need.

I also propose the introduction of an insulation programme. It is ironic that at a time of a growing awareness in this country and throughout the world about the need for energy conservation, the Government are cutting, instead of extending, the meagre system of grants for insulation. Recent estimates show that no fewer than 15·7 million houses in this country require insulation, or improvements to their existing insulation. In many of those cases, the heat is literally going through the roof.

Conservative Members might ask where the money for those schemes will come from. A good nationwide insulation programme could be financed by the cost of one new nuclear power station. There is over-capacity in some parts of the country. For example, in Scotland we have almost double the generating capacity that we require. A nationwide insulation programme would also provide jobs for many of the construction and allied workers who are on the dole. About 7 million households receive housing benefit or supplementary benefit. If we gave them £5 per week, that would amount to a total cost of £35 million per week for heating allowances. I do not suppose that even Terry Wogan would say that that was "mere peanuts".

Many of this morning's newspapers reported a possible Cabinet leak and suggested that the Chancellor of the Exchequer has about £4 billion to play around with in the forthcoming Budget as a result of alleged underspending. I hope that those reports are true and that there is £4 billion to play around with. I hope that, instead of handing it out by way of tax concessions to his rich friends, the Chancellor will bear in mind those people who are less well off and who are most in need, many of whom have to choose between eating and heating.

Age Concern has estimated that more than 100 old people die every day from cold-related illnesses. That figure is a national scandal to which the House should respond. My Bill is a charter to eradicate fuel poverty from this country. It would literally help to save the lives of many people and also to improve the quality of life for many others. Therefore, I ask the House to support my Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Dennis Canavan, Mr. Gavin Strang, Mr. Don Dixon, Mr. William McKelvey, Mr. Ernie Ross, Mr. Martin Redmond, Mr. Dennis Skinner, Mr. Michael Welsh, Mr. Max Madden, Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours, Mr. Jeremy Corbyn and Mr. Tony Lloyd.

People's Right to Fuel

Mr. Dennis Canavan accordingly presented a Bill to stop the disconnection of domestic fuel supplies in cases of hardship; to introduce a comprehensive system of heating allowances and insulation grants; and for related purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 6 March and to be printed. [Bill 80.]

Public Expenditure

Mr. Speaker: I must announce to the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Before the debate begins, can you give us some clarification about who is to speak in it? I see that the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) is on the Opposition Front Bench. Therefore, it looks as though this will be a debate to which the Treasury team will respond. Can you make it clear whether the hon. Gentleman will speak in his capacity as Treasury spokesman for the Opposition or in his new capacity as employment spokesman, now that he has taken over from the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott)?

Mr. Speaker: That is not a matter for me, but I am sure that it will be clarified when the hon. Gentleman rises to speak.

4.35 pm

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John MacGregor): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of the White Paper on the Government's expenditure plans 1987-88 to 1989-90 (Cm. 56—I and II).

The Government's public expenditure programmes for the next three years have already been widely discussed in this House and outside since the Chancellor's autumn statement. This annual debate on the White Paper that was published last month provides an opportunity not only to consider the broad themes and any of the thousands of details which individual hon. Members may wish to pick out, but also to reflect on the observations made in the Treasury and Civil Service Committee's report published last Friday.

However, the debate also provides this year an opportunity to bring out the world of difference between the way in which we on this side of the House approach public expenditure issues and that seen on the Opposition Benches. However, as there is no representative from the Social Democratic party or the Liberal party, I can concentrate on only one Opposition Bench, and I will start with that.

One important difference between us is that we have always emphasised that what the Government spend must reflect the resources available, and that, in turn, depends on the performance of the economy. Wealth must be created before it is spent. The Opposition, by contrast, believe in an ambitious programme of public spending so that, when taxes have been raised to pay for it, the private sector has to put up with what is left. To judge from the experience of the last Labour Government, that means little improvement in individual living standards.

Our determination to give priority to strengthening the economy by reducing inflation and achieving sustained growth has been entirely vindicated. As a result, we were able in the autumn statement to make a significant addition to our spending plans of £4·7 billion in 1987-88, and to do so safely because it stems from our improved economic performance.

That is completely strange to the Labour party, and it left it quite nonplussed. It has been fascinating to see its twists and turns ever since. However, Opposition Members have at last settled down to an entirely predictable response. Having failed spectacularly to agree on anything resembling an economic strategy of their own, they have instead embarked on a vain attempt to instil terror into the electorate at large by conjuring up an imagined vision of crisis round the corner. They will do anything to divert attention from the actual performance of the economy and the paucity of their own policies.

The facts belie them. In recent months, inflation has been registering rates last seen 20 years ago, while Government borrowing last year and this looks set to be the lowest since the early 1970s. Our firm financial policies, our measures to remove supply side constrants and the many steps that we have taken to improve the way in which markets of all kinds operate have laid the foundation for sustained growth in output and employment.

We are now well into our sixth successive year of growth, achieving nearly 3 per cent. a year. We have been topping the growth league of major EC countries, a welcome change from our position at the bottom in the previous decade.

That growth is not, as the Opposition are trying to make out, simply the result of an extravagant consumer boom fuelled by excessive consumer credit. In fact, over these six years, consumers' expenditure has risen by an annual 3 per cent. — just as fast and no faster — *[Interruption.]* Opposition Members should note that I am talking about six successive years of growth. That consumption has risen just as fast as, and no faster than, it did under the last Labour Government's recovery. However, investment has risen faster still, at over 4 per cent. a year — three times as fast as the corresponding annual increase when Labour was last in office, and twice the Community average.

So the steady progress of recent years is continuing. Indeed, in many areas it is speeding up. Manufacturing profitability is higher than at any point since 1973, and manufacturing exports have reached record levels. Since 1979, productivity in this country has risen faster than in any other industrialised country, by 3½ per cent. a year.

Since the country gave our policies its overwhelming vote of confidence in June 1983, employment has grown strongly. Indeed, the number of new jobs has risen for 14 quarters in a row — the longest period of continuous employment growth for almost 30 years.

As for the balance of payments, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has already referred in the House to the reasons for the move into deficit this year after a substantial build-up of surpluses during the past few years. But as a result of our policies, we have a cushion of net overseas assets totalling £80 billion at the last count in 1985—more than six times the level we inherited, and one of the largest holdings in the world, yielding an annual income of almost £5 billion.

So the first theme of this White Paper is that the growing strength of our economy has enabled us to increase our public expenditure plans within what demonstrably we can afford; this has enabled us to meet our public expenditure objectives and to find room for more spending in 1987-88.

My second theme is that the White Paper demonstrates our consistency of purpose, for the planning totals for public expenditure as a whole and for our priorities in individual programmes. As I have said, the success of our economic policies has enabled us, responsibly, to raise our

public spending plans, but in doing so we have been able to give the assurance that there would be no increase in borrowing this year or next. Moreover, the plans allow for a rate of growth of spending in real terms which is significantly less than we project for the economy as a whole. So the Government's fundamental objective, set out in the 1979 manifesto, that

"the State takes too much of the Nation's income; its share must be steadily reduced",

is being achieved. The ratio of general Government expenditure to GDP has been falling during the past four years and will continue to do so over the next three.

But what is also important is that, within that overall objective, we have been able to increase substantially our spending programmes in our key priority areas. As a result, we have considerably strengthened our priority services. That process has been repeated this year, with extra funds being allocated to, among others, the Health Service, the road programme, education, housing priorities, the sick and disabled and law and order. Obviously, I can deal only—and briefly—with a few programmes.

On health, the plans provide for 2·8 per cent. real growth in net Health Service spending next year. That allows sufficient provision to meet pressure on services from the growing numbers of elderly people and for improvements in the services provided. It follows the 26 per cent. real growth since 1978-79. The plans provide for more spending on hospitals — more than 100 new hospitals should be completed by 1990. Within our plans, £50 million has been specifically allocated to reduce waiting lists and waiting times during the next two years.

Capital spending on the national roads programme is up 30 per cent. in real terms since 1978-79, after a 30 per cent. fall under the Labour Administration. In cash terms, that means nearly £6 billion.

Our plans provide for £11 billion of spending on housing over the survey period. That follows a 40 per cent. real terms increase in spending on renovation — £1·3 billion in all—since 1978-79.

The largest cash increase in this year's White Paper is for the education programme. Spending per pupil has already increased by nearly a quarter from 1979-80 to 1985-86.

Expenditure on retirement pensions is up by 25 per cent. in real terms since 1978-79 to cover the needs of the growing numbers of pensioners and to more than meet our commitment to protect the pension against inflation. Spending on benefits for the long-term sick and disabled grew by 75 per cent. in real terms between 1978-79 and 1986-87.

Law and order has always been a priority, and will continue to be. Spending has gone up by 50 per cent. in real terms since 1978-79, and this is by no means all for the police.

Even within our priority areas, however, I am constantly aware of the need to scrutinise programmes to ensure that we are getting value for money and that the programmes are being efficiently applied, administered and targeted.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): The Chief Secretary mentioned priority areas, but he has not mentioned the science budget. May I raise the problem, which the Minister of State knows is serious, of the research councils, which are obliged to pay their staffs between 13 per cent. and 16 per cent. extra, but have not been given the funds to do so, which means a cut in real research, including research related to AIDS. Will the Minister consider this problem especially?

Mr. MacGregor: I shall certainly ensure that the hon. Gentleman receives an answer on that point, but he will know that we have a good record of spending on research and development. He mentioned AIDS; he will know that the Medical Research Council approached us with a request for additional spending on research on AIDS, to which we immediately and readily responded.

Even in our priority areas, we must ensure that we are getting value for money and that the programmes are being efficiently applied, administered and targeted. For example, in the law and order programme, one area of growth stands out — legal aid. Between 1979-80 and 1984-85, total gross expenditure from the legal aid fund rose from £87 million to £263 million. It trebled in only five years. The Government are the biggest single purchaser of legal services in the country. Therefore, they have a compelling interest in the efficiency of the system which delivers justice. At a time when we insist on rigorous examination of spending on health, education and many other matters, we cannot exempt the legal system from such scrutiny. That is why, in 1985, we asked for an efficiency scrutiny of the whole legal aid system. The Government's proposals following public consultation will be announced soon.

That brings me straight to the third theme which runs throughout the White Paper, and that is the emphasis on what is described in the jargon as "output and performance measures", or, more simply, getting better value for money for the taxpayer. Immense efforts have been made by the Government to improve the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the delivery of public goods and services, and results are now showing through quite strikingly. To those who are interested, I cannot underline too strongly the significance of the White Paper in this respect. It provides an account across the whole of Government not only of what is planned to be spent but of what the country is getting for it. This year, there are about 1,800 illustrations of output being achieved, of measures of performance and of the targets which Departments are setting themselves compared with about 1,200 in last year's White Paper. That is a significant advance.

Here again, we have another crucial difference between the approach to public spending of our Government and that of the Labour party. We do not judge the contribution of a programme solely by the resources that are put in, but by the service that is delivered. The Labour party thinks that we are being virtuous only if we are spending more —preferably much, much more. As Lord Barnett, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury in the Labour Government, put it in his book "Inside the Treasury",

"You name it, we were pledged to increase it".

Nothing has changed.

Of course, it is so much easier to get a headline—"X million more on roads"—than to get over the message that, because of the better value for money we are getting from the roads programme, we can build four miles of road for the same price in real terms as three in 1979-80, and we are spending more, too. Of course, one is liable to be accused of parsimonious ungenerosity if one queries whether a programme is delivering its objectives, or

[Mr. MacGregor]

whether a given purpose could be achieved more cheaply or efficiently. Of course, too, this is the unglamorous side of public expenditure management, requiring enormous, but often unrecognised, effort. But the taxpayer is quick to complain when he spots what he regards as an example of waste. I am convinced that the monumental efforts that we have put into this side of public expenditure are paying off, and not only in terms of value for money for the taxpayer.

I was interested to see that, in his address to the Labour party national local government conference, the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) paid lip service to the subject when he inserted in his speech these words:

"every penny we can afford for job creation will have to be wisely spent"

and

"it will involve and require detailed plans which are precisely targeted and carefully costed."

If imitation is a form of flattery, that is a tribute to this side of the House which has been constantly preaching this message. It is certainly a belated recognition of what we have been telling him for months and months: that his employment programmes are badly targeted and ill-costed and would be unwisely spent. But I suspect that it is only lip service.

But these measures and targets for costs, output and performance are not simply descriptive material produced for the purposes of the White Paper. They are being used by Departments in their day-to-day management and in the year-by-year planning and control of programmes.

I see three main benefits from better measurement and targeting. By relating outputs to the costs involved, managers can make better choices. By setting out in advance what a programme is expected to achieve, by when and at what cost, subsequent review and evaluation is improved. By telling this House and the outside world what has been achieved and how that relates to previous targets, Departments are made more accountable.

I am grateful to the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee for the attention it is giving to this subject. It has an important role to play in following through, year by year, the performance of Government in achieving their targets. I hope it will encourage other Select Committees to pursue more rigorously these aspects, not only because it is an important development in accountability but also because it focuses directly on Parliament's role of ensuring that taxpayers' money is not only properly but also wisely spent.

Mr. Dalyell: On Select Committees, the right hon. Gentleman will have seen the report of the House of Lords Select Committee on the science budget. Does he or does he not accept that this is serious for the country? AIDS is not a party matter but is monumentally important. I would not ask for an open cheque book on anything, but could we have an open cheque book for one matter, that is, research into viruses without which a vaccine cannot be produced to do anything to arrest the AIDS problem? Can we at least have an open cheque book for good science on that?

Mr. MacGregor: I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would not expect an open cheque book on anything, as he said at the beginning before he promptly went on to ask for one. It is important to evaluate carefully every public spending proposal to see that it gives value for money and to see whether it can be afforded. That is entirely the approach that we take.

Reference to the Treasury and Civil Service Committee brings me to its report. I should like to pay tribute to the speed with which my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) and his Committee have absorbed what is now a very substantial White Paper and the constructive way in which they approach their tasks. Treasury Ministers and officials have always appreciated in particular the recommendations on technical and presentational matters, and I hope that the Committee would agree that from the positive way in which we have responded this has been a worthwhile dialogue. The Government will be replying in full in the normal way to the report, so the House will forgive me if I comment today only on some of the main points.

The Committee suggested that, in emphasising the objective of reducing public expenditure as a proportion of national income, there could be a weakening of control. I should like to reassure the Committee on this point. In order to secure progress towards the overall objective, the Government each year set intermediate targets in the form of cash planning totals. These cash planning totals are not only the crucial method of control within the year in question, but are also the means by which, step by step, we continue to achieve our medium term objective. So we attach importance to the achievement of the planning total, which is why throughout the year I devote much time and effort to rigorous scrutiny of any claims on the reserve. I grant that we have not always hit the target of delivering the planning total spot-on——

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): Something of an understatement.

Mr. MacGregor: That is rich from the right hon. Gentleman, given the way he is so careless about planning totals. If he ever had the opportunity, which God forbid, to carry through his programme, he would be equally careless about hitting the targets.

Given the overall size of the programmes and the inevitable uncertainties, our record has been creditable. In the five years since the introduction of cash planning, the average overrun for the planning total set for the year ahead has been about 0·8 per cent. and, but for the coal strike, would have been about half that. So there has been no weakening in the efforts to maintain control.

The Committee's warning in the same section against basing plans on over-optimistic assumptions about economic growth is entirely right, and one which the Government support. A glance back at our record in government would demonstrate that we have heeded it, which is why public expenditure as a proportion of gross domestic product is coming down. I say to my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing and to members of the Committee that it is to the Opposition that the point should be directed, although I doubt whether they would ever pay much attention to it. Neither the record of the past Labour Government nor the party's current spending plans suggests that it is one to which they give more than a passing thought.

Next I would like to respond to the Committee's remarks about capital spending. In paragraph 31, the report states that capital expenditure is declining. That is

not actually so. In the current year we expect the outturn for total capital spending to be around £22½ billion. In real terms that is almost exactly the same figure as in 1978-79. Thus, capital spending has not declined but has been maintained — which is in sharp contrast to the record of the Labour party who cut capital spending by over 20 per cent. in their period of office.

One point to which I frequently have to draw attention is that looking at the departmental programmes for the three years ahead does not give a complete picture of what the eventual capital expenditure will be, because almost invariably in practice some of the expenditure from the reserve in any given year is devoted to capital spending. If I may give an illustration, in last year's public expenditure White Paper, for 1986-87, capital spending on departmental programmes was shown as 5·3 per cent. below the amount for 1985-86 in real terms. In fact, it is now 1·6 per cent. above 1985-86.

But I take the spirit of the Committee's report on this point and am fully with the Committee on the relative importance of capital expenditure. The Committee will have noted that in the survey we added an additional £1 billion of capital expenditure to the plans for 1987-88.

Finally on the report, the Committee has shown a continuing interest in Government Departments' running costs and manpower. Obviously, any new system will have its teething pains, but the running costs arrangements introduced last year have settled down well. The running costs limits set in this year's Estimates are being pretty well adhered to; where there are increases — amounting to £80 million out of a total running costs of £13 billion — in almost all cases these reflect deliberate policy decisions. It has been our firm policy that higher pay costs should be absorbed within running cost limits.

In introducing the running costs system, we decided that it would be sensible to continue with separate manpower targets for an initial period. These have been to date an essential part of our strategy for achieving a leaner and more efficient Civil Service. Numbers have fallen by more than 130,000 since April 1979, and nearly 90,000 of that reduction results from increased efficiency, improved methods of working, and general streamlining. That is a significant achievement, due in no small part to the efforts of individual civil servants in improving their Departments' efficiency and in providing better value for money. I should like to pay tribute to them and acknowledge the debt that we owe them.

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: I have given way to the hon. Gentleman often enough.

But we have always recognised the difficulty of running two separate controls side by side for any length of time. Moreover, the "belt and braces" approach runs counter to our other broad objective of extending greater responsibility for financial management and budgeting to Departments and much further down the line within Departments. So we did not publish a separate manpower target beyond April 1988, and made it clear that we would review the need for continuing separate manpower targets beyond that date in the light of our exprience of the new running costs system.

I can now tell the House that, in the light of the encouraging start made by the new control arrangements, we do not intend to set further overall targets for manpower after April 1988. We shall need to continue to take a close interest in manpower during the annual public expenditure survey. The White Paper will continue to give each Department's manpower plans for each of the forward years of the survey and any increase will have to be agreed with the Treasury. The primary consideration in considering extra manpower will be whether the revised manpower plans are consistent with the running costs limits.

I can assure the House, therefore, and particularly those of my hon. Friends who take a close interest in such matters, that the new arrangements — which are a combination of manpower plans and the control on running costs — will maintain the momentum of the drive for increased efficiency and leaner staffing by Government Departments.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. MacGregor: I believe that I have given way enough to the hon. Gentleman. He may make his points in his own speech.

The overall control will be the one set by the running cost limits and that will give individual Civil Service managers greater flexibility to make best use of the resources available to them.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. MacGregor: I do not want to be too long. I have already given way twice to the hon. Gentleman.

In short, the message is that we are achieving success in economic growth and success in our public expenditure programmes through good management and responsible and prudent economic policies. When those expenditure programmes were first announced, the Opposition were totally at a loss. They did not know whether to describe them as irresponsible pre-election spending or as grossly inadequate. So with their characteristic confusion they promptly did both at the same time. That is only one illustration of how much they are at sixes and sevens.

Last year, the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook pledged that the Labour party's "anti-poverty" progamme of £3·6 billion would be met by increasing taxes on the richest 5 per cent. When we pointed out that to raise those sums would not only reintroduce the investment income surcharge and restore capital taxes to 1978-79 levels, but would require a return to destructively high levels of income tax — in this case it would mean a 70 per cent. rate on all incomes above £24,500, including couples' joint incomes — the right hon. Gentleman prevaricated. The right hon. Gentleman started to talk about taxing the very rich — he may have used a different word but he implied the very rich. When it became clear who he had to include among the very rich, his public statements became very confused. Eventually he settled for those with incomes over £27,000, but the electoral impact of that was too much for his leader. Therefore, last weekend, the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) put it up to £30,000.

Now, according to *The Daily Telegraph* of today, the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook last night tried to reconcile the irreconcilable by saying:

"any individual earning £25,000 a year is likely to be affected, anyone earning £27,000 is almost certain to be affected and anyone earning £30,000 is certain to be affected."

That is very clear. The right hon. Gentleman does not say affected by how much, so I can tell him. All those

[Mr. MacGregor]

concerned will be paying marginal tax rates of 70 per cent. The trouble is that Labour's tax policies are as confused and damaging as their expenditure plans.

Not long ago, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) grandly announced that Labour, if elected, would introduce a 1 per cent. training levy on industrial turnover, at a cost to industry of between £5 and £6 billion a year. The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook tried to put it smartly back into the bottle, but his colleague kept pulling it out again. We still do not know where they stand, but the massive threat is there.

Not so long ago the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East described the Labour local authorities as the engines of growth for reducing unemployment. On this one at least, he was backed up by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, who last year, told the Association of Direct Labour Organisations:

"Local authorities will lead the way in Labour's drive to reduce unemployment by 1 million within two years."

The response has been predictable. Southwark chipped in with a scheme, commended by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East, which if implemented nationally would have cost a cool £20 billion spread over two years. Sheffield, Manchester and Haringey are queuing up with their big spending plans. Last week Islington produced a scheme, supported by the same hon. Gentleman, to produce just over 4,000 jobs at a cost of £51 million. One million jobs created "Islington's way" would cost over £12 billion. Is that what the right hon Member for Sparkbrook means by "precisely targeted" schemes and money "wisely spent"?

No wonder, rumour has it, that concern is spreading in the innermost regions of the Shadow Cabinet at the uncontrolled way in which the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East is spewing out such plans—so much so that it is reported that the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) has now therefore taken over the employment portfolio. I say to him and his right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn that he should take over the social security portfolio as well.

I hope that the top bedside reading of the hon. Member for Dagenham will be the recent Audit Commission report. I am sure he will be aware of the profligacy, scandalous creative accounting, overmanning and mismanagement of eight Labour local authorities identified in that report. The hon. Gentleman will have read the Audit Commission's conclusion:

"One of the lessons of the past is that 'throwing money at the problem' all too often simply means more waste".

Mr. Dalyell: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. MacGregor: I have already said that the hon. Gentleman should seek to make his speech later.

It is extremely important to the taxpayer and the electorate to understand the points I am making at the moment. I suspect that the hon. Member for Dagenham, with all his skills, is having nightmares about Labour's spending programmes. If not, he certainly ought to be.

It was almost exactly a year ago that I announced the full-year cost of the Labour party's commitments on public spending. In the spring of last year, other Labour spokesmen, and in particular the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), made several further pledges and I revised the overall total to £28 billion, which did not include some £7 billion of further pledges made by the hon. Member for Oldham, West — I gather that another pledge was given this morning on the radio. Since then we have had a steady flow of further pledges. Pledges at the Labour party conference alone amounted to at least £9 billion.

Throughout, I have said that if the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook will tell me which of his colleagues' pledges he will drop, I will take them off the list. We have given them every opportunity, most recently when my right hon. Friend the Chancellor asked specific questions in the debate in this House on 20 January. Answer was there none.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East has at least suggested that the Labour party would want to abandon the pledge to introduce a minimum wage, to introduce the 35-hour week and to introduce early retirement. Perhaps the hon. Member for Dagenham can tell us today whether that is so. But I have to tell him that, even with those out, the extra pledges made since my last costing would certainly take the figure at least back to £28 billion.

We are told that the hon. Member for Dagenham is working on it. We look forward to the results of his labours. However, the clear lesson of the past year is that, even in opposition, the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook has little or no control over his colleagues. The process by which the Opposition make their plans shows no signs of anyone trying to make choices or impose priorities. We are sorry that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook is not contributing to this debate. The Opposition's policies are similar to the clamour of the Chicago market for pork belly futures — no co-ordination; just people shouting out their bids.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook tours the City, sober-suited, trying to persuade his audience that Labour's policies are well thought out and financially responsible. However, before he has got to the dessert, another of his colleagues has announced some new policy. In recognition of this failure to impose some order, the hon. Member for Dagenham has been brought in to see what he can do. But even while he has been in charge, further pledges have been made in Labour's latest local election document, published some two weeks ago, "Investing in People" — a document which incidentally reconfirmed a large number of existing pledges.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. On Monday night you will recall that you had me up for being out of order. In relation to the Government's business of the day, is all this in order? Sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): This is a debate on public expenditure and, by convention, debates on public expenditure can go very wide. Mr. Speaker has selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition, so the Chief Secretary is entitled to canvass the merits of that amendment as well.

Mr. MacGregor: I am not surprised that the hon. Gentleman does not want this put before the House; he will see the relevance in a moment.

That is why the hon. Member for Dagenham, an honourable man who does assiduous work, must face the fact that the Labour party faces such a huge credibility

gap. For we have seen it all before. In "Inside the Treasury" Lord Barnett quotes the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook as saying

"The Labour Party is always wanting to bake plum pies before we have picked the plums."

It is a nicely turned phrase, but oh, so telling.

It is right for me to make that contrast in this debate. For on public expenditure, our plans are not empty bribes incapable of fulfilment and if attempted likely to wreak havoc on the economy. They are solidly based on economic achievement. The country is getting the fruits of our prudent and responsible stewardship and we are determined to keep it that way.

5.11 pm

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): I beg to move, as an amendment to the motion, at end to add:

'but condemns the Government's continuing hostility to public expenditure on vital community services which has produced such damaging cuts and imposed additional costs; regrets that so much public spending still has to be devoted to such unproductive purposes as unemployment; and recognises that the apparent relaxation of spending limits has been largely inadvertent, falls far short of what is needed to achieve satisfactory provision of services, and is in any case not intended to survive the General Election.'

We are invited in this debate to take note of a more than usually uninformative White Paper. It is particularly coy about some of those details on which the Government rightly feel political sensitivity, for example, on the matter of the cost of some aspects of the privatisation programme. Even where it does tell us things, we are bound to remark that that information must be treated with great caution in view of the obvious point that that, like so much else currently emanating from the Government, is so clearly geared to their pre-election needs.

The Chief Secretary demonstrated again today the basic unease that the Government always demonstrate when they talk about public spending. It was remarkable how much more comfortable he was when he was attacking what he fancifully called Labour's spending plans and how much more reticent and embarrassed he was when talking about his White Paper.

It is worth pausing to speculate as to why that should consistently be so. The reason is that the Chief Secretary has to come to the House and for the third or fourth time —so embarrassing for a Government who maintain that there have never been any alternatives and that their economic prescriptions are set in stone—and go through an exercise in which he concedes that his public spending target has once again had to change. We recall that the first target was that public spending was simply to be cut. There were no ifs or buts; that was what they were going to do. Unfortunately, that proved impossible. The next target was that it was to be kept level in real terms. I am afraid that that, too, proved to be impossible and went out of the window. We are now told that the target, yet to be achieved, is to reduce public spending as a proportion of the national income. What we have now is a pattern of behaviour where targets are fixed and then, in each case, missed. That is the first and obvious example of why the Chief Secretary should feel embarrassed.

There is a second reason. He dare not concede or reveal why he has found hitting his target so difficult. The reason is that he has found it impossible because the rise in public spending that he is now attempting to claim as a victory —a few years earlier he would have hidden it away as a defeat—is a manifestation of economic failure. Of the £19 billion increase in real terms since 1979-80, no less than £16·5 billion can be attributed to economic failure; to the social security programmes, unemployment, debt and interest payments on the national debt. The Chief Secretary has again tried to make a virtue out of necessity.

What has been forced upon him in the past is clearly set to continue because the White Paper concedes, in the assumption that it makes about unemployment, that unemployment will rise from the level specified in the preceding year's White Paper. The Chancellor's hand is still being forced by economic failure and by rises in public sector wage settlements, which he has fought tooth and nail to resist and has condemned root and branch, but which he is now forced to say are the basis upon which public spending has been allowed to rise.

There is a third reason for embarrassment. The Chancellor's efforts to cut public spending have been counter-productive in more than just macro economic terms, although that is very clear because the cuts have led to the economy collapsing in on itself.—*[Interruption.]* This point may elude Conservative Members but the public sector is a part of the economy. If one makes cuts in the public sector, one damages the economy and increases unemployment and the cost of unemployment. It is no accident that the cost of unemployment to the public sector budget is now running at £22 billion per year. There are more direct and detailed consequences. The Audit Commission in an earlier report made it clear that the ill-considered and arbitrary cuts forced on local authorities meant that it was more difficult for them to reduce costs and to deliver services efficiently.

The real embarrassment is an ideological one. We have come a long way since the right hon. and learned Gentleman, now the Foreign Secretary, was the Chancellor of the Exchequer and said that public spending was at the heart of our economic problems. Is that still the view of the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Chief Secretary? If it is, how can they justify the position to which they now have to adhere which is that they have done absolutely nothing to amend the levels of public spending which have risen throughout the bulk of their period in office as a proportion of national income? Do they wish to say that they have adhered to that fundamental proposition made by the first Chancellor in this Tory Administration, or are they to remain silent and to concede by their silence that a fundamental change has been forced upon them by harsh practical experience and by the needs of the pre-election position? I see that they do not rise to that challenge.

No wonder, in the light of those matters, there is a certain ambivalence, not to say schizophrenia, about the way in which the Chief Secretary attempts to deal with public spending. He is not at all clear which way to face. He is not clear whether to speak to the audience in the City, which he is trying to show by a series of nods and winks and little bits of coded language that nothing has really changed and that the leopard has not changed its spots. He is saying that if the Conservative party was to fluke a win at the next general election the brakes would be on again. At the same time he has to say to the wider audience, the audience with many millions of votes, "Forget about what we used to say. All those bets are off. We have changed. We are reformed characters and we are now set on a course where public spending is a virtue and

[Mr. Bryan Gould]

we shall restore all those cuts which we told you in the past we could not avoid, but which we now concede can be restored. What a wonderful thing that will be."

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): Since the hon. Gentleman is now preaching the virtues of clarity, perhaps for reasons of balance he could explain what is meant by the Opposition motion where it says that the spending relaxation, to which he refers, has led to increases which fall

"far short of what it needed".

How much more is needed in the eyes of the Labour party?

Mr. Gould: The hon. Gentleman's intervention, which I was glad to allow him to make, comes at an opportune moment. That is the point to which I now wish to turn. It is on precisely that point that the Chief Secretary demonstrated that he was not keen to speak about his own spending plans, or, more particularly, his public spending record, but was much more comfortable talking about Labour's spending plans.

The Chief Secretary started a hare some months ago which no doubt will run again. The hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) is doing his best to keep it running. The mystery about that exercise is why the Chief Secretary, who we are told is normally a sane and sensible man, a prudent Minister in the Treasury and accustomed to dealing carefully with figures, should lend his name to such an outrageous exercise as he has repeated again. Why should that intelligent man suddenly spout rubbish when he fantasises about Labour's spending plans? I can throw light on that mystery. I was idly looking through the 1986 "Parliamentary Year Book" and I turned to the reference to the Chief Secretary. Among his hobbies, the gardening, the music and the travel, was conjuring. As soon as one understands that crucial aspect of the right hon. Gentleman's personality and knows his range of interests, a great deal becomes clear—not only about his current exercise but about his antecedents.

How was the right hon. Gentleman suddenly transformed from a decent, obscure Minister in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to a senior Minister in the Treasury? There he was, an Agriculture Minister supervising the breeding of white rabbits. Suddenly he developed the habit of using that catch phrase so widely popularised by his hero, the television magician Paul Daniels. In answer to every question put to him he began to reply, "Not a lot". It came to the Prime Minister in a blinding flash that that was the ideal qualification for the Chief Secretaryship in the Treasury. That is why he said in answer to every request for spending, "Not a lot". He became known as Not-a-lot MacGregor, the conjuror and Chief Secretary.

Mr. Forman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gould: No, because the House needs to know about this. It was at this point that the full potential of the right hon. Gentleman's talents became apparent. He was asked, I suppose by the Prime Minister or the Chancellor, to turn his conjuring skills to what was laughingly called Labour's spending plans. He did so, and on some occasions the trick worked to the extent that he produced £24 billion worth of spending. On other occasions, it was £28 billion. Sometimes when his mail order conjuring set worked really well he was able to produce £35 billion.

It is an engaging picture. We see the hon. Gentleman with his top hat, white gloves and cane using his conjuring skills. However, they are rather amateurishly deployed. The right hon. Gentleman has nowhere near the skills of the Chancellor who demonstrates time and again the unusual ability to twist and distort almost everything while keeping a straight face.

We can see the top hat and know where the white rabbits come from. We know why the tricks are done. When we are asked what we make of the ludicrous fantasies and are asked to comment upon and evaluate them and asked if we take them seriously, we are entitled to say, "Not a lot." That is our answer. We take no responsibility for commenting on this absolute invention.

Mr. MacGregor: Will the hon. Gentleman tell the House which items are not white rabbits and are clearly documented in black and white? Which items does he think should not be in the programme so that the programme comes down to, "Not a lot"?

Mr. Gould: The right hon. Gentleman is trying to put a false value, a false certainty and a false worth—one might almost say a false bottom—on an entirely fanciful exercise. I have said many times, and I shall say once more for the sake of the right hon. Gentleman and Conservative Members, that if they want to see an absolutely convincing repetition of all the nonsense that the right hon. Gentleman has peddled and which, as a sign of his desperation and to my great surprise, he continues to peddle, they should ask the question——

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Gould: I hesitate to act as a sales agent for the Institute for Fiscal Studies, for the National Institute for Economic and Social Research, for Phillips and Drew, for the ITEM group or any of the other independent economic forecasters who have looked at this matter and have made it perfectly clear that the basis of the right hon. Gentleman's calculations is so ludicrous as not to warrant serious attention.

Mr. MacGregor: I have read what the Institute for Fiscal Studies has to say. The key point that it makes about the £28 billion is that the Labour party—if the country ever had the misfortune to see it in government—would not expect to implement it all in the first year. I have always granted that and said that it would be in the full flood of the Parliament.

Mr. Gould: I am delighted to see what I trust is the right hon. Gentleman's true character. He has at last said that he is prepared to make that concession. Is he prepared to make the other concessions which would start to make more sense and give a rather lower total to the exercise that he has so often gone through?

Bearing in mind the debate on the Government's White Paper and the embarrassment so clearly suffered by the Government when they are required to talk about public spending, it is clear that their view is quite simply that the public sector is a foreign country, even an enemy. They say that public spending is a drain on the national resources.

We have no such inhibitions and believe that public spending is not only desirable but necessary in the interests of making the investment in our economy without which we simply cannot face the future in a modern industrial world. We feel no embarrassment about that and we

intend to increase public spending. We shall make clear exactly how much and for what purposes we shall spend the money.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): How much and when?

Mr. Gould: We shall do it as soon as the Chief Secretary and the Prime Minister give us a general election. After that we shall begin to remedy the deficiencies in the Government's record. They have allowed public spending to be cut and cut again so that there is now a lack of investment in the training of our people and, as was made clear in the debate, in the research and development needed for our industrial future. We have committed ourselves, and do so again today, to increase public spending in the interests of the infrastructure required by a modern industrial economy. *[Interruption.]* Despite the barrage from the Government Benches, let me make it clear that we are not alone in saying that. The Labour party does not stand alone or make a unique claim on the virtues and benefits of public spending. Our claim is supported by a range of independent bodies, many of which are often close to the ear of the Government. Let me also make it clear that the level of public spending that we are talking about is in no sense excessive by international standards, and certainly not excessive by comparison with countries rather more successful than ours. It is certainly above the level thought to be appropriate in successful economies such as in West Germany and Canada.

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gould: My record on giving way is good.

Mr. Raffan: It is deplorable.

Mr. Gould: I shall not give way to the sort of rabble in the Conservative party who are making a noise.

We are talking about a level of public spending that would take us to the European average. At present we are below that European average. Our level of public spending is a little higher than that of Japan and the United States. However, I wonder whether the Conservative party would wish to align itself with either of those two examples. Japan is a rather special case, after all. The Japanese spend less than 1 per cent. of their national income on defence. Or does the Conservative party wish to align itself with the example of the United States? They certainly have a lower proportion of public spending than us, but is the long-term objective of the Conservative party to aim for American levels of public spending? Is it prepared to pay the cost, in terms of social divisiveness and bitterness, that comes from that level of public spending?

The Labour party would spend that public money on such things as the training that is now desperately needed, on the research and development that the House of Lords Select Committee made clear was desperately needed. We would spend it on the infrastructure which even the CBI now demands that we should make.

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): Will the hon. Gentleman clarify something about which we are in some doubt? He said that Labour would spend more money on training. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) made a commitment of a £6 billion training levy on industry. Does the hon. Gentleman agree with that, and what does he think will be its effects on industrial policy?

Mr. Gould: I am sorry to say that the hon. Gentleman has taken a leaf out of the conjuror's book so often used by the Chief Secretary. I invite the Chief Secretary now to concede that he wrote to me on that point. *[Interruption.]* Let me answer one question at a time. The Chief Secretary wrote to me on that point and he asked me that question. I refer him to a passage in *Hansard*, in which my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) made it perfectly clear that we are committed to a substantial training programme, to financing it from a mixture of public money and a levy from industry and that we have yet to decide what the level of those contributions should be. That is a perfectly proper position for a party in opposition to take.

It is not surprising that in this debate, allegedly about public spending, so much attention is being paid in the House and outside to the public sector borrowing requirement figures, because it is quite clear that that is thought to be the bull point that the Chancellor will make in his Budget preparations.

Let us be perfectly clear that that leeway of increased and additional revenues that the Chancellor now enjoys is not the reward of economic success. It is the fruits of profligacy. That is almost entirely a representation and reflection of increased VAT revenues on increased consumer spending, fueled by record family debt which produces a rapid deterioration in our balance of trade because it sucks in such huge quantities of imported manufactures.

Let us also be clear that, to the extent that these increased revenues are available on a sustainable basis—that remains a wide open question — they are also revenues available to the incoming Labour Government. We would make those revenues available for our investment programme. We would not make them available for the irresponsible and profligate spending boom which the Chancellor hopes will sweep him to a general election victory.

Mr. Nicholls: How does what the hon. Gentleman has just said square with the Fabian tract that he wrote in 1983 in which he called for more money to be left in the coffers of the people to ensure that they could buy the country back to full employment?

Mr. Gould: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right and takes the answer out of my mouth. That was 1983. We are now four years on. Incidentally, I hope that fisticuffs are not about to break out among Conservative Members.

In 1983 we were still enjoying a surplus in our manufactured trade. We now have a deficit which the Treasury forecasts will rise to £7·5 billion this year. If that deficit were produced in British factories, it would account for three quarters of a million jobs. That is the extent of the deterioration. That is why we now need to invest. That is why we know that leaving things to the Tory private market simply will not work. That theory has been tested to destruction over the past four years. We now know that, if investment is to be made, it must be made by the public sector.

I return to the Chancellor's much touted surplus available revenue. That surplus cannot be sustained because the consumer boom and the balance of payments,

[Mr. Gould]

in all its precarious position, simply cannot be sustained. If those revenues melt away it is perfectly clear that, if tax cuts are made in the Budget, they will have to be reversed after the election.

Here is a rare opportunity for the Chief Secretary or the Chancellor to answer a question that matters to the people of this country. We know, from the experience of 1979, that a Tory Government who offer cuts in direct income tax are perfectly prepared, despite the most solemn assurances given before an election, to double the rate of VAT after that election. In the past week there have again been reports that that is part of the hidden agenda that the Tories would follow if they were to win the next election. Part of that hidden agenda is a pay-as-you-go economy where everyone pays or stays away. Part of that agenda is for switching the burden from income tax, by which the rich will benefit so much, to indirect tax, where those who pay little or no income tax will have to shoulder the major burden.

It was significant that the Prime Minister, when confronted with those reports and asked to deny them, said simply that she had no knowledge of such plans. That is a formula that she uses when, for her own purposes, she wants to suggest that the Government are nothing to do with her. I wish to hear from the lips of the Chief Secretary or of the Chancellor, a categorical denial that any such plans are being worked on in the Treasury now. Here is an opportunity. Let us hear that.

Mr. MacGregor: I will give the hon. Gentleman a much clearer answer than was given in the letter that he mentioned earlier. On 12 February my right hon. Friend the Chancellor in his letter to the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), made the facts clear about what the hon. Gentleman described as stories going around. The Chancellor said:

"Needless to say, I can confirm that these are not the Government's tax proposals".

Mr. Gould: That was a very ingenious attempt. It was not, however, an answer to my question. My question is, will the Chief Secretary deny that there is no work going on in the Treasury on proposals to switch the burden from income tax to indirect tax after the next general election? I invite a rather better answer than was given. If he cannot give us that categorical denial — with all the sharp recollection of our experience in 1979—we shall know what to expect after the next general election. We know what the people would have to expect after the next general election, if the Tories were to win. We know that the tax cuts, whatever they may be in the Budget, will be taken away in the most damaging possible way, in a way that will be damaging to their family budgets, to the inflation rate, to employment and to the economy.

The debate gives us a clear opportunity to put before the British people the sort of choice which they will face at the general election. On the one hand, the Government are committed to reining back the public sector on ideological grounds. The public sector alone, as we have demonstrated over recent years, can now make the investment that we need. At the same time, the Government are committed to fuelling, for electoral reasons, a consumer boom that simply intensifies the damage that we have suffered from that lack of investment. On the other hand, we have a Labour party committed to using that public money not in irresponsible tax cuts but in investment in our economic future—an investment which, if it is not made, will leave us unable to compete and condemn us to a future as a Third world country. I have no doubt that the British people, who are often a little more clever than some Conservative Members assume, will make the right choice and that we shall have a Labour Government after the next general election.

5.40 pm

Mr. Terence Higgins (Worthing): The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) referred to conjuring tricks, the essential element of which is that the way in which they are done remains a mystery. After his speech, there should be no doubt that there is a considerable air of mystery as to how a Labour Government would ever finance the spending plans that we believe that they have in mind, although the hon. Gentleman did not give us any quantitative analysis of them.

I thank my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary for his remarks about the report of the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service. General macro-economic analysis is concentrated much more in the debates on the autumn statement and the Budget. Therefore, it seemed appropriate to the Committee that our report on this occasion should deal in rather specific terms with the White Paper, although, as always, no doubt the debate will range wide.

I shall pick up one or two of the points made by my right hon. Friend. It is true that the White Paper has grown enormously from 81 pages in 1969 to 451 pages in the one that we are debating this evening. That reflects the significant change in the way in which the House deals with these matters. In turn, that reflects the change in our financial procedures, because Select Committees as a whole have an opportunity to look into public expenditure in some depth and debate it in the course of the Estimates days that are available. That being so, the White Paper provides a good framework within which the Estimates themselves can be considered.

In that context, I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary will agree that there is some similarity of interest between the Select Committees and the Treasury to the extent that the Select Committees and the House are allowed only to reduce public expenditure and not to increase it. At all events, it is important that we should look carefully at the way in which the White Paper has changed. In particular, on the question of the value of money and what we get in exchange for that expenditure, my right hon. Friend pointed out that we deal now not only with what is being planned to be spent but what we are to get for it. Individual Select Committees monitoring the particular Department with which they are concerned will be able to use this as a reasonable basis.

The way in which the performance indicators have been set out in the White Paper is a great improvement. However, I hope that my right hon. Friend will give careful consideration, when he replies formally to the report, to our suggestion about the changes in the debate on the White Paper. At the moment, there is not much time in the parliamentary timetable for the matters to be examined in detail. It seems a great deal more important that we should have an input from the House in June or July about the future pattern of public expenditure, rather than debating it at this stage, when effectively we are carrying out a post

mortem. I hope that my right hon. Friends the Chief Secretary and the Chancellor will carefully consider that point.

The hon. Member for Dagenham spoke about monitoring public expenditure, on which there has been a significant change, because the principle now adopted is that it should be a declining share of gross domestic product—a rather ghastly ratio of general Government expenditure to gross domestic product; jargon expressed by "GDE/GDP". None the less, the table on page 37 shows the way in which that variable fluctuates, and, in the light of what my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary said, we have to put much more emphasis than before on the planning total if we are to get an idea of the annual basis, and whether the Government are achieving their objectives. I welcome the hon. Gentleman's comments on our other point, that it is important that we should not, in relying on the new ratio, anticipate growth that has not yet taken place before making spending commitments.

I now make two points that are not in the Treasury Committee report, although those who study our proceedings will notice that there is reference to them. The first is overfunding. Over time, the Government have adopted a policy of overfunding the PSBR. I do not want to go into detail on the points made about that, but the Committee was concerned about the way in which the Government appear to be purchasing gilt edged securities and to that extent might be underfunding. Therefore, we noted with interest the answer that my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary gave the Committee, that the policy is neither to overfund nor to underfund.

What has happened is in some ways interesting. The Government's policy is much closer to what would have been regarded as a true monetarist policy than was their policy in 1979-80. They are managing to create a situation in which the borrowing requirement is substantially lower than it was previously and, to that extent, they should be able to control the money supply at significantly lower interest rates. In 1979-80, there was a large borrowing requirement and high interest rates, which is not what would originally be regarded as monetarist policy.

That being so, the present situation on interest rates is somewhat paradoxical. It is difficult to avoid the impression that they are high simply to maintain the value of international sterling. If that is so, it should be possible to fund the PSBR, which generally now is expected to be much lower than was originally thought, with great ease. If that is so, we have to ask why we cannot reduce our interest rates, because the foreign exchange markets ought to be recognising the improvement on the borrowing requirement that the Government have made, and to that extent sterling ought to be stronger.

These are complex matters, and there is an important relationship between interest rates covering loans of different maturities. None the less, these problems need to be resolved, and I hope that the Committee will be able to return to them when it comes to consider my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's Budget statement. Clearly, there is still concern about what the Governor of the Bank of England has called the overhanging glacier of liquidity, and there are undoubtedly fears about the prospect of a possible Labour Government, although I do not believe that that will happen. None the less, such a possibility may be having an adverse effect on the market. As the moment of the general election approaches, interest rates may be higher than they would otherwise be.

In that context, I shall take up the point implicit in the remarks made by the hon. Member for Dagenham. Many of us were surprised at the categorical statement that if my right hon. Friend the Chancellor were to cut taxation in the next Budget the Labour party, if it came to office, would raise taxation to the previous level. Iain Macleod always pointed out that Conservative Governments cut taxes, and Labour Governments raise them. However, such a clear-cut statement from the hon. Gentleman caused some surprise. On reflection, it was rather a clever ploy. Such a categorical statement gives the impression that all that a Labour Government would do is put up taxes to cover any cut that my right hon. Friend might make. However, it is clear from the figures about which we have heard, but which the hon. Gentleman refused point-blank to give, that there would not only be the restoration of any cuts that my right hon. Friend might now make, but massive increases, not just for those on the top rates but more generally.

Mr. Gould: I am provoked to intervene by the right hon. Gentleman's use of the statement by Iain Macleod, which has entered the popular mythology and is repeated ad nauseam by Conservative politicans. Will the right hon. Gentleman not concede that, far from cutting taxes for the vast majority of ordinary people, the Government have increased their tax burden, and that of the country as a whole? If one takes into account not only income tax but national insurance contributions and indirect taxes such as VAT, the burden for ordinary families and the country as a whole, as a proportion of income, is now higher than it was in 1979. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman, with his customary fairness and accuracy, will concede that point.

Mr. Higgins: Iain Macleod always talked in the context of the total taxation yield. In that context, I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's point.

An important point is to be made in terms of the general economic situation as we see it now, and that is that we need to maintain a balance between public expenditure on the one hand and tax cuts, and reduced borrowing and interest rates on the other. We effectively have a three-legged stool. A balance needs to be maintained.

I certainly welcome the priorities that have been set forth in the public expenditure White Paper for various items of public expenditure. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will be able to cut taxes in the Budget that we eagerly anticipate. Having said that, it is important also that we should do everything that we can to reduce interest rates. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor genuinely has an opportunity to achieve our objectives in all three areas. If he succeeds in doing that, it will be unusual. It is a reflection of the overall economic situation that my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary set out so well in his speech.

One aspect is constantly raised in my constituency. The Treasury Select Committee has regularly argued that the proceeds of asset sales, including council house sales, should be treated as a means of funding the public sector borrowing requirement rather than reducing public expenditure. That is certainly the case in respect of council house sales. Quite clearly, it is a temporary arrangement. If we are to get the right set of priorities, despite the Government's good housing record, there is a case for

[Mr. Higgins]

considering whether the 20 per cent. limit on the use of such funds by local authorities should be maintained at the present level. There is, as I understand it, nearly a £8 billion overhang at the moment, with the anticipation of another £2·1 billion coming from the sale of council houses and other local authority assets in 1987-88.

Given the fact that housebuilding and restoration has clearly been shown by the housing stock condition inquiry to be badly needed, given that those activities are labour-intensive and that there is some excess capacity in the industry, and given that the import content is low, I hope that this aspect of the matter, although not strictly a budgetary one, might reasonably be considered in a budgetary context. Local authorities — not least Conservative local authorities—which have so enthusiastically adopted the policy of council house sales, none the less consider that it is unfair that they should not be allowed to spend a higher proportion of the proceeds that they have managed to obtain from that source.

I do not for one moment underestimate the points that will be made about borrowing and so on, but the reality is that, because they have not been allowed to spend the money, many local authorities have repaid debts. Nonetheless, if they were allowed again to finance operations of this kind, it would enable them simply to restore the position.

I recognise that my right hon. Friend must look at the matter in an overall context. For the reasons that I have mentioned, perhaps the priorities in the White Paper are not exactly right. Having said that, the White Paper, both in presentation and in content, is a great improvement. The hard work that my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary has put into it is worthy of congratulation. The overall approach that the Government are adopting is the right one.

5.54 pm

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): I shall begin my remarks by examining the overall levels of expenditure that have been forecast in the White Paper; then I shall say something about the make-up of the forecasts before going on to deal with the general economic situation, and in particular the recent PSBR figures.

In the White Paper we see the reason the mini-boom began during the year. Expenditure is £5·8 billion higher than the Government anticipated. Of course, the largest part of that amount — about £4·5 billion — has come from contingency reserves. The remainder has come from increased additional expenditure of £1·3 billion. That figure is made up substantially of higher social security spending brought about by higher unemployment, higher housing benefits and higher supplementary benefit, plus a substantial increase in public sector pay of about £2 billion. That amount includes, of course, the teachers' pay settlement which is a substantial amount of money. This has led to the substantial increase in public spending in the current year. We forecast a £4·75 billion increase in public spending during 1987-88.

Although, on the face of it, that seems to be welcome news for those who use public sector services and, indeed, for those who work in the public sector, we must ask how adequate those sums are in meeting their needs. One of the Treasury Committee advisers has suggested that the increase in the cost of public sector services is considerably higher than the provision of other services outside the public sector. Indeed, it is so substantial that there is likely to be a 6 per cent. increase in addition to the level of price increases in the private sector over the next two years. That implies that, in substantial areas of public expenditure, we shall see a decline in the volume of services, even though expenditure is increasing. Expenditure is expected to increase by about 0·5 per cent. next year, and by about 3 per cent. in 1988-89. If the increase in costs is to be matched, I calculate that, by the end of the period, there must be a clawback of about £6 billion to meet the sort of figures that the Government envisage.

I should be grateful if the Minister will comment on the point that I have raised. It is obviously one of some substance. I should not want necessarily to accept all the advice of the Treasury Committee. If one looks at the inputs into the cost of public sector services, the pay settlements that have been reached and the likely trend in pay increases in the public sector, one will see that, undoubtedly, the cost of public sector services will be higher than the general increase in costs. What does that imply for the volume of services that will be provided over the period of the White Paper?

As for capital expenditure, to which the Chief Secretary to the Treasury referred, I do not draw the same conclusions as he does from the figures in the White Paper. The public expenditure figures have not helped public sector investment very much. According to the definition that is most favourable to the Government, which is to be found on page 16 of volume II of the White Paper, capital spending on assets, together with capital grants to the private sector, are programmed to fall by nearly 10 per cent. in real terms over the next three years, and as a percentage of general Government expenditure it is programmed to fall from 13·3 per cent. to 11·6 per cent. by 1989-90.

The effect on the construction industry is quite marked. Government expenditure on construction will fall from 6·4 per cent. in 1986-87 to 5·9 per cent. over three years as a share of total Government expenditure. If these figures are true, the Government are moving in exactly the wrong direction regarding capital spending on assets and capital grants to the private sector. That is the area of expenditure that could most directly generate jobs. It represents investment in the capital assets of the country. The decline that is outlined in the White Paper is a mistaken policy and we on these Benches would want to reverse it.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): The hon. Gentleman is dealing with infrastructure expenditure, and I am wondering why he has not referred to private spending on the infrastructure—for example, on the Dartford tunnel, the Thames crossing or even the Channel tunnel. Are they unacceptable forms of expenditure?

Mr. Wrigglesworth: No, not at all. I should be delighted if those projects went ahead. They are supported by those who sit on these Benches. The more that can be arranged, the better for the whole country, for the private sector and for Government revenues. We have proposed funding of that kind over a long period and we very much welcome it, but today we are debating the figures in this White Paper which represent Government expenditure. I welcome private sector investment of the kind that the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) has outlined, but I am referring to the Government's plans for

their own expenditure and the contribution that the Government can make to the construction industry and to the whole economy by putting capital expenditure on the right lines.

Another glaring feature of the White Paper is the continuing rundown of the Department of Trade and Industry's budget. In our view, that confirms the absence of any real strategy for industry. According to the 1986-87 outturn, the Department of Trade and Industry's budget will fall by 47 per cent. in real terms. I accept that in some respects that fall represents a welcome lack of subsidies to areas of the public sector that have received subsidies in the past, but the total includes a further rundown of the regional aid programme. That is most regrettable and it is directly contrary to the direction in which it should be moving, since the regions have been hit so hard by the recession.

Regional and general industrial support has already fallen by over £500 million in the last five years to £368 million this year. A further fall of £280 million is projected by 1989-90—a cut in real terms of more than one third. The White Paper reveals the almost complete elimination of assistance for major industries such as aerospace and shipbuilding that are still struggling and that require the support of the public sector if they are to thrive and remain in being as major forces in world markets in years to come.

In addition, export credit guarantees have been drastically scaled down arising from the recovery of claims because of the international debt problems. Smuggled into the White Paper is a further moratorium on regional assistance. That is said by the Government to be due to a

"transitional bulge in regional development grant awards, resulting from the overlap of the two schemes."

To businesses that are waiting for grants and whose cash flows are impaired and that are having to borrow to cover the shortfall, those words are meaningless. We very much regret this substantial cut in the transfer of resources to the regions because they are struggling so hard, with unemployment levels of over 20 per cent. The Government should be addressing that problem. Indeed, apart from addressing it, they should do everything they possibly can not to cut public expenditure but to increase it to help the regions.

As for the general economic position, the Government deserve the congratulations of the House on two substantial achievements. First, they have returned output to the level at which it stood in 1980. After seven years in office, they have returned us to the 1980 level of output.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): But not in manufacturing.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: The hon. Gentleman is right. Output in manufacturing is still 4 per cent. below the position at which it stood when this Government came to office, but at least the Government ought to be congratulated on having returned output to the 1980 level. With a bit of luck, before the next general election they might even return output to its 1979 level.

We must also congratulate the Government on the first-rate public sector borrowing requirement figures. They take us back to the achievement of my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1969. At last we have returned to the 1969 level. It is a little bit like playing snakes and ladders—sliding down the snake back to "Start." We are supposed to cheer because we have at last got back to "Start" again.

Mr. Mitchell: The right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) lost the Labour party the 1970 election.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: I do not know whether that will happen this time. However, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury will crow too soon if he thinks that getting back to "Start" on the snakes and ladders board will cheer up the country.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Norman Lamont): Does the hon. Gentleman think that in 1979 the Labour Government had returned output to the level at which it stood in 1974?

Mr. Wrigglesworth: It behoves us to look at what is happening in the real economy—at what is happening to people's jobs, people's housing and the position of the National Health Service—rather than at the bogus figures that the Government parade before the country. We hear that 1 million new jobs have been created in the last two years—a fantastic figure. But what is the true figure? The true figure is 239,000 full-time job equivalents. There are 1·6 million fewer jobs today than when this Government came to office in 1979. That is the truth of the matter, not the bogus figures that are being paraded before the country.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): Is the hon. Gentleman denying that there are 40,000 more people in work today in the northern region than there were in 1983?

Mr. Wrigglesworth: I am asking the hon. Gentleman and his right hon. Friends to look more carefully at the composition of the work force and to recognise that the job of a fitter, for example, who is the head of a household, who was earning a substantial wage before he was made redundant, cannot really be compared with the part-time job in a retail outlet that his wife is now doing. She is earning substantially less pay and is working only part-time. That is what has happened to the economy over the last two years. There has been a substantial increase in the number of part-time female jobs. I welcome the creation of any job, whether it be part-time, female, male or any other category. I welcome any job creation. However, to try to perpetuate the myth that those jobs are the same as those which have been lost since 1979 beggars belief. The facts are known, as the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) will know, in places such as Cleveland, Darlington, Northumberland, Scotland, Wales and the north-west where real jobs have been lost.

Mr. Maples: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would not want to mislead the House, but he said earlier that output had only just returned to the 1980 level. According to the figures published in *Economic Trends* over that period, gross domestic product has risen by 14 per cent. and the total output of production industries has risen by 10 per cent.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: I believe that those figures have been published in the past week. I have not seen them, but I will check them very carefully. My point is that it has taken the Government seven years to reach today's position.

The Government have knocked the economy flat on its back and now that it has risen to its knees once again they

[Mr. Wrigglesworth]

expect us to cheer. It is very nice that the economy has got back on to its knees again, but we will only cheer when it is fully back on its feet and growing substantially once more from the point at which the Government took over in 1979. When the Government have achieved that, we will join in the cheers. However, the Government cannot expect us to accept this bogus achievement which they continue to put before the House and country.

The Government, if they want real growth in the economy sustained over a period, must change the course of the economic policies that they have pursued. They must confront the whole problem of pay levels which have existed and which exist now. The evidence now suggests that the downturn in pay settlements resulting from lower inflation has halted. The CBI pay survey published on Tuesday shows figures stable at 4·9 per cent. The earnings figure, which has been stable at 7·5 per cent. for the past two years, jumped to 7·75 per cent. last week with higher overtime payments and bonuses resulting from higher economic activity.

The industrial relations research group survey showed a slight turn-up in settlements, from 5 per cent. to 5·2 per cent. Unit labour costs, the fundamental measure of our competitiveness in manufacturing, rose from an annual rate of 3·4 per cent. to 4·2 per cent. in December, faster than productivity growth. The latest Bank of England quarterly report estimates that, in the third quarter of 1986, the increase in unit labour costs in manufacturing for the major overseas economies was stable at about 1·5 per cent. over the figure for the previous year. That is the contrast. The figure is 1·5 per cent. overseas, yet there is a rise from 3·4 per cent. to 4·2 per cent. in this country. As long as our competitiveness is eroded at that rate, we are in serious trouble, the decline will continue and jobs will not be created. The level of unemployment, as the Treasury model shows, will remain around the 3 million figure for years to come.

The Government must take some action more than mere exhortation. However, I suppose that it is hoping for too much to expect them even to acknowledge that there is a problem before the election. However, the consumer boom will continue and our competitiveness will be eroded as long as the Government leave the problem unattended.

Another point to which reference has already been made tonight is that action must be taken to ensure that interest rates are reduced from their present high and damaging levels. The present levels are damaging to individuals through mortgages and any borrowing in which an individual may be indulging. It is also damaging to companies which must face such costs as an increased overhead, and that damages their competitive position in comparison with overseas companies.

The alliance has advocated for a long time—and I hope that in his Budget approach the Chancellor will give further thought to this—joining the European monetary system exchange rate mechanism to give us greater stability in our exchange rate and to ensure that the need for the level of interest rates that we have at present is reduced. Hopefully, with the strength of support from other central banks and through the greater discipline that entry to the EMS would bring, we would have lower interest rates. We hope that interest rates would, on average, be 2 per cent. lower than at present.

The most important point, especially in the light of yesterday's PSBR figures, is that the Government should not use any additional funds available in the fiscal adjustment to embark on cuts in the standard rate of income tax. With 3 million people unemployed, such cuts cannot be a priority. If the Chancellor uses the resources available to him in investment and targeting expenditure towards things which will bring down the level of unemployment—the alliance has recounted a series of suggestions in previous alliance Budget statements and we will make similar proposals in a few weeks time—we can succeed in bringing the level of unemployment down substantially. If the political will is not present to achieve that, that will not happen. We have made it clear that we will vote against cuts in the standard rate of tax if the Chancellor chooses to do that with the available resources in his Budget.

It is irresponsible for an Opposition party to determine its fiscal and taxation strategy without seeing the full shape of the Budget and the full state of the economy as outlined in the Budget statement. We will determine what taxation measures we will put before the country once we have seen what the Budget proposes for the country. Perhaps a lower rate of tax would help us to introduce the integrated tax and benefit system which we have proposed to replace the present system. We want to examine all the adjustments which the Chancellor will introduce. He may lower thresholds, change the standard rate and other rates of tax and benefits may be affected. We will want to consider all of those factors and consider how they affect the integrated scheme that we foresee before we determine the levels and rates of taxation that we would support after the Budget.

We do not regard cuts in the standard rate of tax as a priority. The Chancellor's priority should be to create jobs. We do not believe that the expenditure outlined in the Budget for the next three years is a strategy for job creation. All the signs are that the Chancellor's Budget on 17 March will not create jobs either. Clearly, the Government are pursuing an election strategy rather than a strategy for the long-term interests of British industry and the country. The people of this country will recognise that, and that will be shown in the result of the Greenwich by-election—as it will be shown, in due course, in the result of the general election.

6.19 pm

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): The hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) was less than generous in his remarks about the Government's achievements. He will find that gross domestic product has risen by about 12 per cent. since 1979. His final remark suggests that he and I have canvassed different streets in Greenwich.

I have a feeling of sadness when I attend this annual debate. It always seems to be an occasion when another nail is driven into the coffin of the policy of reducing public expenditure, on which the Conservative party came to power in 1979. It was during last year's debate that my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury accepted for the first time that the objective of reducing public spending in real terms had been abandoned. He said:

"The White Paper shows that for the three years ahead public spending in real terms is expected to remain broadly stable at around this level."

The House will recall that on that occasion the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service cast some doubt on the credibility of the Government's spending targets. In column 552 I said:

"I must say that based on past performance I am sceptical."

My right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary strongly countered this argument and stated that the reserves for the next three years were higher than those set out in any previous White Paper. It should be of great concern to the House that the scepticism that many of us expressed last year has been proved correct. The Government's optimism has been misplaced. In the current year they have spent the whole of the sum in reserve and spending is estimated to overrun by a further £1·3 billion.

As usual, local government spending is in the forefront of the overspending. Year after year, it has been one of the principal causes of the Government's failure to meet their spending targets. A major element this year is the provision for the increases in teachers' salaries. On any assessment, the Government have made a most generous offer and the additional spending would be well worth accepting if we could be sure that we would obtain a relative improvement in our children's education. I am extremely sceptical that we shall see the improvement that the nation needs so desperately without taking education out of local government control and establishing a national service and a national curriculum. If we do not opt for that radical solution—it will take a great deal of courage—we shall never winkle out the extreme Left wing in ILEA and in some of the authorities in control of large cities, such as Hull on the border of my constituency, which are ruining our children's education.

Despite all their manful efforts, the Government have been unable to keep local authority spending under control. I can see a further financial crisis on the horizon, for two reasons. First, there are millions of pounds outstanding in uncollected rents for council housing. Secondly, there is the creative accounting of a number of Left-wing boroughs that have spent far in excess of their relevant expenditure guidelines. They have done so by mortgaging their children's future and that of their grandchildren. We cannot get on with the job of reforming local authority finance too quickly. Until everyone in the community contributes to local government finance and has a personal interest in it, there will be no return to financial rectitude in local affairs.

The second major area of overspending is, as usual, expenditure on the Department of Health and Social Security. The greatest single item is supplementary benefit payments, which in the current year are no less than 10·4 per cent. above the estimates. This is clearly an example of grossly inadequate forecasting or of expenditure running out of control.

In evidence to the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service, officials gave two reasons for the overspending. First, there has been an increase in special payments. I am pleased to note that the Government are taking action on that front. Secondly, there has been an increase in board-and-lodging payments. It is not the first year that that has happened. Last year, 1985-86, social security spending overran by £1·7 billion.

I pointed out in the debate last year that some items in the Budget were running out of control. I said:

"Now we have yet another explosion, which is worrying me greatly and which will cost my right hon. Friends at the Treasury a great deal of money". —[*Official Report*, 20 February 1986; Vol. 92, c. 501-54.]

I was referring to the establishment of private old people's homes being subsidised by the DHSS to the extent of about £160 a week. My fears have been borne out and these homes are mushrooming throughout the country. Hotel owners find that it is very profitable to have 100 per cent. occupation of their rooms and a subsidy from the Government. Those with large houses are joining the bandwagon.

A new abuse is arising which has only recently been brought to my attention. Many of those who are running private homes are suggesting to potential residents that before entering them as residents they should dispose of their assets and wealth to their families so that after a few weeks they will be able to claim DHSS payments instead of paying the cost of their board and lodging out of their own resources, which will have been quietly spirited away to their families. This racket must be stopped if we are ever to get a grip on this area of expenditure.

The Government's new target is to reduce public expenditure as a proportion of GDP. Again, I think that the Government are being optimistic. If we make an adjustment for the proceeds of privatisation and for the unwinding of the coal strike, we see that, in the current year, expenditure has risen by 3·6 per cent. in real terms, which is marginally above the estimated growth in GDP. Even more disappointing are the Government's figures on page 19 of the White Paper, which show that general Government expenditure as a percentage of GDP for 1986-87, the current year, is estimated to be 43·25 per cent. That is the same percentage as in 1978-79 when the Conservative party came into power.

The planned expenditure increase next year is £4·7 billion, which is an increase in real terms of 2 per cent. This means that in the Budget this year the Government will probably be unable to achieve one of their principal policy aims, which is to reduce the standard rate of income tax to 25p in the pound. If the Government had been able to adhere to their original plans, it would have been feasible to reduce the standard rate to 25p this year. There is a glimmer of hope in the White Paper, for the Government seem to be determined in 1988-89 to return to financial rectitude. The trend of increased public spending is planned to cease in that year. It is planned that it will stay broadly level in real terms. This is welcome news for those of us who believed in the Government's original policy if the plan can be achieved. Given the Government's performance, we could be excused for having reservations about their ability to adhere to their future spending target.

I am sceptical, for three reasons. First, in the current year, with a considerable reserve, we overspent. Next year, the reserve will be nearly £1 billion less. Secondly, in the current year, inflation has been falling faster than expected. Therefore, it should have been easier to adhere to planned levels of expenditure. It is probable that next year inflation will rise slightly. I think that we have seen signs of that in recent weeks. Thirdly, I think that the Government will experience great difficulty in keeping public sector wage increases down to the level of inflation. The teachers have already been given a generous offer and I understand that the firemen have settled for an increase

[Mr. John Townend]

that is about double the rate of inflation. Public pay will be the key to whether the Government can achieve their targets.

I cannot help but feel that the White Paper is a further retreat by the Treasury. Expenditure on education, the DHSS and local authorities has risen significantly and most other Departments have increased their expenditure to a lesser extent. As a Yorkshire Member, I support the argument of my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) about public expenditure per capita in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, which is far higher than in the north of England.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Or in the west midlands.

Mr. Townend: We have just as many problems in the north as there are in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, if not more. Therefore, I strongly urge my right hon. Friend to start to set the balance right in the next White Paper.

It seems that the steam has run out of our efforts to cut spending. However, I hope that my colleagues on the Treasury Bench will get a second wind after the election—when they are back in power—and persuade their colleagues that the country still wants better value for money and a reduced burden of taxation.

The attack on waste must continue. Before long, we must have the courage to attack the DHSS budget. The Health Service, like local government, is still not under complete financial control. In many areas it is not cost-effective. A major problem that we have not solved is the exploitation of the welfare state through the black economy.

Despite my disappointment at the rise in public spending, it must be said that the Government have been able to absorb these increases because of the success of their economic policies. My right hon. Friends deserve the congratulation of not only the House but the whole country. As with so many British achievements, this achievement is recognised to a greater extent abroad. By reducing taxation, increasing incentives, helping small business, smashing the trade union monopoly power and giving back to management the right to manage, but, above all, by bringing down the level of inflation dramatically, the Government have achieved the longest period of sustained economic growth since the war. Britain's wealth has expanded at a considerable rate. Tax revenues are soaring. That means that, at the same time, we have been able to absorb some £5 billion to £6 billion loss of oil revenue, to reduce public sector borrowing and plan to spend in the next year nearly £5 billion more on health, education and social services. I am sure, in addition, that in the Budget my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will be able to bring public sector borrowing down to an even lower level to help us reduce interest rates and reduce the standard rate of income tax, although I do not expect him to be able to bring it down to 25p in the pound.

Set against such widespread achievements, our failure to reduce spending comes into perspective. At least at the next election, anybody who accuses the Government of cutting expenditure will be guilty of a blatant lie.

6.32 pm

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): Millions of people outside Parliament will wonder what the hon. Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) means when he says that taxes have been cut in the past six or seven years. Everybody who has objectively examined the situation knows that taxation, including direct and indirect taxes and national insurance contributions, have increased substantially since 1979.

I want to turn to the theme that was repeated by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury—value for money. We all want value for money, whether it is public or private money. I want to examine that proposition by reference to one or two problems.

I refer first to housing. The housing crisis that Britain faces is the worst that we have experienced in the past 50 years, perhaps even in the past 70 years. Public sector housing has been cut by two thirds since 1979, since the Government came to power, and total housebuilding—public and private—has declined by more than 100,000 a year. More and more houses in the public and private sectors are rotting through lack of maintenance. It has been estimated by, I think, the National Economic Development Council that we need to spend at least £18 billion just to preserve the existing stock of houses.

Let us consider the housing scenario. We have hundreds of thousands of building workers on the dole—brickies, plumbers, electricians, slaters and plasterers—who are all anxious to work. We have a large and increasing number of homeless families. We talk about the EEC mountains of beef and butter; we have mountains of building materials. The *Monthly Digest of Statistics* shows that in November 1986—the latest figures available—there were 328 million bricks lying around the country, 6·5 million sq m of plasterboard, 7 million tonnes of slate and 6·5 million tonnes of cement. We have the workers anxious to work and the building materials.

Local councils—the right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins), who is the distinguished Chairman of the Treasury and Civil Service Committee referred to this matter—have a cash mountain from the compulsory sale of council houses of nearly £4 billion. That is £75 for every man, woman and child in Britain. The Government refuse to allow local councils to spend that money to employ those building trade workers to use those raw materials to build the houses for the countless hundreds of thousands who are waiting for homes. Is it value for money to leave these resources, whether they are manpower or the raw materials, in the stockyards all over the country? Is it value for money to spend £20 billion a year to keep between 3 million and 4 million people on the dole, including many thousands of building trade workers?

Let me give another example of value for money. The Chief Secretary to the Treasury quoted the reduction in the number of civil servants. That is true. However, the Public Accounts Committee and others have shown that the number of tax inspectors and investigators has been reduced, whereas it has been conclusively proved that, if they were employed, the amount of tax revenue that they could claw back out of the black economy would far outweigh the cost of their salaries. These are the false economies that the Government are pursuing. That point has been made repeatedly by the Public Accounts Committee, trade unions and others, but the Government

just say that they have reduced the number of tax inspectors. That has resulted in the loss of millions of pounds of tax revenue.

I have referred to the cost of unemployment. The Government have presided over the highest unemployment in the history of the United Kingdom. We have never known a period when between 3 million and 4 million people — probably more — have been unemployed, not producing a single penny of wealth, and costing the taxpayer £20 billion a year. Is that value for money?

Let me give an example which is slightly smaller but just as important. We had a debate on the Royal Navy a few days ago. One of the points that was raised was the proposed privatisation of the royal dockyards in Rosyth and Devonport. No other major military power in the world has sought to privatise an asset which is so important to the national interest and particularly the defence interest. The Public Accounts Committee and the Defence Select Committee have said that the dockyards will cost more under privatisation rather than less. The Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement, who replied to the Navy debate, cited the exact figure that the Government would save—£320 million over the next 10 years, and more later — on the privatisation of Devonport dockyard. That was a meaningless figure. I do not know where it came from. I wrote to the hon. Gentleman asking how that figure had been arrived at. An assumption must have been made on the number of redundancies in the dockyard during that period. I challenge any Minister to produce a balance sheet to show how that money will be saved. Neither the Public Accounts Committee nor the Select Committee on Defence has supported that claim. On the contrary, they have said that it will cost more. That is the result of the Government's dogmatic approach to the problem.

I give another example — the police and law and order. If there is one item of public expenditure which has roared ahead since 1979 it is expenditure on the police and law and order. The consequence has been more crime—both violent and otherwise—than before in our history. The Government are throwing public money at the police and law and order, but the crime rates are increasing remorselessly. Value for money? I wonder. I have been burgled four times in 18 months. I have had the police there dusting their powder around my house and never a word from them. There was no question of detection. That is what is happening under the Government.

The Government should not talk about value for money. Conservative Members should go to any university lecturer, any school master or any nursing sister in a hospital and ask them what is happening to public expenditure and value for money. University staff are leaving in droves to go to America and elsewhere because of the treatment received by the universities. This country's future depends more than anything else on the way in which we educate our children in our schools and our young men and women in our universities. Their treatment during the past seven or eight years has been a disgrace.

It is said that, if the Chancellor has the bonanza which we believe he has, there are various ways to use it—hand it out as an election bribe, use it in the interests of the Tory party, use it to invest in services, whether they are schools, universities, roads, railways, transport infrastructure or housing—or hand it to the taxpayers who, in the main, will be those who need it least. We are in good company when we say that it is in the national interest that that cash should be spent on improving the national economy in the short and long term — training, education facilities, housing and the rest.

The Tory Reform Group has written an open letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. There may be Conservative Members present who are distinguished presidents or vice-presidents of that organisation. Many Ministers have held those posts, including the Secretary of State for Energy, who I think is now the honorary president. In the letter, the Tory Reform Group argues

"any revenue the Exchequer has to disperse should be concentrated on investment in housing, urban renewal and in our nation's infrastructure in order further to reduce unemployment."

The primary target should be to get the building trade workers employed—take them off the £20 billion a year which is paid in unemployment benefit and get them building houses, factories and the rest. That is what the Tory Reform Group says. Why is the Secretary of State for Energy not here saying, "Hear, hear" to that? The Tory Reform Group's past vice-presidents include several Ministers in the present Government who would all unite with us in saying, "We must get the economy moving. To hell with the election results for the Tory party. The national interest is far more important than the Prime Minister's ego." The right hon. Lady is the greatest disaster that the country has had in living memory. We shall pay the price.

I think that the Financial Secretary to the Treasury is a wet, or he was. He might have dried out since he became a Minister.

Mr. Dalyell: He was.

Mr. Hamilton: The right hon. Gentleman knows very well that if the national interest were the paramount consideration, the resources which the Chancellor will have at his disposal in the Budget would be far better spent on the measures advocated by the Tory Reform Group rather than on proposals with which the Chancellor seeks to bribe the electorate.

Mr. Fallon: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the same document issued by the Tory Reform Group also asks my right hon. Friend the Chancellor to reduce the burden of taxation on the low paid? Does he accept that about 7 million people earn less than £7,000 a year and that they are looking forward to tax cuts in the Budget?

Mr. Hamilton: If all of the £3 billion or £4 billion which the Chancellor has at his disposal is channelled into those people's pockets, our response will be very different. If the records since 1979 are any guide, I suspect that the bulk of the tax concessions will be to those earning more than £20,000 or £30,000 a year, as has happened in almost every Budget since 1979.

The Financial Secretary may like to challenge that statement. If he would care to stand up and say that it is not true, I should like to get that on the record. The facts are there. We all know that the tax concessions made in almost every Budget since 1979 have been primarily to the much better off.

Mr. Marples: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hamilton: I promised that I would be quick. I want to put on the record some more of the Tory Reform Group's propositions. According to a newspaper article,

[Mr. Hamilton]

"Among other proposals the group recommends that sterling should be a full member of the European Monetary System, there should be industrial derating and tax incentives should be introduced to encourage private investment in infrastructure coupled with increased spending on urban renewal."

The group called for a substantial increase in the child benefit and referred to similar matters.

Between now and the general election, which I think will be in May or June—the Prime Minister will cut and run while the going is good—the major debate will be on whether it is wise, acceptable, right or fair to give substantial election bribes in the hope that people will be gulled into voting for the Prime Minister for a third time or whether that money should be channelled into public investment in the ways advocated by the Tory Reform Group, the CBI, the NEDC and the Labour party—public investment for the nation's long-term public good. Opinion polls show that the vast majority of people realise the terrible plight of their schools, hospitals, housing and everything that makes for a good quality of life and believe that they need massive public investment.

Mr. Richard Ryder (Mid-Norfolk): In Devon.

Mr. Hamilton: Not least in Devon. I was going to conclude my speech, but I shall not do so yet. The hon. Gentleman referred to Devon and Cornwall. Those areas regularly return Conservative, Liberal and SDP Members. The consequence of that is the poverty, low pay, deprivation in housing, health and transport that everybody can see in the south-west. I shall be a Member of Parliament in that area after the next election.

In 1979, 22,317 new houses were started in the south-west region, of which only 4,110 were in the public sector and available for renting. That was bad enough, but in 1985, after six or seven years of the Conservative Government which, by and large, the people of that area helped to elect, that figure was cut from 4,110 to a miserable 2,591. That is what the electors in Devon voted for, and that is what they have damn well got. I hope that those figures will be improved on when there is a Labour Government and when I become a Labour Member of Parliament in that area.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) was asked repeatedly by Conservative Members about the precise figures for increased public expenditure. I shall make an offer. I shall give those figures when Conservative Members tell me where the saving of £320 million on Devonport dockyard will come from. That is a fair offer. My hon. Friend said earlier that we shall not give our figures when directed to do so by Conservative Members but when we decide to give them. The electorate can then judge between the relative merits of our proposals and those of Conservative Members.

I fear that the Chancellor will engage in the short-term political gamble of offering massive reductions in direct taxation. If that succeeds in winning the election for the Tories, whenever it comes, we shall all pay for it in massive increases in indirect taxes. Hon. Members and people outside Parliament well remember that, despite the vigorous denials of the Tory party before the election in 1979 about increases in VAT, the first Budget after 1979 saw a massive increase in VAT from 8 per cent. to 15 per cent., with consequences for inflation. The British people will not forget that, and we shall see that they do not forget it when the election comes. They are intelligent enough to understand what is at stake in the next election, and I do not fear the consequences.

6.53 pm

Mr. Peter Rees (Dover): I rise with a sense of inadequacy because I am not a member of the Tory Reform Group and am not in a position to rebut many of the points that were made by the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton). I should also admit that unlike, apparently, himself, I am not privy to the Chancellor's plans for the Budget. Therefore, I do not propose to speculate about that because presumably in a month's time, with the permission of the Chair, we shall all have the chance to discuss fact rather than fiction.

I confine my remarks to the main themes of the debate. I should like to pick up immediately a telling point about the timing of this debate that was made in the last Session by the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service, of which my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) is Chairman. It is disappointing to those of us who are in the Chamber this evening and who are concerned about, if not dedicated to, public expenditure that so few hon. Members attend these debates. That may be due to what they see as the aridity of the subject. However, they are wrong.

I share common ground with my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing in saying that that may be due to the timing of the debate, which almost invariably occurs in what I would describe as the low season, in the run-up to the Budget. The Committee suggested that the debate should take place in May or June. I understand its thinking. I imagine that, in that way, the Committee hopes that the debate will make a contribution to the forthcoming public expenditure round rather than being a post mortem.

From personal experience, I doubt whether a debate on such a subject or, with respect to the Select Committee, on the Committee's report would make a contribution to the determination of the aggregate figure, which is dependent on a range of factors that are probably only authoritatively known by the Chancellor at that stage. It is time that the bids that are put forward by individual Departments must be submitted by May or June. But the hard interdepartmental fighting takes place in September and October. Such is the pace of events in public life that I doubt whether anything that is said in this Chamber in May or June will seem very relevant at the time of the bilaterals or the star chamber, if that interesting instrument is still in existence.

Like my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing, I regard the timing of the debate as important. I consider that a day should be set aside in the Budget debate so that, in tandem with our debate on the Budget proposals, we can discuss the public expenditure proposals put forward in the White Paper. After all, the labours of the Chief Secretary, his successes and, dare I say it, his setbacks, underlie or precede the proposals that the Chancellor of the Exchequer commends to the House. It is salutary that we should see that what we, as a House, approve or disapprove in relation to public expenditure is only the other side of the same coin as the fiscal measures that we consider at Budget time. It is right that hon. Members and the country should see that those two aspects of public policy are part of the same question.

This debate is of critical importance, although it might not seem that way from the number of right hon. and hon. Members who are present in the Chamber. Public expenditure is the discipline within which all Governments must operate. I hope that at least two right hon. Members who have served in the distinguished office of the First Lord of the Treasury will concede that nemesis swiftly follows and strikes down those Administrations that do not observe that discipline.

In this public expenditure White Paper, my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary commends to the House his proposals to increase the public expenditure for 1987-88 by £4·7 billion over the figures proposed in last year's public expenditure White Paper. For the following year of 1988-89, he is proposing that they should be increased by £5·4 billion and for 1989-90 he proposes an overall figure of £161·5 billion. Of course, that figure was not in the previous White Paper. He justifies this on the basis that it will show expenditure as a stable or even a declining percentage of the GDP. Indeed, it is right for him, and for me since I have laboured in this field, too, to emphasise that this has been a constant theme of Conservative Administrations since 1979.

Some have a more rigorous view of such problems. I listened with sympathy and care to the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend), and I must admit to my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench that I align myself with my hon. Friend on this matter. I, too, would prefer the more austere simplicity of the test that was applied in earlier years. However, we can console ourselves with the fact that the increases proposed by my right hon. Friend are probably supportable, given the infinitely stronger economic base which Britain enjoys. It would be a sterile exercise to bandy statistics with Labour Members, but they can be adduced by my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary when he replies to the debate.

I confess to a nostalgic regard for the test that I tried to apply to such matters — that public expenditure should be maintained broadly stable in real terms. I am the first to admit that I never quite achieved that figure. Nor did my predecessors achieve it, but at least we tried——

Mr. Budgen: My right hon. and learned Friend was not so humble at the time, was he?

Mr. Rees: I try to include a decent measure of humility in my speeches, unlike my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen), Mr. Deputy Speaker, who is no doubt eager to catch your eye.

The formulation which the Government commend to the House should still the parrot cries that have almost passed into the mythology of public life that the Government have been responsible for cuts, cuts, cuts. I am sorry to have to say this in the absence of the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), for whom and for whose contributions I usually have a warm regard, because he can present a well-argued and well-researched case. I am sure that the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) will deal with the point when she replies, if she considers it of any interest. Today, the hon. Gentleman was below his normal form.

I hope that the formulation will still the parrot cries and enable the debate to move to a more rational basis. I have no doubt that my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary will admit that no aggregate cuts have been achieved by this Administration—a cause of infinite regret, but there it is. If we can arrest the myth, it will deprive those who have, all too often, used it as an excuse for some shoddy performance in the public sector. I hope that those who are prone to lapse into such a tone of debate will reflect that the quality and effectiveness of public expenditure is almost as important as the quantum. I congratulate my right hon. Friend on increasing the output and performance measures to the staggering total of 1,800. It is always charming to see small Departments, such as Arts and Libraries, trying to apply the same rigorous criteria to their efforts as do the greater Departments of State.

The discipline of a steady or declining percentage of GDP has two disadvantages: first, that the Administration must make some assumptions about the level of GDP; and, secondly, counter-cyclical expenditure becomes more difficult—if that is thought to be a worthy objective.

The disagreement between me and my right hon. and hon. Friends is only slight, because we all believe that Governments should proclaim a clear, easily understood discipline by which their expenditure proposals throughout the year can be tested. As has been demonstrated so often in the past, financial policies must be clear and consistently followed. There should no no wild fluctuations from year to year, often in the shadow of the International Monetary Fund. If my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) were here, I should be tempted to read once again the letters to and from Dr. Witteveen—an area which my hon. Friend has made his own.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary on the remarkable job that he has done. Those who have not scrutinised the matter at fairly close quarters do not appreciate the burden which the Chief Secretary carries and the serious difficulties that must be faced. May I give two instances to the House? Social security is the largest programme that we must consider in the public expenditure White Paper. It is a huge, demand-led programme that is often, if not always, overshot, difficult to forecast and almost impossible to control. The excesses must be offset by economies in a limited number of cash-limited programmes. In passing, I should observe that it is a pity that more economies have not proved possible in the reform of the social security programme, admirable though that reform may be. It has still proved impossible to devise a more readily enforced discipline.

Local authority expenditure is another sensitive area. I say to those hon. Members who constantly commend the flights of fancy of local authorities that the excesses must be offset, and that it is difficult to forecast and control those excesses. That raises an almost constitutional question: what autonomy can central Government concede to local government in a unitary state? What can they concede when central Government accept, perhaps unwisely, the responsibility for the management of the economy? There will no time for it tonight, but I hope that we can return to the matter when the reform of the rating system, not just in Scotland, is debated.

That leads me to reflect on the work of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee. Although I dissented from one of its conclusions, I congratulate it on a workmanlike job. Sometimes the Committee concentrates a little too much on the technical detail, but perhaps that is inevitable when party considerations may prevent a consensus on major issues. Perhaps Select Committees should be bold and should recognise that there will always

[Mr. Rees]

be minority dissenting reports. But we can see that a system which works well in Washington is less easy to operate in the different circumstances of Westminster.

Again genuflecting to my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West, I hope with becoming diffidence, I suggest that the Select Committee might devote itself to a more detailed examination of past performance in this area. It could consider the reasons for overshoots, reflect on economies that might have been made and suggest corrections that could have been attempted.

There are lessons to be learned for the Government and indeed for the whole political process from the apparently dry record of public expenditure. The pressures from special interest groups mount year by year. The cries for more and more public expenditure in particular spheres, sometimes for good and sometimes for specious reasons, grow more insistent. Only the sturdy figure of the Chief Secretary, assisted by the Treasury and, I hope, by the Select Committee, stands between those pressures and financial nemesis. The success this year, therefore, of the Chief Secretary, which is recorded in the public expenditure White Paper which we are debating, deserves our congratulations and our support.

7.10 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. and learned Member for Dover (Mr. Rees). Over a series of Finance Bills he was a most helpful and courteous Chief Secretary to the Treasury. I was attracted by his mechanical idea of having at least one day's debate during the Budget on the public expenditure White Paper.

Both Ministers on the Front Bench are Scots. I say very gently to them that I wonder whether they would make the same speeches if they represented industrial Scotland. The proposed cut in the community programme nationally is 3,000 places. The proposed cut for Scotland is 500 places. I understand from Mr. Allan Payne that the programme in West Lothian, Cowl, which is a great success, is likely to be cut by 325 places. All I can say is that the Ministers are my fellow countrymen and that industrial Scotland really has problems.

I shall stick to one subject, the science budget. It is not my habit to regurgitate in the House speeches that I have heard at big lunches, but I shall break that rule because there was a special speech from Sir George Porter, which many hon. Members heard, at the lunch of the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee. For the purposes of greater accuracy, Sir George gave me a copy of his speech. I want to make five quotations. First, he said:

"For over 400 years we, in this country, have been very good at science, we probably have a higher level of discovery and application than any other country. Yet today the morale among scientists and engineers, especially the younger ones, is at a very low ebb. There is an increasing brain-drain of our best scientists and technologists to other countries, and, within this country, away from subjects like physics and chemistry and mathematics to something more remunerative and better appreciated, like accountancy. The situation is critical and very near to being irreversible."

Does the Treasury agree? I emphasise that this is Sir George Porter's view and not that simply of an Opposition Member.

Secondly, the president of the Royal Society said:

"Britain's industrial performance and competitiveness have been deteriorating for many years and we are now among the poorest of developed Western nations. There are those who argue from this that there is no correlation between scientific activity and industrial success. A very senior Treasury official put it to me bluntly, saying that there was too much science, it was 'like the butter mountain', what we needed was better administrators and managers . . .he just stopped short of advocating more colonial civil servants."

There was a ripple at that round the Savoy. Sir George continued:

"I would have assumed that he must be joking if it were not for the fact that his words accord so well with the actions of his department. For example, in its evidence to the House of Lords Select Committee, the Treasury gave its view as follows: 'The national source of science and technology is less important than the ability to assimilate and apply scientific and technological ideas whatever their origin'."

What will be the attitude to the Sherfield-Gregson committee, that very important Select Committee in the House of Lords? I understand that we may not be told tonight but I hope that it will be considered constructively. So, I suspect, does the Minister of State, Treasury, who was responsible for the matter in a previous incarnation; I know that he cares deeply about these subjects.

Thirdly, Sir George Porter said:

"In 1983, the last year for which I have complete OECD figures, expenditure on industrial R and D in the UK was much lower than in Germany and Japan and was declining at 1·4 per cent. per annum compared with a rise of 3 per cent. in Germany (and France) and 10 per cent. in Japan."

I have picked this passage out on purpose because I am not making a partisan speech.

"Here we cannot blame the Government because British firms received a much higher proportion of their R and D funds from government, 30 per cent. here, compared with 16 per cent. in Germany and 2 per cent. in Japan. Yet German firms invested twice as much on R and D as the UK, and Japan four times as much. Furthermore our investment is falling, theirs is rising. No wonder we find it difficult to build bridges between our basic research and research in industry; all too often when the bridge is crossed there is nobody on the other side."

I picked that out particularly because Sir George was being fair to the Government. I want to be fair to the Government but I ask this question: how about the financing of pure research which is a problem?

Fourthly, Sir George said:

"More applied research, more engineers, more scientific entrepreneurs are urgently needed to provide the new industrial revolution which will put our country back into the first league. We all support this view. Basic science is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for prosperity.

But it is wrong to advocate that scientists doing basic research should mend their ways and concentrate their minds on short term research and development. We must stop telling our research workers that they are doing the wrong thing and agonising about whether their research is basic or applied. There are only two kinds of good research, applied and not yet applied."

The number of alpha submissions that are not being accepted is about 25 per cent.; possibly the really worthwhile ones that are being refused are up to 15 per cent. Does that not worry Ministers and the Government?

My final quotation from Sir George Porter's speech is:

"I am not qualified to say what methods government can use to encourage more industrial R and D, but for all companies to declare their R and D expenditure would be a good start. When a company with successful long-term research unsurpassed in the world, like Pilkingtons, nearly succumbs to predators in a battle with primitive short-range weapons there is something dangerously wrong with our policy."

Does the Treasury have any sympathy for Sir George Porter's view that public companies ought to make public their R and D expenditure?

My view, which is impressionistic and which I cannot support by fact, is that one of the troubles is that the cost of the equipment is going up at an exponential rate. The advent of chips has made equipment exponentially more expensive. More things are possible and there are more things to do.

Michael Kenward's leader in the *New Scientist* of 19 February is a bit tougher than Sir George. It says:

"There is palpable fury in the latest report from the Advisory Board for the Research Councils (ABRC) to the Secretary of State for Education and Science. Doom and gloom are mild words to describe their prognosis for science in Britain. And yet these are no radical roustabouts from the loony left or the rabid right. These people are the pillars of the scientific establishment: they say that the foundations beneath them are crumbling.

The members of the ABRC are frustrated because they believe that they have made a reasonable and reasoned case for the continued support of the research councils and British science. They restate their arguments in their advice to Kenneth Baker, the Secretary of State for Education and Science:"—

the report will be known to Ministers—

"'Whatever analyses based on average rates of inflation purport to show, the real buying power of the science budget has declined and is continuing to decline. The country's investment in its science base is falling further behind the investment made by other OECD countries . . .'

'. . . demands on the UK science base are growing. There are social and medical demands, for example, the AIDS emergency'."

If I may return briefly to what I said about AIDS in my earlier intervention, I understand that an extra £7 million has been made available. I am against blank cheques, but we are faced with an absolutely horrific problem of historic proportions—it is similar to the bubonic plague. In this one case, surely it would be possible for the Government to give the Medical Research Council the money for which it has asked for research on viruses. We are not talking about hundreds of millions of pounds but we are asking for enough to pay for fundamental research on any sensible, good idea on the viruses because it is common knowledge that, without that research, we will not get a vaccine that might at least arrest if not cure the disease.

I am attracted by the proposal put forward by Professor Mitchell of SERC when he presented a paper to the Royal Society in November on inter-university campus research on exceedingly expensive work. It would be silly, given the Science budget, to give every and any scientist necessarily as much money as he asked for. There is an obligation on people like me to say how money will be saved or spent within reasonable proportions. I urge the Treasury Ministers to consider Professor Mitchell's paper, which outlined the advantages of inter-university campuses. If that proposal were carried out at a local level, Heriot-Watt university's work on semi-conductors could also include work from the universities of Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen.

I understand that the European independent review of CERN—Conseil Européen pour la Recherche Nucléaire —will take place in June 1987 and that the Government will make a decision by December 1987. That decision will be reached before the next debate on public expenditure. For pity's sake I hope that we will not in any way renege on our international subscriptions because that would be not only a blow to particle physics but also a considerable blow to the country's prestige in the international scientific community.

My special plea is that we should not cut the expenditure on the BBC's overseas services. Those services are of immense value to this country and those of us who have travelled abroad are aware of the high regard in which they are held overseas. The Government are scrimping, because the amount of money involved is not great. I know that Ministers are rather contemptuous of special pleading and I am careful to avoid such pleading, but I believe that there is a strong argument to allow the BBC's overseas services to continue their excellent work, and Government funding must continue.

7.23 pm

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) has always been a doughty advocate of extra spending on the science community and I am sure that the matters he has raised will be taken into account when, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Rees) explained, the budget for that area is considered later in the year.

I would like to touch upon what I believe to be the most immediate considerations going through the mind of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor. It is obvious that he intends and is capable of making substantial cuts in income tax. He must also be considering the balance between cuts in income tax and reductions in the public sector borrowing requirement. No doubt my right hon. and hon. Friends have urged upon the Chancellor the popularity and immediacy of cuts in income tax.

I believe that there is an advantage in cutting PSBR. I am not arguing that such a cut would necessarily and immediately lead to a cut in interest rates but it may well be a factor that would press down upon interest rates. Therefore, it may lead, subject to the view of the markets, to a lowering of interest rates. At any rate, a reduction in PSBR would make the control of the money supply easier, although I appreciate that that is no longer fashionable. If the Chancellor is more concerned about holding up the value of sterling, I believe that a cut in PSBR would also help to do that.

Let us assume for a moment that a substantial reduction in PSBR led to a reduction in interest rates. In recent days we have read in the newspapers that a 1 per cent. reduction in base rates would reduce the retail prices index by half a per cent. I have not seen any calculations put forward by Treasury Ministers to substantiate that, nor have I seen any calculations that disprove that. It is clear that a reduction in base rates would have a substantial effect on the retail prices index. I am not arguing about whether the retail prices index is a good indicator of either present of future inflation, but it does have other important effects.

First, the retail prices index has a substantial effect upon the Government's negotiating position when they are negotiating public sector wages. My hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) pointed out that the substantial concessions that have been made to the teachers and the way in which public sector unions often negotiate on the basis of a fixed standard of comparison between one sector and another will make it more difficult for the Treasury to hold the line against other public sector workers. As 27 per cent. of the taxpayers' pay bill is represented by public expenditure, anything that strengthens the hand of the Treasury in dealing with public sector unions must be considered a great advantage.

[Mr. Nicholas Budgen]

If there was a reduction in interest rates there would be other, wider advantages. I believe that the sector of the economy that would gain most advantage by lower interest rates is the construction industry. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) is no longer in the Chamber, since he made some good points about the construction industry. It is true that the construction industry in the south-east is very prosperous and some may argue that it is overheated. The hon. Gentleman acknowledged that in other areas there are carpenters and bricklayers and bricks and all the other materials that could sustain a considerable increase in construction work if it were possible to find the capital for such work.

Another sector of the economy that seems likely to expand is the self-employment sector — it is the sector most likely to expand without stimulation from the taxpayer. There is no doubt that when entrepreneurs set up in self-employed work of any sort it is difficult and expensive to borrow money from the banks. The person in that position must pay a great deal over the base rate in comparison to bigger, established companies. He must make arrangements to repay the money more quickly and must give more security than that given by some other creditworthy borrowers. Therefore, to him a reduction in interest rates is very important and may make the difference between remaining unemployed and setting out on the difficult task of self-employment.

The alternative to the free market encouragement of the self-employed are state sponsored schemes such as the community programme. It is important to note the way in which the community programme is now expanding. I do not know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, whether you have had an opportunity to look at the first volume of the 1986 White Paper. On page 11, paragraph 32, it shows that the community programme is now aimed to reach nearly 250,000 jobs by June 1986 compared with 130,000 only a year earlier. That is a massive and expensive expansion of state activity. If one looks at page 9 table 1.4 of the same document one sees the extent to which direct support of employment has expanded. It has moved from £2·9 billion in 1983-84 to a planned £4 billion in 1988-89. That is an expensive and fast growing area of expenditure. If one can hold stable that area of expenditure by making it more possible for people to move into self-employment, that is good for them and for the taxpayer.

Even if I do not carry the House with me on that point, there are grave limits to the expansion of the community programme. Everybody knows, as they go round the country, there is scarcely a graveyard that has not been tidied and scarcely a vicar who has not had his garden tidied.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: The monetarist graveyard.

Mr. Budgen: In my experience, not all vicars are monetarists and most of them seem to be pleased to have their graveyards tidied, their gardens improved and the play areas of their schools slabbed down. Joking apart, there must be a limit, not just a limit of useful jobs. The Government have been successful in persuading the trade union movement to accept the community programme. As the programme runs out of graveyards and activities which would not normally be carried out by unionised labour and moves on to other activities which are at present thought to be the preserve of unionised labour, it will run the risk of losing, if not the support, the acquiescence of the trade unions. Most of all, it is an expensive programme and it is not one which is as satisfactory as seeing the same people in self-employment and serving the needs of the market.

I should like to say a few words about the agricultural sector. This is the first time I have ever said anything in the House about agriculture and it is no part of my business, representing an urban constituency, to represent the views of the farmer. However, as an over-borrowed farmer myself, I observe a little of what is going on in the farming community.

The hon. Member for Fife, Central demonstrated to me adequately the way in which a Labour Government find it extremely difficult to resist the claims of nurses and teachers. In the same way a Tory Government find it difficult to resist the claims of the farmers. Perhaps I reflected on that most of all as I listened to my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food announcing his extra £25 million last year for the farming community the day before the annual general meeting of the National Farmers' Union. I reflected at the same time on the way in which the former Secretary of State for Education and Science, my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East (Sir K. Joseph), argued with the teachers about every single penny. He certainly would not have handed over £25 million the day before a critical resolution against him at a teachers' union. I do not wish to cast moral blame upon the Labour party for, from time to time, being a push-over for the teachers and nurses, nor do I wish, naturally, to say anything snide or critical about my own party. However, as we approach a general election there will be a sad tendency on the part of the Tory party to look for ways in which it might support the farmers yet further.

Page 9 of the same volume shows interestingly the plan for 1988-89. It is planned that trade and industry in that year shall be supported by the taxpayer to the total of £1 billion. If it be that there is a proper role for the taxpayer in supporting trade and industry, it is interesting to compare the amount of support the farming industry generally gets with the devastation of the industrial areas of the west midlands or the north. In that same column it shows that domestic expenditure on farming is £2·3 billion. Just above that one sees the suggested contribution to the EEC of another £1 billion, of which two thirds goes to support agricultural prices. That small sector of the economy is, the House may think, adequately supported already. However, the only section of the agriculture community currently in serious trouble are those farmers who are over-borrowed and who bought land at the recently grossly inflated prices because the land represented the capitalisation of the subsidy and support.

The farmers who are over-borrowed can best be helped by slightly lower interest rates. What is not required is a further subvention to agriculture. If the House disagrees, I should say that I inquired yesterday as to what was happening about milk quotas in my part of Staffordshire. A year ago, quota, which as the House knows is a saleable commodity, was being sold at 13p per litre. It is now being sold at 27p per litre. That is because the farmers who are not over-borrowed and who have the land and cattle and can afford to find the ready cash to buy quota are doing very well thank you. It is true that next door to the farmer

who is buying quota at 27p—100 per cent higher than a year ago—is somebody who is over-borrowed and being threatened by the bank.

We do not require imaginative schemes of set-aside which could become enormously expensive. One sees from page 11 of this document that the net purchases of cereals into intervention are expected to be 1·9 million tonnes, leaving stocks of 5·6 million tonnes. It is quite obvious from that that a set-aside programe which deals with over-production, even of cereals, could become an enormously growing mushroom of expenditure.

The proposals by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for further support and the making of a tax shelter for the forestry industry could be extremely expensive. If the Tory party finds it electorally necessary to give some extra support to the farming industry, it will be best done through lower interest rates. That is preferable to the introduction of further schemes of subsidy and support which will make the situation for agriculture worse by holding up the price of land and making entry to the industry more difficult for those who have new capital to invest in land.

There are strong and persuasive arguments for bearing down upon interest rates within all the proper monetarist disciplines. That is important and should be at least as important in the Chancellor's mind as an immediate reduction in tax rates.

7.42 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): I listened with great interest to the speech of the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen). I always listen to his speeches with interest because he shares with his predecessor the characteristic of remorseless logic. His conclusions always follow from his premises. Therefore, it is surprising to find that he is able to support a Government with policies that he has just criticised, because those policies do not follow from the hon. Gentleman's premises. I doubt though whether his premises were correct. They were like his references because he referred to the White Paper and the page references were wrong. The outcome of his proposal was that the Government should continue to bear down on interest rates. They have been doing that for eight years but that policy has never given birth to lower interest rates and a little bit more bearing down will not give the birth that the hon. Gentleman and I so anxiously desire.

The expenditure plans represent one of two things. One is a reconciliation with reality. For eight years the Government have been trying to defy such reconciliation by pretending that they could cut public spending and that has caused incalculable damage to the economy. The Government have been pressing cuts at a time when, with the depressed state of the real economy, the correct Keynesian way would be to increase public spending in order to stimulate the economy out of the depression that the Government have helped to create. Even President Reagan, the last surviving Keynesian, was aware of that, and the expansion of the deficit financing that he started in August 1982 has generated 8 million jobs in the United States. With a similar expansion the Government could have created 2 million jobs but because of their obsession with cutting public spending they deprived themselves of the ability to serve the cause of the people that they have put out of work.

The expenditure plans are either a reconciliation with reality, because the Government now recognise that they cannot do the job, or an augury of the approaching election. The Government have set out to pretty-up the half-cocked economy that they are running to make it look better. That is essentially a cosmetic operation and to carry it out they are projecting public spending increases and talking about bringing down interest rates. In the Budget we shall surely see tax cuts. Those things are being set out like cheese in a trap in the hope of luring the electors into returning a Tory Government for another term.

The public expenditure plans are either a reconciliation with that reality or a recognition of the approaching election, but they may well be both. They are certainly a measure of death-bed repentance, because the figures in the expenditure programme represent a change in Government policy. The Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service detected that change in its report on the autumn financial statement. This time our report is a bit more cautious because of the Chancellor's angry reaction to our mild criticisms and our mild assertions that there had been a change of policy. He attacked the advisers, the logic, everybody connected with the Committee and me for having contributed the conclusion. That made us anxious not to provoke him this time and we are very moderate in our conclusion.

The change in policy is still there because the Government have gone through three phases in their approach to public spending. The first phase was one of cuts. To pretend that they could cut taxes the Government wanted to cut public spending and we had a series of follies in that phase of desperately cutting public spending. We had follies such as the increase in the charges for overseas students, the economic harm done to our universities by the cuts in university spending, and tragedies such as the decimation of the housing programme, especially the housing programmes of local authorities. We also had tragedies like the undermining of investment.

All those things were done for a wrong and unattainable purpose. The Government were inflicting real harm on the economy and at the same time were weakening that economy, because a Government who cut spending also cut their revenue. That is because the amount that Government spend is recycled and comes back in taxation and stimulates the economy. They were harming the real economy by a programme of desperate, unnecessary cuts. They were approaching the issue the wrong way because the need was to expand production and get the economy growing so that it could carry the heavier burden of public spending that the people want and that is the hallmark of a civilised, advanced society.

The Government were approaching it the other way by cutting public spending and harming the economy instead of expanding it. That was the first stupid phase. The second phase was more mildly stupid because that phase was one of keeping public spending level in real terms. That phase inflicted more harm on the economy and still did not produce the promised result because the one thing the Government neglected to consider was the harm that their public spending cuts inflicted on the economy. Those cuts gave rise to an increase in unemployment and therefore to a massive increase in social security spending to support the unemployed generated by the depression that the Government inflicted on the real economy in the first place.

[Mr. Austin Mitchell]

Some years ago, the House of Lords calculated that each person out of work costs £6,000. That is made up of revenue lost, benefit payments and uncontributed activity. The real costs of unemployment are massive and were responsible for an increase in public spending. In the Treasury and Civil Service Committee report, we criticise the estimates of social security spending and say how inadequate they were over the year. We know that the new system of estimating social security expenditure has produced results which are actually further out than those produced using the old, inadequate system. That is largely because the Government have never grasped the reality that, if they put people out of work they will increase spending and move themselves further away from their declared ambition of cutting public spending. The only way to do that is to expand the real economy.

In this White Paper the Government have moved into phase 3. They are admitting failure and saying that public spending should rise with the GNP. They are again ignoring the fact that the improvement in the annual growth rate during their whole period of office — because they usually calculate the figures from 1982 to make them look better—has been 1·2 per cent. That is the most pathetic growth rate in British history since the war and is the slowest growth rate achieved by any Government. That is the record of this Government. Even now, in this new phase of death-bed repentance, the Government cannot resist fiddling the figures. This is a Government of figure-fiddling. They are fiddling the unemployment figures. As we heard earlier today in the Chief Secretary's speech, they attempted to fiddle the figures of the Labour party's spending. The Chief Secretary fiddles the Government spending figures down but the Labour party's spending up. In either case the process of fiddling is exactly the same. That is clearly visible in the Government's expenditure plans.

In the section of the Government's expenditure plans devoted to local authorities, projections are increased. The Government are no longer trying the unrealistic technique of saying, "This is what local authorities should spend. This is what they will spend." Now the Government are allowing some increase in local authority spending. At the same time they are still getting it both ways, because it is stated in the plans:

"The Government does not accept that local authorities need to spend as much as the plans provide."

That statement says that the Government will provide local authorities with more money, but will criticise them at the same time because they do not need to spend it. That is typical of the trick logic that the Government go in for. Although what the Government think they will spend has been increased, it has not been increased in line with the real increase in local authority spending over the period since 1978-79. That is an increase of 1·8 per cent. a year.

The projections that the Government make in their expenditure plans are below the real rate of increase that the historical record demonstrates. Therefore, the projections are unlikely to be achieved unless the Government bring in more draconian controls on local authorities. The Government have been engaged in a continuous war with local government ever since they came into office. They have attempted to strangle local government and to remove their independence. Either the Government introduce more draconian controls on local authorities or we shall see cuts in local authority spending programmes. One or the other must follow from the provisos in the expenditure plans, as remorselessly as the logic of the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West. That is a fiddling of the figures.

A further fiddling of the figures is the 20 per cent. of housing receipts from council house sales which local authorities are allowed to spend in the year in which those receipts accrue. That is a proportion that bears no relation to any reality. Our questioning of the Minister and officials before the Treasury and Civil Service Committee produced no rational basis for that 20 per cent. figure. What is the basis for saying that local authorities can spend only 20 per cent.? Why not allow them to spend more? Why not say, "Here is a problem of real housing need, with a deteriorating local authority stock, and a desperate position arising in some areas where we need to spend on housing renovation"? We need to spend on new building. The costs of putting people in bed and breakfast accommodation are enormous. Those costs could be completely removed by more local authority spending on housing. According to the DHSS, it costs £13,150 a year to keep a family with two children in bed and breakfast accommodation. The total costs to the public purse, if the local authority borrowed the money to build a house, would only be £7,600 in the first year of building that house. It costs £13,150 to put such a family in bed and breakfast accommodation and £7,600 during the first year to put them in a council house. That is a total illogicality.

Spend the money on housing. Free the local authorities to spend what is after all their own money in the way that they wish, and stimulate the building industry. That should be the logic. Instead, the totally fallacious proportion of 20 per cent. of housing receipts from council house sales, which no Minister or official could provide any logic for, has been established. Perhaps that figure was suggested because it was half the Chancellor's age, plus an allowance for the number of hairs that fell out during the previous week. Perhaps it has some mystical significance. I do not know. It was never explained to the members of the Treasury and Civil Service Committee. I see no justification for it——

Mr. John Watts (Slough): I am sure that the hon. Gentleman has read the notes supplied by the Treasury to the Committee. He will find that the rationale is explained clearly in those notes. The Government set and plan the gross level of capital expenditure. The prescribed proportion of capital receipts which can be applied is determined to arrive at that gross level of provision and to leave sufficient leeway for capital allocations to be made to those authorities that do not have capital receipts, so that the patterns of expenditure can follow more closely the needs of authorities to spend, rather than their ability merely to generate receipts. I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would have supported a scheme that allowed spending priorities to be recognised and not merely the ability of rich Tory outer London boroughs to generate enormous receipts from the sale of their council houses.

Mr. Mitchell: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for demonstrating exactly what I was saying. The way in which he read that out showed that there was no logic for the 20 per cent. level being fixed. That level applies across all authorities. It bears no logic to the specific

circumstances of each one, or to the position in the building industry or in the economy generally in any particular year. That proportion has remained unchanged. Initially it was plucked out of the air. Because the Government have highly trained, Oxford and Cambridge and public school-educated civil servants to find excuses for the failure of their policies, they can now justify it, but it has no logical justification. The same arguments that the hon. Gentleman has just given us would have applied to 25 per cent., or 30 per cent. There is no conceivable reason why that figure has been fixed when it would be far simpler, given the needs of the building industry and the housing crisis that is building up, to set them freer at any rate, if not totally free.

There is a fourth fiddle on investment in the Government's expenditure plans. In the late 1970s that was already down by a third. We have become a shabbier, shoddier country because of the failure of public investment, yet, whatever the Chief Secretary said, the plans are for a continuing fall. What emerges from the Government's expenditure plans is a continuing fall of 3 per cent. per annum in real terms. If realised, the plans will mean a capital formation decline of 17 per cent. down on the already depressed level that existed at the end of the 1970s. The construction industry is in an even worse position. In 1986-87 it will be 15 per cent. below the level of 1978-79. It will decline by a further 7 per cent. by the end of the decade. That is what is in store for construction in the plans in the White Paper.

The old stupid position of trying to cut public spending, thereby amplifying a much bigger cut in investment, operates again, even in the projections for the future in the White Paper. That has happened despite the fact that the CBI, the TUC and all the reports that we have received from NEDO say that money desperately needs to be spent on infrastructure to stimulate the economy in a fashion which does not suck in imports and which is a beneficial economic stimulus. We need to spend on infrastructure. The Government propose to cut spending. That seems to be the approach in the White Paper. We are seeing the Government throwing an opportunity away. We should seize that opportunity to increase spending. The Chancellor by his policies, partly by the spending cuts and also by the general economic management during the whole period with which he has been associated with the Treasury, inflicted enormous damage on the real economy of this country.

There has been a 30 per cent. decline in manufacturing employment over that period. In areas of Yorkshire and Humberside, which I represent, there has been a 35 per cent. decline in manufacturing. That is the record. There is now a process—slight and inadequate I am afraid—of recovery going on. Why is it going on? It is going on because the Chancellor has been forced willy-nilly by circumstances, and without avowing it, into adopting large chunks of the Labour party's 1983 manifesto.

That manifesto was criticised as impractical, but let us look at the record. It said that there should be a substantial devaluation of sterling, which was overvalued and thereby inflicting great harm on the real economy and manufacturing. We suggested a 30 per cent. devaluation in 1983. Sterling is now 30 per cent down on the level of 1982. The Government have adopted the Labour party manifesto. Improvements will follow, although sterling has still some way to fall. It is still 20 per cent. overvalued against the deutschmark and our manufacturing exports are still 25 per cent. up as against manufactured imports. The devaluation forced on the Government, willy-nilly because of oil, the fall in the dollar and the state of the real economy, a devaluation resisted every step of the way by increased interest rates, will be beneficial.

We secondly proposed in the 1983 manifesto to increase public expenditure. We gave an illustrative figure of £15 billion for the public sector borrowing requirement. This year, the PSBR plus privatisation is a £15 billion public sector financial deficit, which is what we suggested in 1983.

Thirdly, we suggested increasing spending on job schemes and public sector employment. Now, because the election is approaching, as the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West pointed out, although he gave the wrong page reference, there has been a huge increase in job schemes and the community programme, calculated to bring the unemployment figure below 3 million by the time of the election. We advocated that in 1983 and it has been done.

Fourthly, we suggested scrapping monetary targets, and the Chancellor is now doing that because he cannot meet them.

Those four basic proposals in the Labour party manifesto have been implemented by the Government. Although they are too little, too late and although the Chancellor has resisted them every step of the way because he did not want to carry them out, they were right, and improvements have followed. It is possible to argue that the economy is riding the J-curve rather than heading for a remorseless balance of payments crisis. If that is true, as I think that it is, it is clear that here is an opportunity to expand and to seize the advantages that come our way because the Chancellor has at last been forced to abandon overvaluation.

However, on the Chancellor's premises, retribution will follow after the election if a Conservative Government return. He has always resisted these beneficial developments. Therefore, it follows that he will want to strengthen sterling after the election by putting up interest rates even more, and that he will try to deal with the problem of inflation, which is increasing, and for which he has no other strategy, by deflating the economy. It follows that he will have to tackle the problem of financing unemployment by increasing taxation. Increasing VAT will be forced on him by the EEC.

All those consequences follow from the Chancellor's premises, but they need not follow if we set out to exploit the opportunity that lies ahead of us and that we could exploit by stimulating the economy and deliberately bringing down interest rates. The Chancellor has been against that and given us lots of excuses. First it was that when he got the public sector borrowing requirement down, interest rates would come down, but that did not work. Then his excuse was that our interest rates were high because American interest rates were high, but now ours are the highest in the world. American interest rates are lower, but ours have not come down. Let us get interest rates and sterling value down. We can then expand the economy, content that the stimulus will not cause us to rush overseas to buy more imports, but will stimulate manufacturing and investment here.

That is the opportunity that only the kind of programme put forward by the Labour party, which is an expansionary programme and not the half-baked fiddling with the figures presented by the Government, can seize. This is a historic opportunity. In the 1990s, we shall be

[Mr. Mitchell]

heading for a national tragedy, given what has been done to manufacturing industry and the fact that the value of oil, which alone has allowed us to survive and maintain our standard of living, will be chipped away. We have an opportunity to expand and face that problem, but the Government will not seize it. Only our proposals, by bringing down interest rates, encouraging investment and stimulating demand in all the ways available to Government, will do this. We do not want a credit explosion, which will lead to asset inflation of 1972, 1973 and 1974 dimensions. Stimulating demand through public sector spending and putting people back to work, especially by building houses, is the only way to proceed. It is a tragedy that, while in 1979 in Yorkshire and Humberside there were 17,800 housing starts, in 1985 there were only 12,300. At a time when there are 400,000 building workers out of work, that is a folly. As a further step, we need to increase regional incentives to attract development out of London.

It is ridiculous that there is such a house price explosion in London that this week a broom cupboard has been sold for £36,500. Anybody who buys a broom cupboard for that price is as daft as a brush anyway. That is the price of a seven-bedroomed house in Grimsby. It is ludicrous that people cannot afford to transfer south because they cannot afford the housing. Through regional incentives, we should be taking industry to where people, the unemployed and the social capital are, but the expenditure plan proposes cuts in regional spending.

Spending by the Department of Trade and Industry has been cut massively, and much of what it had went to the regions. Regional support is generally industrial support. As predicted by these figures, that will be cut by 31 per cent. in real terms. Regional support has been halved since 1983. The Government are now estimating that it will be cut again by another half next year. At £200 million, that is a 52 per cent. cut in regional support programmes. It means that for every £4 that the Labour party spent on regional incentives in 1979, this Government will be spending £1. That is at a time when the gap between north and south is widening and there is a desperate need to encourage industry to go to the people, and particularly, one would hope, to areas with high unemployment such as Grimsby, the north-east, Yorkshire, the north-west and so on. What such areas can do to attract industry has been greatly undermined as the north-south gap widens. That is not a formula for seizing opportunities. If expansion will overheat the economy, it will do so less rapidly if we can attract industry north and develop new manufacturing there.

As a last priority, we need to expand real training, not just schemes to get people off the register, but training to confer real skills so that we do not run into the skill shortages and skill bottlenecks into which the British economy has run all too often in the past. All that needs to be done to put our people back to work and to give the country some pride so that it can face the world and compete on equal terms with powerful exporting economies. All that we have done over the past eight years is inflict harm on our manufacturing base and make it less able to compete.

All this needs to be done to make society better because we are steadily becoming a more shabby, shoddy, nasty and declining society. Our roads are in potholes, our National Health Service inadequate and our education creaking. Our universities are declining from the centres of excellence that they once were as they lose brains to higher paid posts overseas. That is not the sort of future that any hon. Member would want for the country, but it is the type of future that we shall have unless we improve on the priorities of the public expenditure programme, seize the opportunity for growth that lies ahead of us, and say to the Government, "Enough. You have tried to fiddle the figures for too long to try to show that decline was prosperity and development." It is time to stop the figure-fiddling and to give way to a party that will turn the situation around.

8.9 pm

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): I shall refer to some of the points made in the lengthy speech by the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), but first I shall make a passing reference to the speech made by the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), who led the debate for the Opposition. I must confess that I rather enjoyed some parts of the speech by the hon. Member for Dagenham. It was a light speech. Indeed, it was a soufflé speech. It hardly touched upon the policy issues. Of course, we have heard that the speeches made by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) were judged in some quarters—I think also by some of his hon. Friends—as a little like heavy pudding. There has been an extraordinary contrast between the diet of the hon. Member for Sparkbrook and what we were served up this afternoon. The matter has now gone the other way to ludicrous extremes. If it tells us nothing about Labour's policies, it tells us a great deal about what is going on in the inner circles of the Labour party.

There are two amendments on the Order Paper, one of which has been called, and the other one—to which I hope it will not be out of order to make a glancing reference—is in the names of various members of the SDP and the Liberal party. As I understand it, that amendment calls for a number of things, but ends by saying that it does not like tax cuts and wants to do other things. The official Opposition amendment takes a different line. They say—this theme has come through in a number of speeches, both inside and outside the House, from the Government's critics—that the present phase of expansion will be short-lived, is artificial, is concerned with vote winning, is unsustainable and will end in a major balance of payments crisis, and, indeed, that any tax cuts in the Budget will make matters worse.

It is interesting that the official Opposition critique of the Government's economic policy has changed. For a long time, as the hon. Member for Great Grimsby will remember, the Keynesian economic establishment and the more moderate elements on the Labour Front Bench were critical of Government policy. They said that there could be no recovery under the policies of the Conservative Government. Now the answers have changed. So, like the Irish in the 19th century, they changed the question. Now they say, "There is a recovery, because we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that it is all around us"—the hon. Member for Great Grimsby referred to some aspects of it—"but it will not last, it cannot be sustained and, therefore, we are headed for the familiar pattern of

overheating, rising inflation and a balance of payments crisis." In other words, the Opposition say that nothing in the British economy has altered.

I shall refer to the proposition about the sustainability of the present phase and its ingredients. It is by that proposition that we can judge the viability of the Government's public expenditure plans and the wisdom of choosing from tax cuts, public expenditure or reduced borrowing to help try to influence interest rates. The first point to be noted in answer to critics who say that it will all end in disaster, that it is temporary and artificial, is that the boom is not deficit-financed. It is not, as some economists say, comparable with the Barber boom or the Maudling boom, in which substantial and growing Government deficits were visible. Perhaps—here I move on to rather delicate ground; the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) referred to this—the nearest comparison is the situation that existed in 1969 when the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins), brought forward a pattern of Budget strategy that led towards a balanced Budget.

The trend towards a balanced Budget set by my right hon. Friends will not lead to the same electoral result as happened in 1970. As a matter of fact, if it had not been for the Budget presented by the right hon. Member for Hillhead, the Labour defeat would have been much worse. In that sense, it was a positive electoral result. In many ways, the situation is more comparable with the right hon. Gentleman's style than with the talk of pre-election booms and so on that we hear from Opposition Members. The boom is not deficit-financed. On the contrary, we see the prospect of substantial undershooting of the PSBR.

Mr. Austin Mitchell *rose*——

Mr. Howell: I shall give way in a moment. I should like to finish this point.

I would welcome a package—that is probably what we shall get — that has room for tax cuts, for the increases in public expenditure that were referred to in the autumn statement, and for some undershooting to help to contribute to an atmosphere in which we may get interest rates down, although they are largely internationally determined.

Mr. Mitchell: The right hon. Gentleman made an interesting point, but he did not tackle the question whether the recovery springs from the policies that began in 1979. The policies have changed. Indeed, the manifestation of the change is the fact that the hon. Gentleman is no longer on the Government Front Bench. The central change is that the rise in the exchange rate has been reversed. It has gone down 30 per cent., and that must have a stimulating effect, particularly for manufacturing.

Mr. Howell: Of course, competitive exchange rates may or may not have a stimulating effect. They can provide an opportunity but they do not guarantee success, as the hon. Gentleman knows. I shall refer later to the ingredients and the roots of the present expansion.

So the first point, I repeat, is that the boom is not deficit-financed. It is not one of the pre-election booms that roll off the tongues of some critics. Secondly, I do not believe that the boom is consumption-led, as some hon. Members have suggested. It is true that revenue from VAT is rising, and this is creating a good revenue cushion for my right hon. Friend. But revenue from corporation tax also is rising rapidly. That revenue is derived from rising profits, on which taxes are paid. If hon. Members say that this is to do with the candy floss end of the economy, they should examine some of the figures relating to the changing texture and content of imports. If hon. Members examine the latest figures, they will see that capital goods imports are rising, whereas finished manufactures and consumer goods have been running at a reasonably flat level.

Capital goods imports, raw materials and the basic ingredients of an investment-led recovery are beginning to show up in the import figures. I advise those who dismiss this as another consumer-led boom riding on the back of an enormous credit expansion to look at the details. They will possibly revise their judgment about what is driving the present expansion phase forward. It is important to get that point clear.

Another of the points made by the hon. Member for Dagenham — the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook makes this point ad nauseam—is that the present stage is not only consumer-led but is sucking in imports, and that, if there are further personal tax cuts, they will add to the level of consumption and suck in more imports. This appears to be one of the Opposition's arguments against having tax cuts in the Budget. That is a misplaced judgment and a piece of absurd defeatism.

Why should it be assumed that, if there is increased demand in the British economy—there is no guarantee that tax cuts will necessarily all go to demand; some might be saved — it will lead to more jobs in Cologne or Tokyo, as the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook said? That is a miserable, defeatist attitude. It is typical of Opposition Members' attitudes with which we have had to deal. There is no reason why one should not begin to see an economy which has had the supply side changes that ours has had, being capable of responding. It is. I am not the only person who believes that it is. I suspect that my right hon. and hon. Friends also believe it.

The Bank of England published a good passage on this subject in its quarterly bulletin. The Bank of England is not noted for adopting a very optimistic attitude towards the capacity of the British economy to expand, but on page 21 of its February quarterly bulletin it said:

> "The strength of exports, and the recent rise in imports of capital and intermediate goods and raw materials, suggest that domestic output will respond to the buoyant growth of domestic demand."

That is austere banker's language for saying that the supply side capacity of the economy is now very flexible and well developed and that if there is an expansion of demand, because of tax cuts, there is every possibility that that demand will be met not by sucking in imports—a trite phrase that has been borrowed from so-called independent forecasters by Opposition Members — but by the British economy. The British economy is now capable of responding to that demand. That is another reason why the artificial boom thesis is very shallow. Those who utter it have not examined the facts.

Thirdly, unlike past very rapid expansion phases, I do not believe that this one is balance of payments constrained. I have already mentioned the changing nature of the import pattern. The export scene is also looking quite healthy and there is an enormous growth in interest, profits and dividends from overseas. As my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury said with great

[Mr. Howell]

vigour and accuracy this afternoon, that is all set to produce a vast, continuing and rising inflow that will help substantially to offset the trade deficit.

It is very interesting to watch this unfold, because a great many economists failed completely to notice that this would happen. The reason that some of them failed to notice that it would happen was that they were carried away by the persuasive political myth, much peddled by the Opposition, that North sea oil receipts had been wasted. Therefore, economists who were inclined to believe that myth had their eyes turned away from the fact that in reality gigantic overseas investment has taken place, which has put this country into the position where it is the second biggest creditor nation on earth after Japan. It has provided us with a huge annuity — an inflow of income that will last long after all the oil has gone and that will increase in size.

This is not just paper money that evaporates; it leads to demand for new products and new jobs in Britain. That, too, is beginning to have an effect inside the British economy and it makes the pattern of growth far more sustainable than those which, in the past, ended in balance of payments crises. Again, therefore, the trite prediction that this is an artificial boom that will end in a balance of payments crisis is unfounded. It cannot be sustained by that kind of argument.

I am not even convinced by the other assertion that we have heard again and again from Opposition Members, that this is all to do with the south-east and the rich south. If hon. Members examine the flow of orders that is following this remarkable phase of expansion, they will see that the order books are beginning to fill up at last—I am delighted that they are—in the midlands, the north-east and the north-west. They will also notice — again unlike previous expansion phases — that instead of the productivity increases of a few years ago fading away, they have, if anything, accelerated. We are now looking at staggering figures of productivity in this expansion phase which put us in the same league as the Japanese and German miracle economies — indeed, which put us, according to the latest figures, above the Japanese and German levels of productivity. I put those points to Opposition Members who dismiss the present expansion phase as temporary and unsustainable. It is important for them to understand that that is not so.

This phase of expansion does not come from artificial manoeuvres or from the use of "demand bellows" by my right hon. and hon. Friends in Whitehall. On the contrary, they are engaged in a shrinkage of Government borrowing to some of the lowest levels, in proportion to gross domestic product, in the Western world. It does not come from that source at all; it comes from the supply side reforms that have been pushed into this economy, in the teeth of bitter criticism and with much struggle and difficulty, in the last seven years.

Those supply side changes are evident now, in de-restriction and deregulation, much better industrial relations and greater readiness to invest. They are beginning to bear fruit. They show that the British economy is capable of taking advantage of its competitive sterling exchange rate without it ending in soaring costs, renewed inflation and the loss of competitiveness, just when we thought that we had gained it. For that reason, the case for additional tax cuts to reinforce this process is very strong.

There are of course many other reasons for tax cuts as well. Opposition spokesmen say that they are against tax cuts. I am completely baffled by that statement. In one breath they say, with some justification, that the overall burden of taxation, if measured in this way or that, may have risen, yet in the next breath they say that they want tax cuts to be reversed and that taxes ought to be higher still. Why do they not understand that a man on 75 per cent. of average earnings, with two children and earning about £160 a week, pays 34 per cent. of that £160 a week —a very tight budget for a family with two children— straight back in tax, national insurance and other forms of taxation? Why do they not take pity on the hardship that that kind of arithmetic causes? Why does not the Social Democratic party take pity on the kind of hardship that is caused by those figures? Is it not concerned about the hardship that is caused by high taxes on low incomes? It baffles me that again and again Members on the Opposition Benches dismiss the idea of tax cuts and that they have put into the amendment to the motion the statement that they want tax increases. If they are concerned about hardship——

Mr. Wrigglesworth: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Howell: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will allow me to finish what I have to say.

Quite apart from the other points that I have made about the prudence and wisdom of further tax cuts for supply side reasons, I think that Opposition Members should rethink their position before they happily vote against the tax cuts that I hope my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will announce in his Budget.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: Will the right hon. Gentleman draw a clear distinction between what the Labour Opposition and the alliance Opposition are saying? We share his anxiety about the burden of taxation on the people to whom he referred. We propose to take care of that by the integration of the taxation and benefit systems.

Mr. Howell: I find it extraordinarily difficult—and I am not the only one — to understand what either the Social Democratic party or the Labour party is saying and to draw a distinction between the two, when I have found out. All I can go by at the moment is the motion in the name of the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) and others. It

"deplores the priority which the Government is giving to cuts in the standard rate of tax."

That cut in the standard rate of tax would be of great benefit to millions of people on very low incomes. If the Social Democratic party is not concerned with those people, or if it has some other help in mind, it should make its position clear. At the moment, it is against lifting the burden of high tax on low incomes, and that is very puzzling.

The nature of this recovery, it seems to me, is neither temporary nor unsustainable. When Opposition Members argue — reassuringly for us — that when the Tories win the next election something will have to be done, they fail to understand the nature and the long-term, underlying supply side qualities that underpin this steady, sober growth. It is not spectacular but I believe that it is fully

sustainable. It will pave the way for a lower tax economy generally, for a reduction in interest rates and for the financing of our public and private services and of the infrastructure—both from public and private resources—in a thoroughly responsible way.

I hope that the Opposition will have second thoughts about their economic analysis. They draw heavily on independent forecasters, so-called, in the City, whose credentials suggest to me that their independence is somewhat coloured by their politics. I advise the Opposition not to rely so much upon independent forecasters and to rethink their position on tax cuts. I do not think that they will, but perhaps we shall hear more about that later.

We are seeing now the sustained expansion of a non-inflationary kind for which we have fought for years. It gives my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer massive opportunities of the kind that no Chancellor since the war has had to put this economy back on its feet, to end the era of defeatism, of Britain being the sick man of Europe, and to make us one of the leading contributors to the world economy and recovery.

8.29 pm

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): I shall concentrate my remarks on the housing aspects of the public expenditure plans and to begin by considering the stated objectives of housing expenditure in the plans. There are three objectives which, in broad terms, are not unreasonable. However, when we consider them against the reality, they go no way to meeting the problems.

The first objective is given as the choice for decent housing through the spread of home ownership. There is nothing objectionable about that and the Opposition support home ownership. However, the problem faced by many of my constituents, especially those who are unemployed, is that even in an expanded private sector where new housing stocks were created in the private sector, the unemployed would not be able to get a mortgage and take advantage of that availability. While we accept that home ownership is desirable, it is not an objective open to many of the unemployed people in my constituency.

The second objective which the plans concede in a somewhat mealy-mouthed way is the role for the public sector. They contain an analysis of the amounts of expenditure involved.

Thirdly, the plans consider the urban housing renewal unit, or Estate Action as it is now called, and some of the special schemes involving the private sector that will take place through the Housing Corporation.

I shall concentrate on these objectives and how they relate to the reality of people's lives and the potential that exists within the construction industry. My hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) made a good analysis of how problems in the construction industry and housing can be brought together to stimulate economic growth.

There are plans for increases in the rented sector of some £390 million—at least, that is how it is shown in the programmes. However, in terms of housing investment programmes—which are critically important in my area because there is such a large council house stock and most of the people in need believe that the council house rented sector is the way to resolve their need—that means a reduction in expenditure of about £99 million, and in real terms that is a drop of 11 per cent. That is very serious and affects my constituents.

There has been talk about the use of capital receipts. However, many local authorities have virtually exhausted any capital receipts that may have been available. Whether these authorities should have complete access to such capital receipts as exist is another argument. However, the Government cannot use the argument that capital receipts exist in every case. A large amount of national capital receipts may be available but these receipts are not necessarily available to the local authorities that need them. That position is serious and a cause of grave concern.

Local authorities that are virtually without capital receipts, such as that in my constituency, have to try to cope with demands for expenditure on housing for major and serious repairs and for new family housing for rent, and with the growing demands and needs for special accommodation for the elderly—a growing proportion of the population nationally and in my constituency. However, these authorities have no capital allocations or capital receipts with which to meet even part of those demands.

While I accept that some of the new schemes in connection with the Housing Corporation are interesting and ought to be explored and adopted, and that there have been some small increases, the great demands and the potential of the housing association movement—and, one of my particular interests, the housing co-operative movement — are not being harnessed to deal with housing problems. However, I must pay tribute in that regard to the amount of money put into such housing. I am interested in the new challenge funding. The Ravenscroft newbuild co-operative is applying to use that new, different kind of funding which involves the private sector in a newbuild scheme and I hope that it succeeds. However, even if it does succeed, there are many groups and people in housing need in my constituency who cannot possibly use that route and whose needs and problems will not be resolved.

In housing terms, we are faced with plans which do not come near meeting the housing needs. Nor do they help to harness the economic growth potential that undoubtedly exists in the construction industry. If we can harness and direct expenditure in that direction, there will be direct results and spin-offs throughout the economy and a multiplying effect. That can be a real stimulus to the economy, but the opportunity is being missed.

We are also confronted nationally—and I have given examples from my constituency—with examples of how the housing problems are not being met in any reasonable way. The Government's plans reveal an escalation of a growing housing problem which is now reaching crisis proportions.

I turn now to some of the problems that we face nationally. All hon. Members must be aware from their constituency experience of the growing problems with waiting lists. At every advice centre and surgery that I hold, I am confronted by people in desperate housing need, but no end to their problems is in sight. The local authority must deal with priorities which are even greater than theirs. Those problems must be dealt with in areas such as mine. It is simply not good enough to claim that the private sector and owner—occupation will resolve the problems when, for example, I am confronted with

[Mr. George Howarth]

between 9,000 and 10,000 unemployed people and their families. The private sector and owner-occupation options are not open to them. They face severe overcrowding and they often live in flats with young children and no gardens.

Another of the national problems at present is that of severe overcrowding. In some families, children of opposite sexes are forced to share bedrooms because of the lack of space. When I became involved in politics 20 years ago, I thought that we would have eradicated that problem by now. However, that problem occurs daily throughout the country.

There is little or no scope in the plans to meet the needs of people who, although cured, are forced to remain in psychiatric units because there is no housing available for them if they leave such units. It is estimated that about 835,000 people are in hospital wards simply because there is no suitable housing for them.

The Government's plans offer little hope of meeting the needs of the homeless. It is all very well to quote statistics about the number of vacant council houses. We know that sometimes the management of empty stock could be improved. However, the truth is that there will always be a proportion of the housing stock standing empty because of the movements of people in the area and the need for improvements to those properties. However, there are still 100,000 people homeless and no light at the end of the tunnel for them. There have been many debates which have raised important points about the growing use of bed and breakfast accommodation for the homeless.

The authority in my constituency is faced with an aging housing stock in the public sector, yet no capital receipts or allocations are available to meet the problems caused by the need for serious repairs. In many instances there is a need for new roofs and window frames, for example. It is estimated that about £20,000 million will be needed to clear the national backlog of repairs, and I do not believe that anything will happen on that scale. There is a problem in the private sector, for it is estimated that about 77 per cent. of all unfit dwellings are to be found within it. I have some examples in my constituency. The Government's plans will do nothing to resolve that problem.

The next Labour Government should have an objective of 1 million new homes so that something can be done to meet demand. That would cost about £28,500 million. We need resources directed to the repair of substandard and seriously defective housing, which would cost about £27,500 million. We need resources to repair the public sector housing stock, and that would require the expenditure of about £20,000 million. Finally, we need the local authorities, the housing association movement, housing co-operative groups and the construction industry to be given the assurance that what they are ready, willing and able to do will happen because the necessary public resources will be provided.

The cost of the programme that I have outlined would be about £1,500 for every man, woman and child in the country. That seems a small price for resolving a housing crisis. Unfortunately, the Government's plans show no prospect of anything being done in the near future.

8.41 pm

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): I have some sympathy with some of the problems that the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) has described. I, too, represent an inner city area in which there are housing difficulties. I think that there are other solutions to the problem apart from building more council houses, but it is an area of policy that perhaps needs more thought.

I wish to concentrate on the main theme of the debate. One of the characteristics of all economic debates is the constant attempt of Opposition Members to pretend that the economy is in terminal decline, that no one has any employment and that all companies are losing money and markets. We have a serious unemployment problem, but large sectors of the economy are extremely successful. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer is to be congratulated on his record of sustained growth. We are now entering the seventh year of economic growth with sustained relatively low inflation despite that growth.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer was able in his autumn statement to offer substantial increases in public expenditure and the economic debate that is taking place outside the House is directed to how whatever fiscal surpluses there are should be used. Should they be used to reduce the public sector borrowing requirement or to produce tax cuts, for example? That is not a picture of an economy in terminal decline. Instead, it is one that reflects substantial successes. It is to the constant chagrin of the Opposition that that is the ground on which the economic debate is taking place. As I have said, discussion is centred on the purpose for which fiscal surpluses should be used. Should they be used to increase public spending, to reduce the PSBR or to enable tax cuts to be introduced? I expect that the result will be a mixture of two or three of the options. None of us knows now the size of the surplus that my right hon. Friend will have at his disposal.

If my right hon. Friend finds that the fiscal surplus allows him to introduce income tax reductions, I hope that he will concentrate on reducing the standard rate and not on raising thresholds. The argument whether we should reduce rates or raise thresholds in those terms has been conclusively won, in my opinion, by those who share my view that the cutting of the standard rate is the most important objective. The raising of thresholds does not take people out of income tax. That may happen temporarily, but within a short time they will receive a pay rise that puts them into income tax again. The raising of thresholds has become irrelevant to the poverty and unemployment traps. It is irrelevant to the poverty trap because the proposed social security changes will be based on net take-home pay. It is irrelevant to the unemployment trap because that relates to average tax rates and not marginal ones. For all these reasons, it makes much more sense, if we are to have income tax reductions, to have them directed to the basic rate.

The argument against that approach is that it does not help the low paid as much as the raising of tax thresholds. That is true, but we should concentrate on helping the low paid and not give more general help to the entire wage-earning population. If tax thresholds are raised, everyone benefits as the effect extends across the board. A simple approach — it is one that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has pursued in various Budgets — is to reduce or remove bands of employees' national insurance contributions. That concentrates help on the low paid and does not go to everyone else, and it can be done relatively cheaply. The 5 per cent. and 7 per cent. employees' national insurance contributions could be

abolished at a net cost of about £500 million. That would mean that those on less than £5,000 a year would pay no national insurance contributions.

It is worth thinking of what that means. Someone on £5,000 a year would have an extra £350 a year in his pocket. If we were to achieve that result by the thresholds approach, we would have to raise them by about £1,200, or about 35 per cent. That would be prohibitively expensive because it would apply across the board.

The two main themes of our economic policy should be the reduction of interest rates and the reduction of unemployment. The unemployment scene seems to be radically different from that of two years ago, when I started to take a serious interest in the subject with my hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman). The House will recall that we published a short pamphlet. On looking back, I feel that much of what appeared in the pamphlet still makes a great deal of sense.

As I have said, the unemployment scene has changed radically. A substantial part of Britain is in a boom but there are pockets within that part — some are more substantial than others — where there is serious depression. It is not the simple matter of a north and south divide. The south-east generally is a prosperous part of the country, but there are parts of central London that are extremely deprived, which have massive unemployment and many serious problems. On the other side of the coin, there are parts of the north where there are just as many Mercedes and BMWs per 100 yd as there are in the south-east. The problem is much more complex than a north-south divide. There are specific areas in which there are serious problems.

Whatever help or treatment we provide should be focused on the unemployment problem in specific areas with great problems. We should not try to do something nationwide that would diminish the effect of whatever policy we pursued in the areas with the greatest problems.

It would seem that there are two specific ways in which we can try to alleviate unemployment, and they should be targeted on the areas that are especially deprived. One approach is the further reduction of employers' national insurance contributions to reduce the cost to employers of employment. The other approach is the extension of job subsidy schemes, of which there are two or three examples in the Government's package of employment policies. An average male manual worker is paid about £8,500 a year and the cost to the Exchequer if he becomes unemployed is about £7,500 a year. It would seem that it is worth focusing on areas within regions where there are high levels of unemployment to try to ease the cost to employers of creating jobs in the private sector.

The really run down inner city areas need something rather more specific than what I have suggested so far. The urban programme as a whole — we have urban development corporations, urban land grants and urban regeneration grants — is a serious and well targeted attempt to help them, and I welcome the increased budgets this year. If we add together the budgets of the urban programme, the derelict land grant and the urban development corporations the total is about £580 million, an increase of about one-eighth since last year. I welcome that increase, but if there is room for fiscal manoeuvre in the Budget and it is of the order of some of the figures that are being speculated upon, I hope that some of it will be used to increase specific programmes that are directed to improving decaying and run down inner city areas. That will create jobs in the short term while the work is taking place, and in the longer term it will lead to the economic regeneration of the areas. The other main theme of economic policy should be to achieve a reduction in interest rates. By any standard, we have high interest rates. The bank rate is about 11 per cent. The rate on dollars is 6·5 per cent., on deutschmarks and the yen it is just over 4 per cent., and even on the French franc it is only 8·5 per cent. By international standards, and in real terms, our interest rates are high.

We must ask why we are out of line with the rest of the important developed economies. I have a theory, which I have propounded often in speeches in the House, which gains some agreement from a great many people, but seems to fall on deaf ears in the Treasury. I do not know whether my right hon. Friend will have time to deal with it when he winds up the debate. Interest rates are high not because other countries' interest rates are high or because of attempts to prop up the pound, but because credit is growing fast. The banks and financial institutions have become the engines of credit growth. By the liberalisation of financial markets, they have actively and aggressively gone out and sold loans to people. They have sold credit —that is their product—and they have done so in a way that has caused it to grow at an artificially high rate. They have had to fund that by bidding up the interest rates on deposits. That is borne out by the fact that so much of the expansion of lending has gone to property development companies and to individuals and consumers rather than to industry. The figures for one of the major banks over the past five years show that its lending to manufacturing industry has risen by 33 per cent., to property companies by 170 per cent. and to individual consumers by over 200 per cent. Those figures bear out my argument.

High interest rates have a serious and a deleterious effect on manufacturing industry's ability to invest and on its costs. They are one of the fundamental reasons, if not the main reason, why sterling is under pressure on foreign exchange markets. The markets are concerned about the huge overhang of liquidity and are worried that it might result in inflation. Financial factors feed off themselves —the pound is weak because credit is growing too fast, so we have to raise interest rates and keep interest rates high to protect the pound. It is a vicious circle that must be broken. To break it, there must be some restriction on credit and credit growth. The danger is that it might damage the consumer boom. If my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has room to cut income tax perhaps he could get the best of both worlds by restraining credit growth to help interest rates but sustain the consumer boom through cuts in income tax.

One of the other ways that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor might help with interest rates is by using some of his fiscal adjustment to reduce the public sector borrowing requirement. Of itself, that will not reduce interest rates, but it will go some way towards compensating what is seen in financial markets as a laxity in fiscal and monetary policy, and a not entirely 100 per cent. belief that the Government will hit their public expenditure targets. If one could inject a little confidence there, and it were combined with some restriction on credit growth, we might see a fairly substantial and meaningful reduction in interest rates to the levels in our competitor countries. Those are sensible ways in which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor might use the money available to him.

[Mr. John Maples]

My right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury has brought to the House a remarkable success story on the economy. It is to his credit that the debate is being conducted in terms of what we will do with the extra money that is available. It gives him a range of options. If he were to apply some of the extra money in the ways that I have suggested, we could sustain the growth in consumer spending, but at the same time bring down interest rates and help alleviate unemployment. I hope that he will choose to do some of those things.

8.55 pm

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): I shall be brief and put three points. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Slough (Mr. Watts) will be able to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Public spending should be fairly distributed. The greatest of all distortions in public spending is the inequity in treatment between England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. On the last territorial analysis, the differences in 1985-86 were that in Northern Ireland public spending was 52·5 per cent. higher per head than in England. In Scotland it was 27·2 per cent. higher and in Wales 10 per cent. higher.

With regard to Northern Ireland, there are obvious security costs. Those security costs should not divert our attention from other aspects of the Northern Ireland programme. Spending on industry, trade and employment in Northern Ireland is 340 per cent. higher per head than in England. Spending on housing in Northern Ireland is 357 per cent. higher per head than in England. I should like to hear from my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary some prospect that that non-security expenditure in Northern Ireland will be reduced over the years. The difference in Wales is only 10 per cent. That 10 per cent. over all the public expenditure programmes conceals larger differences—noticeably a subsidy which is some 73 per cent. higher on industry and employment in Wales than in England.

Scotland is by far the worst example of all. Scotland, unlike Wales and Northern Ireland, is by no means one of the poorer regions of the United Kingdom. Indeed, on some measurement of GDP it is one of the wealthiest regions outside the south-east of England. Public spending is 27 per cent. higher per head in Scotland than it is in England. Let us put that in slightly more practical terms. I began life in Dundee. I now represent the constituency of Darlington. For every £4 spent on health in Darlington, £5 is spent in Dundee. For every £5 spent on industry and employment in Darlington, some £9·50 is spent in Dundee. For every £5 spent on housing in the north-east, nearly £10 is spent on housing in Scotland. Moreover, the gap between Scottish and English spending has widened under the Government rather than narrowed.

That kind of distortion is unjustified and discriminates directly against the English regions. We must ask ourselves why the Treasury tolerates a system that is so manifestly unfair. If it is not the territorial block formula—the Chief Secretary to the Treasury does not think that it is—the only other explanation is the political lobbying of the respective Secretaries of State for those three territories. If that is true, the one thing that the Government were elected to achieve was a reduction in the extent to which the allocation of public expenditure was organised on the basis of political entitlement, and to redress it to a distribution on the basis of genuine need.

I want to put to my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary three specific points on territorial spending. The first concerns assessment of need. Since the system has been in operation we have not had any realistic assessment of need. If geographical or historical circumstances—for example, in Scotland—justify additional spending, let us have that justification out in the open. If the Scottish Office and the Treasury cannot agree on a system of measuring genuine need, perhaps some independent body—the Cabinet Office, for instance—could assess those differences.

Secondly, there is the overprovision which has built up since 1980 in the Scottish budget in particular but in the Northern Ireland budget. I estimate that, over the six or seven years that the formula has been running, the overprovision has been nearly £1 billion. I should like to know the Treasury's estimate.

Thirdly, if the territorial block formula is not at fault—my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary tells me in a letter of 5 January

"The formula arrangements have their intended effect of keeping the trend of territorial block expenditure in line with that of comparable English expenditure"—

why has my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland voluntarily yielded the operation of the formula on local authority expenditure? If he is able to do that, why is the Treasury not able to press him on suspending the operation of the formula in other aspects such as housing and employment support?

It seems to be common ground that far too many of our defence establishments are based in the south and west rather than the north-east and north-west. Such establishments, whether they are depots, research establishments or defence bases, carry huge spending implications for the local economy in which they are sited. I should like that system to be re-examined to ascertain whether some of those bases and depots could be moved nearer the northern flank of NATO, which we are pledged to defend, to boost the economy of the north-west and the north-east in the same way as they have injected spending power into the west and the south.

On housing, I notice that some £314,000 is spent on the national mobility scheme. Some 22,000 applications by council tenants for rehousing under that scheme have been made in other parts of the country, but the scheme was able to find alternative accommodation for only 7,000. If we are spending £314,000, each successful placement costs us only some £60 per head. I should like more resources to be switched within the housing budgets to make a reality of that national mobility scheme.

9 pm

Mr. John Watts (Slough): I wish to return to the question which the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) dodged throughout his speech. I fail to see how he could move an amendment which claims that the apparent relaxation of spending limits falls far short of what is needed without being prepared to say what in his estimation is needed in the way of additional expenditure. The hon. Gentleman refuted the carefully costed list of Labour spending promises which was prepared by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary, but he was not prepared to say in detail which of the 32 items totalling

more than £28 billion were not now part of the Labour party's programme. We understand from the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) that the only commitment is to the so-called anti-poverty and job creation programmes, but most of the other items in the list seem not to be contained within those two programmes.

I do not have the time to read out all 32 items or to give chapter and verse for the sources of those promises, although that information is available and has been supplied to the Labour Front Bench. I should like to take some examples, in the hope that the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) will tell me at least in respect of those specifics whether they are part of the Labour party's promises to the electorate.

There is the pledge to increase overseas aid to 0·7 per cent. of GNP, at a cost of £1·46 billion — a promise given by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook in his speech to the Overseas Development Institute on 9 June 1986. Is that part of Labour's spending programme? There is the promise of the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), in an article in *Tribune* in February 1986, to raise child benefit to £14 a week, at a cost of £3·25 billion. Is that part of Labour's programme? The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), in *Hansard* 27 March 1985, promised free television licences for old-age pensioners at a cost of £320 million. Is that Labour policy?

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, in *Hansard* 20 March 1985, proposed that pensions should be increased by £5 a week for the single pensioner and £8 a week for a couple, at a cost of £1·65 billion. Does that form part of his committed programme? On 2 April 1986, in the *Daily Mirror*, the hon. Member for Oldham, West promised to double the Christmas bonus to old-age pensioners, at a cost of £110 million. Will the hon. Member for Thurrock tell me whether that is part of Labour's programme? There is also the winter premium of £5 a week for all needy pensioners and widows, which the hon. Member for Oldham, West said on 6 March 1986 would cost £180 million.

I could continue that list if I had more time at my disposal. None of those items appears to be in the so-called job creation or poverty programmes to which the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook is committed. Unless the hon. Member for Thurrock can advise me that the Labour party is still committed to those promises, I can draw no conclusion, nor can my constituents, other than that those promises have been made carelessly and cynically in an attempt to buy votes in a general election that the Labour party has great cause to fear. It makes promises that would cost £35 billion and would add more than 30p to the standard rate of income tax but pretends that it has a modest plan that would require the mere doubling of the PSBR and only another £3·5 billion in taxation. There is a yawning credibility gap between the cost of the promises that the Labour party scatters around like confetti and the costs to which it is prepared to own up.

As the public expenditure White Paper and the recent PSBR figures suggest, we can have our cake and eat it. We can have higher spending and I suspect that when the Budget comes we can have lower taxes as well. However, we must bake the cake first, because we cannot eat it before we have baked it. A fundamental flaw in the economics of the Labour party has always been that it desires to spend money before the wealth has been created.

The policies of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer have given us six years of sustained economic growth. That growth permits well-targeted increases in public expenditure, scope for cuts in direct taxation and also for a reduction in borrowing.

By contrast, the Labour party is the bad news party that makes pessimism a profession. Opposition Members are always waiting for bad news. Their story changes; it used to be that inflation would rocket after the 1983 general election. They then said that there would be a crisis in the balance of payments — we are told that it is just around the corner. Now the Labour party says that there will be a further explosion in VAT.

The Labour party will be disappointed on 17 March when my right hon. Friend the Chancellor opens his Budget because it will be good news for Britain, but bad news for the Labour party. However, the worst news of all that is coming the Labour party's way will be when it faces its third defeat in a row at the general election.

9.7 pm

Dr. Oonagh McDonald (Thurrock): Yesterday, the Treasury announced the figures for the PSBR. The 10-month figure stood at the amazing figure of £400 million. I checked back over previous years and found that it was quite unprecedented. However, when I checked the 10-month figures and the 11-month figures for previous years — the 11-month figure is, of course, announced with the Budget — and with the outturn, I found that there is always a discrepancy between the 10-month figure, the 11-month figure and the figure for the full 12 months. In other words, for all their talk about the PSBR the Treasury and the Government have never got that figure right.

When one considers that figure a little more closely, one sees that part of the reason why it is so low now is that the sale of state assets has been set against the figure for borrowing. However, that is one off and will not necessarily happen in future years. It certainly will not happen under a Labour Government and if a Tory Government get in again next time, they will have to hunt around for things to sell.

The other reason why that figure has turned out as it has is the buoyant tax revenue from income tax and company tax. However, that is only partly due to profitability. It is also due to the fact that companies have now run out of their tax allowances and have started to pay tax. We should not expect that figure to be as buoyant in the future.

This year's receipts from VAT increased by more than £3 billion over last year's figures. It is no wonder that the Government are looking at VAT as an attractive source of revenue if we should have the misfortune to have another Tory Government. I noticed that, in his answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), the Chief Secretary chose his words with great care. He could not be described as denying that another Tory Government would not increase VAT.

The increase in VAT take comes from an increase in consumer spending, which was up by 5 per cent. last year. Whatever some Conservative Members say, it is fuelled by the increase in consumer debt, which rose by another 14 per cent. in 1986, making the total outstanding amount of consumer credit at the end of 1986 the staggering figure of £30 billion. The hon. Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples), in his interesting contribution to the debate, said

[Dr. Oonagh McDonald]

that banks and other financial institutions have increased consumer credit. But that has not happened by accident. The liberalisation that he mentioned is not accidental;, it is deliberate Government policy.

We may see further increases this year when the building societies also extend consumer credit. Perhaps understandably, some of them, notably the Halifax, are becoming anxious about the extent of consumer credit and consumer debt and their impact on households. In an interesting study published today, the Halifax building society said that the number of its borrowers who were more than 12 months in arrears had increased from 400 to 1,800 during the past five years.

The increase in consumer credit has led to endless anxiety and, in some cases, to tragedy in many households as people take on debt that they cannot afford and then cannot pay it back. Many personal tragedies occur and many loan sharks are waiting to trap the unwise and the unwary who have taken on far too much debt. But the Government do not care about the impact of the growth of consumer credit on households. They do not care about the tragedies and anxieties to which it gives rise. All that they are worried about is the pre-election consumer boom. No effort is made to control credit or to control the activities of the loan sharks who batten on to the unfortunate.

The growth in consumer credit has led to a rapid growth in imports, which were up 6 per cent. last year. As Conservative Members said, not all of it was represented by consumer goods. Nevertheless, retail sales, which are running at more than 25 per cent. above the level in 1979, are being fed by imported goods. Our so-called market-oriented economy is still producing fewer consumer goods than it did in 1979. British industry has not adapted as we would have wished to meet the growth in consumer demand. Of course, the Government do not care about that. The VAT comes flooding in and the trade deficit is shrugged aside. There was a small trade deficit overall last year, but a huge deficit of £8·7 billion in manufactured goods. This year, the Treasury expects a deficit of £1·5 billion. The Government hope that we did not notice their forecast in the 1986 Budget statement of a surplus of £1·5 billion, even taking the fall in oil prices into account. That surplus has suddenly turned into a deficit.

The Treasury estimate of what the deficit will be at the end of 1987 is not shared by many economic forecasters, with 18 forecasters putting the expected deficit at the end of 1987 at £5 billion. The Labour party has been accused of pessimism and of spreading gloom and doom, but it is also being said by independent forecasters, many of whom would be insulted to be considered our supporters. They are merely taking a cold, hard look at what the Government are doing. The growth in consumer credit and in VAT may not continue. The Government may find that the growth in the revenue from corporation tax which they have experienced this year may not continue in 1987, for the reasons I have already mentioned.

Let us consider the position that faces the Government as they come up to the Budget and let us examine the Government's plans — which will not, however, be fulfilled after the election. The Government have a real chance to take a long-term view of the economy. The Chancellor has said that some people should take a long-term view. In his new year interview with the *Financial Times*, he condemned short-termism out of hand. He condemned the reluctance of industry to put more money into research and development or to invest enough to keep up in the technology race.

The Chancellor's policies, particularly the extremely high interest rates that are far beyond those of our competitors, have made it difficult for industry to plan long-term. That means that the Chancellor's complaint lacks substance. He has the opportunity to take a long-term view of the needs of the people and of the needs of the economy, but it is clear that he intends not to take a long-term view at all. He will be found to be the most guilty of short-termism.

All the Chancellor is interested in is cobbling together a Budget that he thinks will enable his party to win the next election. He is not prepared to think beyond election day. He is not prepared to take the long-term interests of the people or of the needs of the economy into account. Instead, he will hunt for the best set of election bribes that he can find. The British public are more intelligent than to be taken in by his election bribes. He will put the emphasis on tax cuts and decry yet again public expenditure. He will decry the possible increase in public expenditure for 1987 and later, knowing full well that at least 65 per cent. of extra public spending finds its way back into the public purse, having en route met people's needs and helped to create more jobs.

Given the bonanza in Government revenue which the Treasury so proudly announced yesterday, how can the Chancellor justify not finding more than a measly £10 for a tiny handful of pensioners to help them pay the heating bills that even now are arriving through their letter boxes for the desperately cold January? How can the Chancellor expect to be regarded as a civilised human being and refuse, despite those unexpected billions of extra revenue, to do something for pensioners who face huge heating bills? Why does he not consider our proposal to give a winter heating supplement to pensioners on supplementary benefit at a cost of £150 million? That is less than the £165 million which he spent on promoting shares in British Gas.

Given the options before the Chancellor, how can he possibly justify an increase of 80p a week for single pensioners, which will no doubt be announced in the Budget, instead of giving them a decent increase, especially in view of the Government's action over the past eight years in cheating pensioners by breaking the link between earnings and pensions, which has cost single pensioners £7 a week and married couples £11 a week?

The White Paper shows that spending has increased by £4·7 billion in 1987-88—I shall return to that later. That increased spending is designed to save jobs—the jobs of 117 Conservative Members. Those jobs will turn out to be expensive. Fortunately, the electorate will have the veto on that expenditure and the Government will discover that that expenditure will not save those jobs.

It is interesting to note that the pattern of spending in the White Paper rises in 1987-88, but if the Tories get back into office, spending is at a standstill for 1988-89. Therefore, there are no plans to increase Government spending in real terms. I agree with Christopher Johnson who said, in his memorandum to the Select Committee, that there will be a

"battening down of hatches after the election"—

an election that the Tories hope they will win.

The Government pretend to increase spending in various areas. They propose to spend most of that increase on, first, social security, which the Treasury Select Committee rightly pointed out is the one figure that the Government have persistently got wrong — every year they have got that estimate wrong. Secondly, they are proposing to increase spending on salaries in the public sector. The Chancellor weeps crocodile tears over that, but if a gun is at his head he is willing to make that spending.

In the next three years, spending within the National Health Service is expected to rise by 9 per cent. That is nothing like enough to keep up with medical advances, especially in medical technology, the growth in the number of elderly and the very old and the increase in salaries. The Government have said what wonderful work they are doing for the Health Service, but if the Health Service were to meet the needs of the Government plans it would need an increase in spending of 16 per cent. rather than 9 per cent.

The spending plans in the White Paper contain some interesting elements. There is a clear implication that there will be an increase in prescription charges. Yet that increase too will not take place in 1987, but if the Government get back into office, that increase will occur in 1988-89. It is yet another way in which those who receive tax cuts in the forthcoming Budget will find themselves paying for them. With regard to prescription charges it will be the sick, the poor and especially the long-term sick who will pay through the nose for other people's tax cuts.

When we consider housing expenditure, we appreciate the Alice-in-Wonderland world of the White Paper. Tucked away in the second volume on public expenditure is the claim:

"in most parts of the country there is now an adequate supply of housing overall."

What an absurd and ridiculous claim. My hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) spelled out the urgent need for housing repairs and the lengthening waiting lists for council housing in his constituency. He said that more than 1 million people were on the council housing waiting list and that there was an outstanding repair bill of £19 billion.

There is a shortfall of more than 1 million houses when we consider the number of households requiring separate accommodation that is fit for human habitation. In the face of that, the Government believe that there is adequate housing in the country and the Government's proposed increased expenditure on housing is all of £350 million. That is nothing like enough to meet the bill for repairs or the provision of council houses. Of course we expect the public sector to make its provision of housing but the public sector alone cannot meet all the housing needs. Like most Opposition Members, time after time in my advice surgery I meet young couples who would give their eye teeth for a council flat. They will not get one because, as in so many other parts of the country, no new council housing has been built and the council houses that have been sold — I do not oppose that — have not been replaced by additional stock. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh".] Hon. Members know that perfectly well, except when they fall back into their fantasy Alice-in-Wonderland world.

In education, the increased expenditure is more cosmetic than real. It is true that there is increased expenditure for 1987, but the Government exaggerated the size of the increase by comparing their plans for 1987-88 with what they planned to spend in the current year. Therefore, the figure in the White Paper is yet another fiddle, not that we have come to expect anything else from the present Government. Fiddling figures and conjuring tricks seem to be a major pastime. However, what should have been a pastime has now been substituted for real work, particularly on the part of the Chief Secretary who likes to indulge himself—*[Interruption.]* Of course there is increased spending on teachers' salaries and other salaries in the education sector. Quite right, too.

In my constituency we are having the greatest difficulty obtaining primary school teachers. Many primary school classes in my constituency have been without one consistent teacher throughout the whole year. That deprives working-class children in my constituency of a decent opportunity to learn how to read and do arithmetic properly. That is the sort of basic standard that I want to see. The Government continually talk about basic standards in education but they will not provide decent pay for classroom teachers, sufficient books or equipment or decent classrooms. The Chancellor does not know what he is talking about. I doubt whether he has been in a classroom recently. It is only with that sort of equipment, with sufficient books and with properly trained and sufficient teachers that we can expect to reach decent standards of education.

Almost all the increased expenditure on education planned by the Government is to go on salaries. They should be spending more on making the basic provisions that I have outlined. The £4·7 billion increase in the White Paper amounts to very little in terms of improving the quality of services in those fundamental areas which people expect.

I shall now turn to regional spending. The Chancellor knows so little about his own expenditure plans that he thought that expenditure on regional development grants had been increased. That is what he said in a debate. Instead of which, it is being cut by £200 million in the coming year. If one looks at the previous amount, one will see that the provision for regional expenditure has not been increased at all. My hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), our regional affairs spokesman, has shown, spelled out and explained to the Prime Minister, since the Chancellor seems to be incapable of understanding it, the fact that regional development grants have been cut, making the north-south divide even worse. It is quite plain that the Tories look upon certain areas as political no-go areas. They have written off Scotland and the north of England because they know that they will not win there and they have cut the money that is necessary to deal with the horrendous unemployment problems in the north. They feel that such money is wasted.

In their 1987 Budget, the Government seem to have a leeway of £3 billion or £4 billion. That means that resources are available. The PSBR figures which the Government happily announced yesterday seem to show that. When they looked at those figures, some of the Chief Secretary's hon. Friends wanted him to use the extra resources to meet human needs. They wanted them used to provide houses, to improve health and education and to provide desperately needed resources to build up the infrastructure. They wanted him to invest in people and in the future. We want that as well.

The Government have no basis for their attack on our spending plans, which are clearly and specifically directed at the objectives of combating poverty and dealing with

[Dr. Oonagh McDonald]

unemployment. The Chief Secretary would rather use those resources for a cynical pre-election bribe. His aim is short-term — the utterly selfish one of saving his own job. Where is the long-term thinking there that he demands from others? It is nowhere in sight. Only the Labour party provides the long-term thinking, the planning and the resources necessary to put right the damage of the last eight years.

9.31 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Norman Lamont): This debate has shown that the White Paper bears on nearly every aspect of policy. I hope that the House will forgive me if I do not cover the whole field. Instead, I shall focus on three aspects of our plans. First, I shall deal with our policy for the total of public expenditure in the short and medium term and, secondly, with the distribution of priorities within the overall planning total. Thirdly, in order to reinforce what my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary said about better value for money in those programmes, I shall speak about that.

Before dealing with those matters, I shall respond to some of the points raised in the debate, especially the points made by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr Dalyell). He quoted some remarks made at a luncheon the other day by Sir George Porter. I found myself in sympathy with some of those remarks. We certainly take the Sherfield-Gregson Select Committee report extremely seriously and shall reply in considerable detail to the points that it made. The hon. Gentleman asked about other matters. I cannot reply to him now about CERN but I shall write to him about that.

The hon. Gentleman also asked about general spending on civil research and development. We have shown our commitment to that because the science budget for 1987-88 is in real terms 10 per cent. higher than it was in 1978-79. As he acknowledged in the remarks that he quoted, our support for civil research and development compares well with that in other advanced countries.

The hon. Gentleman asked about research money for the programme about AIDS. He acknowledged what has already been announced and said that the Medical Research Council should be given everything for which it asks. I think I am right in saying that it has been given everything that it has asked for. We take this matter extremely seriously and, of course, any further requests by the Medical Research Council will be seriously considered. The hon. Gentleman described the matter in terms which were wholly appropriate to its seriousness.

As regards the third point that the hon. Gentleman made about pay rises and research staff, pay settlements for the research councils have not been reached this year, although, like other authorities, they will be expected to make pay awards within the programmes for which we have budgeted.

Mr. Dalyell: If they do this it means that the research councils will have to cut back on their research programmes to pay the wages to which they are committed.

Mr. Lamont: That does not automatically follow. As the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) said, that dilemma always applies in the public sector and always applies to public sector pay. There must always be a discipline within each authority. They have to find their own wages. We cannot just underwrite a given level of wages.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) raised the question of the timing of this debate. He suggested that, following the Select Committee's recommendation, it would be better if the debate had been arranged for May or June. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary will consider what he said. I know that my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing has made that point before. I shall make some of the points for having a debate at this time, although obviously my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary will consider what has been said. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing knows, we have a two-stage process, the autumn statement, which the Committee examined in November, when most of the macro-economic issues will be covered, and the White Paper that is published in January when the details of programmes are spelled out. Although the two occasions are different, they are part of the same process.

The advantage of a debate in February is that it can be expected to concentrate on public expenditure issues. A debate in May, when so much of the attention of the House is still on the Budget, may not concentrate public expenditure issues in the same way.

We set out clearly our long-term approach to public spending in our 1979 manifesto. We said that public spending was taking an excessive share of national income and that it should decline progressively. That was the objective that we were elected to work towards. Some hon. Members have suggested that the White Paper reveals a change of tactics on public spending, but our policy has been consistent and it is successful. The only reversal of policy is one for which we willingly take credit, that is reversing the remorseless upward trend of the public spending share of national output. That occurred not this year, but four years ago.

Mr. Gould: Would the Minister care to take up the offer which other Conservative Members did not? Will he now endorse the remarks of the then Chancellor who is now the Foreign Secretary to the effect that when he took over the Chancellorship public spending was at the heart of our economic problems? What has changed since then and how has he changed that problem?

Mr. Lamont: Public spending is at the heart of economic management, and it was at the heart of our economic problems. It is precisely because we have brought public spending under control that we have achieved the growth and the buoyancy of revenue that Labour Members are so keen to spend. The hon. Gentleman asks what has changed. I shall tell him what has changed. During the 1970s public spending was increasing by an average of 3 per cent. a year in real terms. In our first Parliament we reduced that to 2·25 per cent., despite the difficulties of the international recession. Since 1982-83, the rate of increase has come down again to 1·75 per cent. and for the next three years we plan that it should grow by an average of around 1 per cent.

Our prudence on public spending is only one side of the story. The other side is the success of our economic policies that have created the conditions for sustained non-inflationary growth. Under the Labour Government the United Kingdom was bottom of the European

Community growth league. Money GDP was growing fast enough, by about 19 per cent. a year, but, of that, 17 per cent. was frittered away in high inflation.

Since 1983, the United Kingdom has been at the top of the EEC growth league. We have had six successive years of uninterrupted growth. That is the longest period of uninterrupted growth that this country has had for many many years, whatever the Opposition may say. This growth is broadly based. Consumption has been rising by 3 per cent. a year, with investment rising by 4 per cent. a year, twice as fast as the EEC average. In the recovery from 1975 under Labour, consumption grew twice as fast as investment.

Some of my hon. Friends, and the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald), have expressed the view that the totals outlined in the White Paper will be overrun. I accept that they represent a demanding objective, but the taxpayer has every right to expect demanding objectives. Holding to the plans in this White Paper will require continued efforts to get better value for money, but as the Audit Commission on local government has brought out far too clearly, there is plenty of scope in the public sector, in local authorities in particular, for massive improvements. With the Contingency Reserve not as high as last year but higher than the year before, we have every chance of hitting our targets. Furthermore, contrary to what the hon. Member for Thurrock said, our record is extremely good. Over the past five years, the increase over targets has averaged only 0·8 per cent., and that is after taking account of the miners' strike.

We are determined to continue to reduce expenditure as a proportion of national output. That will not be easy. The price of control is willingness to take hard decisions, but the growth in output that we have achieved and will continue to achieve enables us, within our overall objectives, to permit a controlled and modest rise in expenditure in real terms. The increases that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor announced in his autumn statement were modest, and were affordable precisely because the Government for so long have struggled hard to bring public spending under control. It is because we have been prudent and cautious in the past that we are able to afford those increases.

Labour Members did not know how to react to that announcement. They did not know whether it was too much or too little. On the whole, they concluded that it was a mean but cynical pre-election boom. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) said, the Opposition have changed tack. They used to argue that under the Government recovery was impossible. Now, they are saying that it is going too fast and will not last. As my right hon. Friend said, the growth that we are seeing at the moment is not deficit-financed, and for that reason is sustainable and not a pre-election boom.

The alliance parties were conspicuous in the debate by their absence. We had very much hoped to hear from the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) something of the alliance's public expenditure plans, and what its priorities are. It is extremely difficult to find out anything about its intentions. I recall what Mrs. Shirley Williams, a former Member for the House, said the other day about her party. It was:

"The danger is that our party at this stage of its development may find itself meaning all things to all people."

That is precisely what it is. When I saw its publication the other day entitled "The Time Has Come", I thought how appropriate it was that it chose the first line of a stanza from a poem by Lewis Carroll, the last line of which is full of references to porcine quadrupeds in the air. I do not know whether it has anything to do with the way that the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) loves oysters.

We did not hear anything from the alliance about its priorities in public spending. They are usually a little bit more beyond what the Government are spending. The hon. Member for Stockton, South complained that total output was hardly up. He seems to have become confused between total output and manufacturing output and does not seem to be aware that total output has recovered strongly and is 11·5 per cent. above the 1979 base.

The hon. Gentleman referred also to regional policy. As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor said earlier, under the White Paper, regional policy is increased by about £36 million on the previous survey. Of course, we make no apology for the fact that, under the new style regional development grants, we are looking for economies in regional policy, and quite rightly too. In the past, regional policy has involved plenty of waste. Taxpayers' money went on capital-intensive projects that created few jobs in the regions. Indeed, table 3.5.2 of the White Paper shows that the new RDGs that are being phased in are already effective in creating jobs. They are expected to create over 41,000 jobs in 1986-87, and selective assistance created nearly 21,000 jobs last year.

I am confident that it makes complete sense for our regional policy to be much more targeted towards the creation of jobs. It makes no sense for taxpayers' money to be flung at investment projects, regardless of employment. Indeed, that was the purpose of regional policy—to rectify the imbalance in employment between different regions.

The hon. Member for Stockton, South also suggested that we should see more investment in infrastructure. But the Government's record on infrastructure is good. Under the Government, capital spending has been maintained. Under the Labour Government, which the hon. Gentleman was prepared to support, total capital spending fell by about 23 per cent. between 1973-74 and 1978-79. Capital spending in the National Health Service fell by 31 per cent. under the Government that the hon. Gentleman supported. Under the present Government it has increased by about 31 per cent. Under Labour, expenditure on roads fell by 34 per cent. Under the present Government, it has increased by about 12 per cent.

The White Paper makes it perfectly clear that the Government have a good record on capital expenditure, and we intend that that should continue. Opposition Members have made it clear that they do not regard the public spending that is put forward in this White Paper as adequate. They always favour a boost to public spending. For them it is an article of faith. No level of public spending would ever satisfy their aspirations. They now suggest one policy—a direction of public expenditure—that many members of the public, if they were ever allowed to learn about it, would find alarming, extraordinary and wholly inappropriate. Opposition Members plan to direct a large part of their extra funding through local authorities.

It would be one thing for Opposition Members to increase spending and their jobs package through local authorities, but it is quite another thing to do it when they plan simultaneously to end controls on local authority

[Mr. Lamont]

spending, end rate-capping, and end controls on current spending. They propose these things at the very time when there is concern about the efficiency of local authorities, as mentioned in the recent Audit Commission report on eight inner London authorities. That report contrasted the spending policies of eight Labour inner London authorities with eight other authorities facing equally difficult social problems. It concluded:

"There was considerable profligacy. Expenditure was double that in similarly deprived areas. There were scandalous creative accounting techniques — over £700 million worth. There was mismanagement in housing. Staffing and other costs were 70 per cent. higher than might reasonably be expected and arrears nearing three times good practice levels."

The report provided firm evidence of enormous waste in the authorities and tremendous scope for improvements in efficiency. What was the reaction of Opposition Members? They reacted in exactly the same way as the Greeks did to the bearer of bad news. They decided immediately to call for a re-examination of the terms of reference of the Audit Commission.

How can we have any confidence in the Labour party's plans for local government when it responds like that to the Audit Commission's report? Even in well-run local authorities the last thing that we need are enterprise boards to be set up by them to compete with private sector businesses. There is no doubt that local authorities would undercut every private sector business, while making them pay skyscraper rates to meet the losses that their own enterprise boards would incur.

The Opposition say that the quickest way to get people back to work is to create new jobs in local government. But that is already happening in many Labour-controlled local authorities. According to the Audit Commission, the eight London authorities have twice as many staff as the most deprived metropolitan district outside London. Islington —one of the authorities to which my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury referred today—is about to create, according to press reports, 4,000 jobs at a cost of £50 million. That is nearly £13,000 a job. We shall soon reach the position where we have to publish special public sector borrowing requirement figures for Islington on its own.

Of course I accept that most local authorities are run by moderate and sensible people who are anxious to provide a service for their constituents and to be accountable to them. Opposition Members have themselves attacked these zealots in certain local authorities. Although authorities of that kind may be in a minority, they control areas in which very large numbers of people live. They are effective political operators who control substantial resources that are being mismanaged, to the detriment of the electors. Those authorities are showing poor performance, extremism and profligacy. Opposition Members have said that they want their jobs package to be channelled through those self-same local authorities that demonstrate irresponsibility and mismanagement of their resources. They will have to show some prospect of obtaining better value for money if a vote for Labour is not to be a vote for waste and extremism.

The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) is faced with the impossible task of persuading the British people that the attitude of the Labour party to public expenditure is responsible and can be afforded. It was the former Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Lord Barnett, who warned his own party, the Labour party, against unrealistic promises. He said:

"It might be said that the first months of the Labour Government were characterized by our spending money which, in the event, we did not have."

Mr. Gould: I cannot help but notice that the Minister has run out of material and that he is finding it difficult to spin out the time. I wonder whether I can help him? This is a friendly gesture to help him to use up his time. Could he comment on tonight's news that Leyland Trucks has been sold off to a foreign company? Is this part of the Government's general plans for selling off assets, and is it yet another instance of a major part of our manufacturing capacity being sold off to foreign competitors?

Mr. Lamont: I am in no danger of running out of material and I have some questions to put to the hon. Gentleman, too. I can neither confirm nor deny anything. I have not seen what has been reported on television. However, a statement on Rover will be made to the House, when appropriate, at the earliest possible moment.

Opposition Members have made it clear today that they do not like the Government to refer to their plans, yet they reserve the right to criticise our plans and to say that the White Paper is inadequate. They criticise what they exaggerate as spending cuts. The Opposition constantly urge us to spend even more sums of money, yet at the same time they deny to the Government the right to challenge them about their spending plans.

The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) complained that my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury had wrongly estimated his programme at £28 billion. The right hon. Gentleman said that the real figure is only about £10 billion and that the programme is made up of two elements: first, the £3·5 billion poverty package to be financed by taxing what he terms "the rich" and, secondly, the £6 billion jobs package to be financed by borrowing. That may be the first-year cost. However, the first-year cost must be borne again in years two, three and four. If the Opposition are proposing a jobs package, those jobs presumably are not just for year one, but for years two, three and four. Even if £10 billion is to be added to the existing PSBR, that must be added to the proceeds on privatisation of £5 million a year which Opposition Members are pledged to forgo.

Even a £10 billion addition to the public sector borrowing requirement would be a significant step along the road which always leads the Opposition to the IMF. If the poverty package and the jobs package are the full extent of their plans, what are we to make of the other pledges made by Labour spokesmen?

Is the Labour party no longer committed to overseas aid? The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook made that pledge about overseas aid only last June. Does it mean that Labour's pledge to increase spending by 3 per cent. in real terms has already been abandoned? Does it mean that Labour would not increase spending on education—a pledge that was made in "Investing in People"? I give the Opposition this opportunity. Will the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook tell us which of the numerous pledges in "Investing in People" will be abandoned?

Opposition Members talk about free TV licences for pensioners. That is not contained in the Opposition's first-year package. However, Opposition Members are content to come to the House and vote for such a measure on a

Friday and vote for the Government to implement it now. Opposition Members cannot have it both ways. It is not good enough to claim that the only programme that counts is the first-year programme yet at the same time fail to disown the pledges made by Labour spokesmen as they travel around the country.

The Leader of the Opposition gave the game away in the "Panorama" programme when he was asked about those pledges. He said that the pledges were simply

"the mooted ideas, descriptions in lectures and an assortment of speeches of what could be conceivable, of what might be desirable."

Is that how we should interpret the pledges in "Investing in People"? Is that how we should interpret the pledge to provide an educational allowance so that all young people over 16 can undertake full-time education and training? Is that how we should interpret Labour's commitment to a complete ban on lead in petrol? Is that how we should interpret Labour party conference pledges on social security which were passed by an overwhelming majority last October? Is that how we should interpret Labour's commitment to reduce prescription charges immediately and phase them out eventually?

The House and the country are entitled to answers to those questions. The Labour party cannot have it both ways. Opposition Members cannot claim that these points are not in Labour's programme and repeat those pledges again and again. I return to the comments made by Lord Barnett when he said that the days had long passed when he naively thought that it would be easy to persuade his Labour colleagues that two and two made four.

Opposition Members have always been worried about parading their programme. At one stage they said that it should be put to an independent audit, yet when we offered to take them up on that, they withdrew the offer. We can have no confidence in the ability of the Leader of the Opposition to cost his pledges when he cannot even get it right on "Panorama". The 26·9 per cent. rate of inflation to which he referred occurred under the former Labour Government and not under a Conservative Government, as he claimed.

The economy is doing well. It has achieved growth because we have controlled spending, inflation and borrowing. It is because we have had that discipline that we are now in a strong position. For that reason I invite the House to support the sensible priorities and proven policies that are outlined in the White Paper.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 192, Noes 339.

Division No. 95] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley, N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Neill, Martin
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. James Hamilton and
Mr. Allen McKay.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Sir Alexander
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Staml'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Mariand, Paul
Mates, Michael
Mather, Sir Carol
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Prior, Rt Hon James
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*

Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:

Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of the White Paper on the Government's expenditure plans 1987-88 to 1989-90 (Cm. 56—I and II).

Rate Rebate (Scotland)

10.14 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Ancram): I beg to move,

That the Revaluation Rate Rebate (Scotland) Order 1986, dated 17th December 1986, a copy of which was laid before this House on 19th December, be approved.

With the leave of the House, I think that it would be for the convenience of the House if we were to debate at the same time the second motion,

That the Rate Support Grant (Scotland) Order 1987, dated 2nd February 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 4th February, be approved.

As hon. Members will realise, the rate support grant order is a replacement order for that originally tabled in December 1986, and subsequently withdrawn. This is the main rate support grant order for 1987-88, and, when it was originally tabled, the teachers' pay dispute was still unresolved. Happily, a settlement of that dispute has now been reached. Therefore, it is appropriate to release and distribute the additional grant that was promised, as the Government's share of that settlement. It is clearly convenient for local authorities to know precisely where they stand on this as soon as possible, and we thought that it would also be for the convenience of the House to wrap the whole matter up in the single Order. The Rate Support Grant (Scotland) Order repeats the provisions of the earlier draft order but also includes the extra grant for teachers' pay for 1986-87 and for 1987-88.

The Revaluation Rate Rebate, (Scotland) Order 1986 continues revaluation rate rebates to give a third year of relief to those most affected by revaluation.

I do not propose to detain the House with a long statement of general policy, but the background to our policy on local authority expenditure is relevant. In 1978-79, immediately before we took office, the volume of local authority expenditure increased by 6·6 per cent. It was not simply a question of inflation, but of significant expansion in services, in addition to the effects of a high rate of inflation at that time. No responsible Government could have stood aside in the face of that trend. Indeed, the previous Labour Government certainly did not, when the late Mr. Anthony Crosland told local authorities in 1976 "the party's over". — *[Interruption.]* Opposition Members do not like to be reminded that there was a time when they were in office and when they were responsible about local authority expenditure. It might be better for Scotland if they were returned to a sense of responsibility about such matters.

The effect on the wider economy of such a substantial increase in public expenditure — if it were to have continued — would have been insupportable. The effect on the narrower local economies of vastly increasing rating burdens on domestic payers and on business and commerce, would equally have been disastrous. Thus, one of our major objectives since that time has been to restrain local authority expenditure, in the interests of the local ratepayers, and also with the wider objective of reducing public expenditure generally, as a proportion of gross domestic product.

Some authorities have co-operated well in bringing expenditure under control. However, others, particularly some that account for a large proportion of local authority current expenditure in Scotland, have not. The overall volume of local authority expenditure continued to increase in every year up to and including 1984-85. The House is familiar with the steps we have had to take to exercise pressure on local authorities in this respect, through reductions in rate support grant and, in some cases, in the rates of individual authorities. That pressure, and a recognition of the broader underlying reasons for the Government's policy, has begun to bear fruit, and in 1986-87 authorities budgeted for a slightly lower volume of expenditure than they had in 1978-79. No fewer than 40 out of the 65 Scottish authorities budgeted at, or below, their expenditure guidelines.

This evidence of greater realism by local authorities is welcome news for all of us, especially ratepayers. The greater responsiveness of local authorities has allowed the Government to respond positively with the substantial increases in expenditure provision and aggregate Exchequer grant for 1987-88, which were announced last summer and which are reflected in tonight's order. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State announced on 23 July last year that expenditure provision for 1987-88 would be £3,277 million, and aggregate Exchequer grant £2,160 million. The total provision, distributed to local authorities in the form of their expenditure guidelines, represented a substantial increase of £285 million over that for the previous year, and was 3·75 per cent. over the local authorities' own budgets for 1986-87, taking account of adjustments to those budgets for the interim teachers' pay award implemented in April 1986. This provision was adequate to maintain the 1986-87 volume of expenditure into 1987-88, on the basis of the Government's inflation assumptions. The aggregate Exchequer grant was increased by £151 million over the 1986-87 figure, to a level adequate to maintain grant, again on the basis of the assumptions we were able to make in July 1986, at the existing percentage.

Expenditure provision and grant were increased in December by £1·96 million to reflect the transfer of financial responsibility for Leith nautical college, the Orkney internal ferry services and the transfer of list D schools. There is also a further increase for 1987-88 of £60 million in provision and £30 million in grant to meet the costs in that year of the final teachers' pay settlement.

Although I welcome the fact that 1986-87 budgets were for the first time, in volume terms, below spending in 1978-79, it remains the case that some authorities are spending too much.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): What does the Minister mean by "too much"?

Mr. Ancram: The simplest answer is that they were spending over the guidelines given to them by the Government and, on that basis, the Government consider that they are spending too much.

Mr. Foulkes: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Ancram: No. I have given way to the hon. Gentleman. This is a short debate and I shall not give way again. The hon. Gentleman can make his own speech if he is lucky enough to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Foulkes *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. The Minister has said that he is not giving way again.

Mr. Ancram: A number of authorities have, therefore, once again incurred heavy grant penalties, and selective action was taken under section 5 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1966 to reduce Edinburgh district council's rate. Those authorities which have incurred grant penalties stand to have the grant returned to them if their final outturn expenditure for the year has been reduced. I hope that the authorities concerned will have adjusted their budgets accordingly. The important point for us tonight, however, is that there is no excuse for overspending in relation to guidelines in the coming financial year 1987-88. The generous provision for that year should make it possible for all authorities to budget within guidelines, and their ratepayers will be looking to them to do precisely this. I give notice tonight that, especially in the light of the generous guidelines that have been issued, we will take a very serious view of budget plans for overspending next year, and substantial grant penalties will again be imposed where necessary. Equally, careful consideration will be given to selective action in individual cases, if that seems justified.

The Government's concern for adequate provision is reflected in individual services. In education, we have made available for the first time a special unallocated margin of £50 million for distribution to education authorities. This recognises the reality of their high spending in relation to assessed need, and provides room for the new educational developments that are in prospect —for example, the introduction of standard grade.

It is estimated that about £295 million out of aggregate Exchequer grant will be paid in grants for specific services. The remainder will be rate support grants. In 1985-86, domestic rate relief was increased from the equivalent of 1p to 8p to mitigate the effects of revaluation on the domestic sector. This high relief was reduced for 1986-87 to 7p in the pound. We have decided that it should be maintained at 7p for 1987-88. The cost of this relief is £91 million. The ratio of resources element to needs element for 1986-87 was 1:8. I have proposed to maintain that ratio for 1987-88, giving a resources element of £197 million.

The rest of aggregate Exchequer grant, and by far the largest part of it, forms the needs element. The client group method of needs assessment continues to be the basis of needs element distribution.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I am sure that the Minister is aware that the amounts given to the two local authorities in my constituency do not come close to the needs element. As the orders under consideration also provide for some relief for businesses in the amount given back because of revaluation, will he accept that the Government came much closer to giving Orkney and Shetland islands councils the full amount to which they are entitled under the client group method? That would be of more significance in helping businesses in Orkney and Shetland than the amount given under the orders before us.

Mr. Ancram: Before the transfers for teachers's pay there is an increase in the needs element for 1987-88 of 6·2 per cent., which is above the rate of inflation for both the Orkney islands and the Shetland islands. I would have thought that the hon. Gentleman would agree that that was generous.

However, as in past years it has seemed prudent to limit the impact of sudden changes in the grant entitlements of individual authorities by setting maxima for grant gains and losses. No authority has been given less grant than in the equivalent order for 1986-87 and grant increases are subject to a maximum of 12 per cent. Last year we received representations from a number of authorities, mainly small rural districts, which were worried that full implementation of the client group method would mean their losing all entitlement to needs element. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) will remember pressing us on this point in the debate on an earlier rate support grant order, on 24 January 1985, and I am sure he will welcome the steps I am now taking, for a second year, to meet his concern on behalf of those districts.

Mr. Wallace *rose*——

Mr. Ancram: I have already given way to the hon. Gentleman. This is a short debate and I wish to get on because other hon. Members will want to take part.

In response to the concern of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden, a minimum grant entitlement of £11 per head was set. We have decided to increase that to £11·50 a head, roughly in line with inflation. As in previous years Orkney and Shetland have been treated as special cases because of their high rating resources.

Mr. Wallace: Will the Minister say how much it would benefit domestic, commercial and industrial ratepayers in Orkney and Shetland if the full amount were paid under the client group method? What would it mean in pence per pound on the rates?

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Gentleman knows that there have been special arrangements for Orkney and Shetland precisely because they have high rating resources related to the development of the oil industry. He knows full well that the benefits of that in terms of rate poundages in those two areas have been considerable in comparison to the Scottish mainland. They have been given the average grant increase over what they received in the present year.

During our debate last year the hon. Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie) asked what interest rates had been assumed in the calculation. I hope that I may save him the trouble of making a speech tonight if I tell him that the interest rate assumed was 10·4 per cent. Any variation from that, whether up or down, will be matched by a change in the total of rate support grants.

I mentioned earlier that there were three additions to be made to the figures that I announced in July to reflect transfers of responsibility. The final instalment of the list D transfer is £100,000 and this has been distributed according to pupil numbers. Orkney's grant has been increased by £1,070,000 for the transfer of Orkney internal ferry services. Leith nautical college is to be transferred to Lothian region from 1 August 1987. The part year effect of this transfer is £790,000. This has been apportioned using the estimated regional breakdown of students. The extra £30 million in grant for teachers' pay has been distributed among the regional and islands authorities proportionally to their needs assessments for teaching staff costs, including the so-called circular 991 teachers. All of these detailed apportionments have been discussed and agreed with COSLA. Details of the needs element entitlements of authorities after these adjustments are given in the final column of the table in appendix E to the report.

[Mr. Ancram]

The order also contains adjustments for back years and I should like to explain those briefly. For 1986-87 there was to have been a reduction in rate support grants of £7·9 million because interest rates are now estimated at 10·6 per cent. rather than the 11 per cent. used in the main order. This has now been offset by an increase of £8 million for teachers' pay. Grant penalties for 1986-87 will be revised once provisional outturn expenditure returns are available. I hope that those returns will show a reduction in overspending so that grant penalties can be returned to authorities to the benefit of their ratepayers. Budgets for 1985-86 showed a planned overspend of £91 million and that led to penalties of £127 million. Provisional outturns showed a £43 million fall in overspending and penalties were reduced by £69 million. I am glad to say that final outturns for 1985-86 show a further reduction in overspend from £47·2 million at provisional outturn to £43·2 million and a further £7·4 million of grant is accordingly being returned.

I am sure that hon. Members find these long, complicated rate support grant orders as arduous as I do. They will be relieved to know that next year's main rate support grant order will be the last of its kind. For 1989-90 and subsequent years the Abolition of Domestic Rates Bill will replace them with revenue support grant orders. I promise the House that those will be both shorter and simpler.

The Revaluation Rate Rebate (Scotland) Order 1986 is by comparison a straightforward document. The 1985 revaluation increased the rateable values of some domestic and commercial subjects by much more than the average change. The Government introduced special relief under the Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Act 1985 for domestic and commercial ratepayers whose rateable values increased more than threefold. In the first year that relief was paid at 100 per cent. of the cost of having an increase in rateable value of more than threefold. This year relief is being paid at 75 per cent. The order provides for 50 per cent. relief in 1987-88. The relief is, as before, subject to a maximum and this is to be £5,000 for any one property. The cost of the relief will be about £15 million compared with £20 million this year and £26 million last year.

Finally, hon. Members will expect me to say something about the early indications now emanating from local authorities of their proposed rates increases for 1987-88. We hear tales of a 35 per cent. increase from one authority, and several others not far behind. We will not be in a position to comment authoritatively on those reports until local authorities have notified us of their budgets. That does not normally happen until March. We then need to study carefully the planned levels of expenditure. What I will say now is that in general in the light of the generous settlement that I have described this evening — notification of which has been available to local authorities for some considerable time — there is no excuse for that kind of behaviour by local authorities.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian) *rose*——

Mr. Jim Craigen (Glasgow, Maryhill) *rose*——

Mr. Ancram: I give way to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen).

Mr. Craigen: Given the rate support order that the Minister is introducing tonight, what level of increase in rate poundage does the Scottish Office estimate?

Mr. Ancram: When my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State announced the aggregate Exchequer grant he made clear that he believed that on the basis of that grant and the basis on the provision, Scottish local authorities would not need to increase their rates. Obviously an element of increase will result from the settlement of the teachers' pay dispute, but that increase is reckoned to be marginal—about 1p in the pound.

With regard to the rate support grant order, provided that local authorities do what the Government require through guidelines and penalties there will be no rate increases in Scotland as a whole.

On the matter of rate increases, we will, as I have said, need to examine the full detail of budgets, once they are submitted. But let me emphasise that the responsibility for substantial rate increases, where these are imposed, will rest firmly with the local authority concerned, and ratepayers in Scotland should not be fooled or misled about that. Lothian is a particular case in point, where press reports indicate a rate increase of around 17p or 18p —an increase of 35 per cent. We are already hearing from Lothian spokesmen that this increase is inevitable and inexorable and is to be blamed on Government. I suspect that that is what the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) is trying to tell me.

Mr. Home Robertson: The Minister is supposed to be a Lothian spokesman as well, although I sometimes wonder. Will he explain why he virtually rigged the rate support grant formula deliberately to penalise his constituents and mine in Lothian region? Will he acknowledge the fact that of the suggested rate increase, 30 per cent. is totally outwith the control of the regional council?

Mr. Ancram: I shall come to that shortly — *[Interruption.]* I intend to answer the question. I wonder whether the hon. Member for East Lothian has found out whether the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities would support him in his view about the way in which the distribution formula operates. It has been evident that Lothian has taken a view that is inconsistent with that taken by other local authorities in Scotland, precisely because the formula this year has operated marginally against the position in Lothian but to the benefit of other authorities in Scotland. The hon. Gentleman will have to ask himself and his hon. Friends on the Opposition Front Bench whether they believe that the formula, which is agreed with COSLA, should be changed in the way in which he seems to be suggesting.

This touches on the second point made by the hon. Member for East Lothian; we have looked at the figures in Lothian. I discovered that the effect of the teachers' pay settlement will add about 1·7p to Lothian's poundage in the coming year and that the effect of the rate support grant settlement, in which, as the hon. Member for East Lothian said, Lothian's assessed needs were in some respects reduced, will add about 1·1p to the rates of Lothian ratepayers. That is the total extent of the Government's responsibility for what Lothian is now proposing—an increase of less than 3p out of the total reported increase of around 18p. All I can say is that

Lothian ratepayers will be well able to draw their own conclusions as to who is responsible for the rest of the increase.

These orders provide a firm financial basis for local authorities next year. Expenditure provision for next year has been set at local authority budgets plus inflation. The increase in aggregate Exchequer grant is double the rate of inflation. The Government have done their part to keep rate increases down next year, and I hope that the local authorities will do theirs.

I commend both these orders to the House.

10.37 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): The hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Ancram) has a remarkable ability to reduce any audience to a combination of irritated disenchantment and, I am afraid, galloping apathy. He has managed to induce a state of enthusiasm among his own supporters and my hon. Friends which I suspect is rather akin to the atmosphere at Hampden Park at the final whistle tonight. I found only one thing that he said the least bit encouraging and I ought to concede that. If he manages to survive in his present job for any length of time and does introduce the poll tax, the fact that it will shorten his speeches is the only persuasive argument that I have heard for that measure.

I believe in making a concession when a concession is justified and worth making and, of course, the rate support grant settlement is better this year than it has been in some recent years and we would not want to hide that from the House. Indeed, I think that COSLA and individual local authorities would be prepared to concede that. It would be wrong to say otherwise. However, it is still profoundly unsatisfactory when viewed against the backcloth of what has been happening to local government finance in recent years. I am glad that the Minister made the point that, whatever may have happened to aggrevate current expenditure and aggreage Exchequer grant, the truth is that if one takes a global view, aggregate current expenditure is only some 3·75 per cent. over budget in 1986-87.

In a horrid aside the Minister suggested that in a sense that was satisfactory and would fully cover local authority costs. All the figures, and the experience and projections given to me suggest that the amount will be inadequate and that there will be a further shortfall. Perhaps it will not be on the scale of recent years, but it will still be a worsening of a situation that is profoundly discouraging and that has done substantial and serious damage to the level of service provided by local government in Scotland.

We are looking at a long history of fiscal pillage by the Government of local authority expenditure. The only fair and sensible way to look at this is in volume terms, and if one does that one sees that the whole punitive expedition, the atmosphere of crisis that has undoubtedly been engendered and the wrecking of almost any sort of reasonable relationship between local and central Government have meant that in volume terms local government expenditure is still significantly below what it was in 1978-79.

We have seen mounting pressure upon the services provided for people. They have had to pay more and more, largely because of the grant reductions that have so marked the policy of the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends. Not only are people being asked to pay more to compensate for the Treasury cuts, but local authorities are being asked consistently, year after year, to take on additional statutory duties and to fund them from a budget which in real terms is sharply declining.

I have one prospective item to add to that list, because, as the Minister and my long suffering hon. Friends who served on the Committee well know, the poll tax will introduce substantial extra administrative charges. A figure in excess of £20 million is mentioned in the financial memorandum to the Bill. That will deepen the difficulties that are undoubtedly faced by local government.

The Minister will know that there is little comfort in the figures for the coming year. In education, for example, current levels of spending will have to be cut by just over 5 per cent. to bring them into line with the provision that the Minister proposes for 1987-88. In social work, the figure is perhaps less dramatic, but it is still 2·3 per cent. on the calculations that have been offered to me. Across the board it is about 4·2 per cent.

If we are to fall into line with this so-called reasonable provision that the Minister paraded in the last 20 minutes or so, we will be faced with substantial cuts in present levels of expenditure. That is the information given to me, and I am not in a mood to mislead the House. I have conceded that the figures are not as bad as in previous years, but they are still open to that inescapable interpretation.

That is the overall picture, but of course there are real problems for some authorities. There has been some stability in the block expenditure. For example, there has been an increase in the needs element of about 6·2 per cent. after limitation for both district councils and regions, but for individual authorities the variations within the totals are very large. The Minister knows that. In the regions, the increase in the needs elements varies from 7·8 per cent. to 1·6 per cent. For district concils, the percentage is much more dramatic, varying from no increase to one dramatic increase of 60 per cent. or just over 60 per cent.

Over the years, the Minister has made a great virtue of agreeing with COSLA. I accept that there has been agreement about the client group approach and its introduction, but we are still in a rather strange and artificial world. As the Minister knows, about 29 district councils would not, on the client group approach, have had an increase at all this year, but they have got the £11·50 per capita fee which the Minister introduced. I think this amounts to about £22 million in total. The effects are sometimes arbitrary and, as the Minister has conceded in the case of Lothian, some authorities will undoubtedly be left with a considerable grievance and considerable problems.

The needs grant, at about £1·4 billion, dwarfs other parts of the package. I say in passing, because I do not wish to dwell upon it, that I found the Minister's casually announced decision about the help for those who suffered particularly badly in the revaluation remarkably callous when remembered against the background of the razzmatazz and the unveiling of the great financial package by the right hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger) at the Conservative party's conference two or perhaps three years ago.

Hon. Members may remember that we were told with great eclat that the help would be a £50 million package. It was discovered on examination that the £50 million, because of the extraordinarily narrowly drawn terms of reference of the scheme, was never going to be spent. So that help was confined to that part of the rate poundage

[Mr. Donald Dewar]

and that part of the increase above 300 per cent. The figure came to about £26 million or £27 millioa. That was the extent of the Government's generosity to those who they felt had been so wronged.

We then had a 100 per cent. relief for that small proportion of rateable value. That was then reduced to 75 per cent. Now it is reduced to 50 per cent. Obviously the Government's charity has run out very rapidly as they come to the political judgment that they can get away with retreating from the rather minimal amount of help that they were prepared to give.

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): I am sure that the whole House shares the hon. Gentleman's sympathy with the position of people who have suffered from revaluation, but will he confirm that the Labour party's policy is one of having regular revaluations for the domestic ratepayer without any support whatsoever?

Mr. Dewar: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman, who may be wrong-headed but is not foolish, at least in a narrow technical sense, will accept that one of the problems of the revaluation was that the normal date had been allowed to slip, so the period was especially long and the adjustments therefore especially painful. I am glad that he is still worried and concerned about his constituents who may be caught in that position. I hope that his concern will run to voting with us tonight in protest against the way in which the help has been cut back.

We have had threats from the Minister. I recognise that he is entitled to cut a figure while he can at the Dispatch Box because time is running out. Nevertheless, he has threatened fire and brimstone for a large number of authorities or for any authority that he regards as having spent excessively unreasonably. There was a little bit of skirmishing and a little bit of skirting around the problems facing the Lothian region. The Minister did some calculations. He said that he thought that only 3p of the present rate increase could be laid at his door. That was a reference to the fact that the needs element for Lothian, if I remember rightly, has gone up by only 1·6 per cent. Not even the optimism of the Minister could present that as an adequate compensation for inflation costs.

I, too, am not in a position to talk authoritatively, as he puts it, about the Lothian budget which has not, I understand, been finalised, but I say to the Minister in a preliminary sense that any idea that the problems of the Lothian region are only marginally the fault of the Conservative party is taking rather a narrow view of that organisation. While undoubtedly a large number of the problems are a direct result of the policies that were followed by the Conservative Administration who were in office immediately before Labour won power——

Mr. Ancram: They brought the rates down.

Mr. Dewar: Ah, they brought the rates down, the Minister says, as if that were some particular talisman. However, he is right. They brought the rates down, but they did it by the sort of fiscal manoeuvring, the sort of accountancy that I would have thought would have brought a round condemnation from the Minister. Perhaps we shall get that. I am told that they raided the last of the reserves for £13·75 million. That is revenue that cannot be replaced from the same source and will therefore have to be found by the ratepayer. They knew what they were doing.

Under that Administration, in that last election year, for the first time ever, the transport deficit of £5·3 million was not funded but was allowed to be carried forward to the next year and, therefore, must be funded in this year's budget. There was also the £14·7 million deficit from the clawback. There is a figure of some £31 million for inflation, about which £12 million was for the teachers' pay settlement.

Knowing the Minister's vindictive approach, there may be, although I hope that there will not be, opportunities to debate this in more detail later on if he goes for a section 5 order, or tries some selective clawback. If that happens, we shall deal with the matter in some detail. It is clear that there was an element of opportunism and expediency about the way in which the last Conservative budget for Lothian region was put together, which inevitably invited a price when more responsible people had to look at the situation and pick up the bills in the coming year.

Mr. Foulkes: Is my hon. Friend aware that the convenor of the Lothian region, who was responsible for that fiscal fiddle, is now the principal political adviser to the Secretary of State for Scotland?

Mr. Dewar: I was not aware of that. Perhaps the Secretary of State would like to confirm or deny it. It is a matter of passing interest. Rumour had reached me that the Secretary of State had been turned down by the gentleman in question. I do not know whether that is true —it may be just tittle-tattle. It would raise him in my estimation, but that is a matter between the Secretary of State and Councillor Meek.

The vast majority of the problems faced fall into the categories to which I have referred. No doubt we shall have arguments later as to whether it is legitimate to spend a small proportion of the increase in the rate poundage on such matters as free bus passes for pensioners or an additional 400 home helps. It is not the black and white picture that the Minister sought to paint.

The extraordinary situation in Lothian, is that the guidelines have gone up substantially, perhaps even generously, but now stand £32 million above the needs assessment. Even if Lothian were to spend exactly to the Government's guidelines, that would involve it in a rates increase of about 20 per cent. That shows what a topsy-turvy artificial world of local government finance the Minister is constructing. In 1987-88, it looks as if there will be an excess over guidelines of 9 per cent. in Lothian, but Councillor Brian Meek's Conservative administration had an excess of 6·6 per cent. and the Minister did not mount the same attack on it.

I recognise that these are highly technical, and no doubt for some hon. Members, unimportant matters, but they are fundamental to the service needs in Scotland and the way that we run our society and make choices in essential matters such as health care and education. This is not just a political game. The mark of the Minister's administration has been the way in which he has hunted local government, ruthlessly criticised it and brought a partisan approach to it that I regret.

The Minister knows that today I have been commenting on some letters that he sent, on 27 January, to Councillor Brian Meek and Councillor Jean

Armstrong, who are the Conservative group leaders on the Strathclyde and Lothian councils.*[Interruption.]* I hear my hon. Friend the Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg) express surprise that anyone can call himself a group leader on the Strathclyde council. It is a marginal distinction—one among few.

Some of the things that the Minister has been saying in his correspondence show the attitude that he has been taking. For example, he said:

"Lothian says that it cannot avoid a huge rates increase because the Government is giving too much money to Strathclyde while the latter whines in the opposite direction."

The Minister should not, in his official capacity, be accusing local authorities of "whining", or, as he does later in the letter, of "moaning". He should not be ascribing to them points of view that I am assured by both councils have never been espoused or put forward. It does nothing for the dignity of his office, or that of the Scottish Information Office, which was asked to distribute this in the form of a press release. I have drawn that matter to the attention of the Comptroller and Auditor General. *[Interruption.]* I thought that it was worth doing, given the rather irritable way in which the Minister combs through local government affairs, looking for things about which he can cavil and complain. That type of partisan, political campaigning should not be done, at least under the colours of the Scottish Office.

We firmly believe that we should protect local services. Councils should be allowed to get on with the job. The people who live in the areas that we represent deserve decent education services, decent social services, and decent housing services. They are threatened by the parsimony, inefficiency and malice with which the Government have conducted their local government policy over the past few years.

10.56 pm

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood): There is a certain ritualistic air about the annual rate support grant debates. At least the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) gave us a good laugh with his reference to the Comptroller and Auditor General. My hon. Friend the Minister sought to forestall one regular feature of debates such as this when he said that he hoped that his answer on interest rates would mean that the hon. Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie) would not feel the need to speak. I hope that that aspiration is not realised. One of the admirable features of these debates is the ringing tone in which the hon. Member for Cunninghame, South denounces the rate support grant, whether it is under a Conservative Government or a Labour Government.

The hon. Member for Garscadden was a little short of ammunition. Indeed, from the Labour party's point of view, this rate support grant settlement, is a little difficult to attack. Current expenditure provision has been increased by 9·5 per cent. and the aggregate Exchequer grant by 7·5 per cent. That is double the rate of inflation. The hon. Gentleman scraped the barrel when he spent some time alleging that, next year, because of the introduction of the community charge, local authorities will somehow face great increases in expenditure against a total expenditure of £3·4 billion.

What was interesting about the speech by the hon. Member for Garscadden was what he did not say in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), who asked him about the Labour party's policy on revaluation. For the information of the hon. Member for Garscadden, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton), as I understood his speeches in Committee, made the Labour party's policy quite clear. There will be a domestic rate revaluation in Scotland in 1990 if, by any mischance, the Labour party is returned to office at the next election. I hope that that point will be confirmed if Opposition Members on the Labour Front Bench speak during the debate.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State on listening to the objective representations from me and many others about the minimum grant entitlement. I was delighted that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has continued the minimum grant entitlement and increased it to £11·50 per head. There were representations from Labour Members also about this matter. It was outrageous for COSLA to attack the minimum grant entitlement, as indeed did its leadership representing the great battalions of Glasgow and elsewhere. It is a perfectly reasonable measure for my right hon. and learned Friend to take. It helps not only Eastwood but smaller councils such as Inverness, Badenoch and Strathspey, Roxburgh and Berwickshire, as well as Labour councils such as East Kilbride. I hope that the Labour party will make it clear whether it supports what the Government have done in relation to the minimum entitlement.

My hon. Friend said that, of course, it will be some time before we know what the local authorities' rate decisions are for next year. I am happy to be able to tell him tonight that the recommendation that will go before Eastwood district council will be for an unchanged rate in 1987-88. That is because of financial prudence, modest and sensible real growth and a well considered rate support grant settlement.

I wish that I could say the same about Strathclyde. However, it appears that despite an increase in its needs element of 9·1 per cent. under this settlement, Strathclyde intends to impose a rate increase of 20 per cent. The leader of the council has admitted in public that this will cost jobs, particularly jobs in small businesses, in Strathclyde. A rate increase of that magnitude is unjustified and outrageous. The finance convenor of Strathclyde said at a consultation meeting with non-domestic ratepayers that the opposition to that rate increase was paralysed. Yes, the opposition is paralysed by the enormity of a 20 per cent. rates increase by Strathclyde.

Why is such a huge rate increase being proposed? I put it to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland that there are three reasons for it. First, it is a straight "payola" through the urban programme. A very large number of urban programme projects is being taken on by Strathclyde. There are a few well justified urban programme projects—for example, the Dunterlie children's centre in my constituency—but many others cannot be justified.

Secondly, Strathclyde is increasing the rates by that amount because there is a general election in the offing and it hopes that the Government will take some of the flak.

Thirdly, I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will consider very carefully the fact that Strathclyde and other regional councils are increasing the base line for non-domestic rates ahead of the implementation of the Abolition of Domestic Rates etc. (Scotland) Bill. When

[Mr. Allan Stewart]

that Bill has been passed, the increase in rates for non-domestic ratepayers will be held by central Government to the rate of inflation. The rate proposal is wholly unjustified and outrageous.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland on the way in which he introduced the two orders and I urge him to be very tough, if necessary, about the proposals of certain regional councils.

11.2 pm

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): These rate support grant debates are rather repetitive occasions. As always, the Minister opened with an oration that bore some comparison to a magician casting a spell, to judge by the increasingly glazed expressions on the faces of all hon. Members. The length of the debate is not related to its complexity, and it is difficult to deal with the subject extensively.

The Minister said that everything would be much simpler next year. Perhaps he meant that personally—that next year he will not have to wrestle with all these complex matters because they will be in the hands of others. Even if they fall into the hands of others, I am doubtful whether everything will be all that much more simple. Experience thus far has shown that nobody has been able to make things much simpler.

In the short time that is available to me, I shall make a few points and ask some questions. First, the Minister said that there should be no rate increases next year. To take as an example the Highland region, about which I know a little, the rate will be 56p in the pound. If the rate support grant had remained at its real 1979-80 level, the rate would be 33p—[HON. MEMBERS: "Pence."] Yes. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) has a very——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We cannot have private conversations.

Sir Russell Johnston: I was simply referring, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley, who interrupted me in a somewhat vulgar fashion. I was trying to respond to that vulgarity with dignity.

If the RSG had remained at its 1983-84 level, this year's rate would have been 44p in the pound. My point is that although the Minister says that there should be no rate increases, the reality is, as the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) put it most effectively when he referred to "fiscal pillage"—an expression with which I would agree—as the Minister is aware, that there has been a steady reduction in Government support, and that has resulted in a reduction in the quality and the extent of service.

The increases from 1986-87 and 1987-88 average out at about 12·4 per cent. overall, but the variations within the regions are considerable. The figures range from 23 per cent. in Strathclyde to 6·38 per cent. in the Highlands with variations in between of 9·4 per cent. in the Borders and 8·7 per cent. in the Grampian region.

Secondly, it would appear that the new formula may be operating against the rural areas. I wonder whether that is a reflection on COSLA's urban dominance or whether it is Government policy. I am not arguing against the considerable increases in Strathclyde and Lothian, but I wonder whether since, as the Minister and the hon. Member for Garscadden have explained, the teachers' settlement is a significant part of the demand on the RSG increase the allocations to the more rural areas are not insufficient.

Thirdly I want to repeat a simple point that has already been made well by the hon. Member for Garscadden. There is no doubt whatever that the pattern of more and more central control is embodied once more in the orders.

I want the Minister to answer two particular points. As the Minister knows, there is special provision for road gritting and clearance. We are in the middle of a rather cold winter which, although it has not been too bad so far, might get worse. As I understand it, there is a triggering mechanism which is not unlike the triggering mechanism for the cold weather allowance. The mechanism for road gritting is triggered from the meteorological measuring points on the coast. As there is an obligation on regional authorities to maintain certain roads clear, irrespective of the population in the area, I do not believe that that is a very good system.

If my next point is not directly relevant, either you, Mr. Deputy Speaker or the Minister will tell me so, but I am certain that all hon. Members would be interested to know whether the Minister has made any progress against the background of the RSG orders in settling the problem of the rating of sports clubs in Scotland. That problem continues to have an adverse effect on some very desirable enterprises.

This debate maintains a pattern. Rate support grant rose prior to the election in 1979, it rose again prior to the 1983 election and it is rising yet again. Clearly, any increase is welcome, but the pattern makes me somewhat cynical.

11.10 pm

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): I welcome the orders, because they will provide some protection for the hard-pressed ratepayer. There is compensation for those who have suffered the effects of revaluation. It is extraordinary to hear Opposition Members complaining about the tediousness of these debates when they all support the continuation of the rating system.

Mr. David Lambie (Cunninghame, South): That is not true.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman is an honourable exception. Apart from referring to himself he might have been referring to members of the so-called alliance, who have continued to seek to persuade the Scottish people that they are against the rating system and in favour of something else. They have so far proved singularly unable to produce any workable system despite the many hours that have been spent in this place discussing the issue.

Labour-controlled councils throughout Scotland have continued to pursue their narrow ideology, against ratepayers' interests. They have acted against the interests of those whom they are supposed to represent while complaining about the effect on services of the orders. These Labour-controlled councils have shown that their true allegiance is to the promotion of Socialism and the Labour party rather than representing the interests of local people.

The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) was astute enough to speak of the

importance of road gritting and the problems that are faced in providing that service at this time of year. In his crusades in favour of local democracy, the hon. Gentleman should take account of the effect of the Labour party dominating an authority such as the Central regional council, which covers my constituency. The comrades decided after a mild December that they would no longer grit minor roads on the ground that they had run out of money because the Government had cut their resources. The same comrades found £40,000 to pay for a women's committee. They argued that they had run out of money and could not grit the roads on the first occasion when there was a call on the budget. It was only after howls of protest had been made that they reinstated the previous policy.

That which is happening in local government is happening in the Chamber this evening. We are seeing the posturing of the Labour party. Labour Members are pretending to represent the interests of the old and those who are trapped in their homes because of winter conditions and ungritted roads, but the reality is that they are playing politics. Given power in local government in Scotland, their preference is to cut sensitive services and to blame the Government for having to do so to make a political point. When it comes to sacrificing the people to bash the Government, Labour Members are all too ready to do so. They would take the same view if ever we were unfortunate enough to find them in power.

Mr. Home Robertson: The hon. Gentleman is talking about local authorities making political points. Does he accept that a political point was made by the people of Lothian region last year, for example, when they voted overwhelmingly for the Labour party and elected a Labour council, which is seeking to carry out its mandate and is being pilloried by the Government for doing so?

Mr. Forsyth: I would take more account of lectures on accountability and democracy from the hon. Gentleman if he had not wiled away many hours in Committee explaining to us why he is against the system that would allow those who have the ability to consume local government services to make a contribution towards the cost of providing them.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that it is incredible that Labour authorities that have complained that they are short of funds can arrange conferences costing thousands of pounds on issues such as apartheid in South Africa, which has little, if anything, to do with local government? I understand that there is to be a conference in Glasgow tomorrow, and thousands of pounds will be spent sending delegates to it.

Mr. Forsyth: My hon. Friend is right. I am constantly amazed by the local authority in my constituency, which can find the funds to provide chauffeur-driven cars to ferry the relatives of councillors to their meetings or to do their shopping — apparently this is in the interests of local democracy as it makes it easier for individuals to become involved in local government—while complaining that it is unable to effect simple repairs to my constituents' houses.

The single thread that runs through the Opposition's complaints year after year is that somehow there is a connection between the quality of services and the amount that is spent. The examples south of the border, where more progressive councils have introduced efficiency audits and put services out to competitive tender——

Mr. Foulkes: Tell us by how much you have lined your pockets with privatisation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not make accusations against me.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman——

Mr. Foulkes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I, unreservedly, make it clear that I did not impute in any way anything against you? I was pointing out that the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) had lined his pockets with privatisation.

Mr. Forsyth: You are honoured, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you have been excluded from the insults rained by the hon. Gentleman on this day alone on everyone from the President of the United States to the Secretary of State for Scotland. I am happy to join that company.

The single flaw to which I was trying to allude, which permeates these points made by the Opposition, is the belief that the level of expenditure in services is equated with quality. If local authorities that are controlled by the Labour party were to look to efficiency audits and to putting services out to competitive tender and were able to get value for money, they might have some credibility——

Mr. Foulkes: Look for the beam in the hon. Gentleman's eye.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman keeps intervening because he does not want to hear. The Labour party has become the party of protest in Scotland. It is the party which is long on slogans and short on solutions. I would say to the hon. Gentleman who continues to interrupt from a sedentary position, that the people of Scotland should recognise that the Labour party is now the reactionary party which stands four square behind the rating system, which wishes to have regular revaluations, and to remove all controls on expenditure by local authorities and which would return us to the days of high-spending local government with high rates, destroying businesses and jobs. For the Labour party to say that it is the champion of local democracy, when it is committed to policies which would destroy jobs and local government, is an outrage.

I hope that behind all the accusations against the Government, and behind all the complaints about the rate support grant, the people of Scotland will realise what the Labour party is about — paying off its bosses in the trade union movement and using ratepayers' cash to do so.

11.14 pm

Mr. David Lambie (Cunninghame, South): I did not intend to intervene in the debate because last week I spoke on the Housing Support Grant (Scotland) Order. Usually, the Rate Support Grant (Scotland) Order and the Housing Support Grant (Scotland) Order are taken on the same night. Usually, the same speech does for both. Having been challenged by the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), who hoped that I would not miss out this year, especially as it is a general election year, I thought that I would accept his challenge.

[Mr. David Lambie]

I hope that this is the last Rate Support Grant (Scotland) Order that I shall need to vote against. Within three months of a general election, which I hope will result in a Labour Government introducing——

Mr. Michael Hirst (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): Would the hon. Gentleman care to put his own £5 on that?

Mr. Lambie: The Gentleman is one of the hon. Members who will not be here after the next election. Instead of challenging people, the hon. Gentleman should be in Bearsden looking after the people who have suffered from the flooding. He should not waste his time writing a speech about another matter.

I hope that, after the election, when we have a Labour Government, we shall have a Scottish Parliament which will deal with local affairs and take control over local government. I hope that the Labour Government will reorganise local government and set up a one-tier authority system. I hope also—I have to convince my Front-Bench colleagues of the rightness of this—that we shall then abolish the rating system and introduce 100 per cent. Government grants. Local democracy will depend on local people, through their elected representatives, determining how that 100 per cent. grant is spent.

We shall be able to do that because Scotland is a small country. There would seldom be differences between the political complexions of the local councils and the Scottish Government in Edinburgh. The Scottish people are Labour. We would have Labour local authorities in most of the region and a Labour Government dealing with local affairs. There would not be conflict.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have allowed the hon. Member considerable latitude, but he should return to the orders.

Mr. Lambie: It is strange that Front-Benchers can speak about the abolition of the rating system, but when the hon. Member for Cunninghame, South speaks about his system, you rule me out of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was making a point about the conflict that exists between Labour-controlled authorities in Scotland and a Tory Government in the United Kingdom who are not representative of the Scottish people and do not speak for them. That is why we are here tonight.

My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) said that these orders were not as bad as those in previous years. That is understandable, because, within three months of a general election, it would be stupid for the Government to antagonise the Scottish people more than they have. Since 1979-80, rate support grant as a proportion of relevant expenditure fell from 70 per cent. to 56 per cent. last year. I have not heard from the Labour Front Bench or from the Government what the percentage is this year. After a reduction from 70 per cent. to 56 per cent., one cannot go any further, especially within three months of a general election, without antagonising the ratepayers of Scotland. I do not accept that the Government have changed their mind or that they are beginning to help local authorities. This change in attitude is because of the forthcoming general election.

This is a black night for the Scottish people. This is another attack on the Scottish ratepayers through rate support grant. Tonight, the Scottish football team has lost the match against the Republic of Ireland by one goal to nil. It looks as though we are out of the European cup. We need not only a change of Government in Scotland but a change in the management of the Scottish Football Association. Both the Government and the Scottish Football Association are disasters for the Scottish people.

I was very disappointed that the hon. Member for Eastwood criticised the Strathclyde region for diverting a lot of money into the urban aid programme. He made it clear that he was thanking Strathclyde region for taking over the main urban aid project in his constituency.

Mr. Allan Stewart: One.

Mr. Lambie: The main one. Every Strathclyde Member made representations not only to the Government but to Strathclyde region for extra urban aid money for projects in their constituencies. I am grateful to Strathclyde region for taking over the main urban aid project in my constituency—the Redburn centre in Irvine. Every third man in the area is unemployed. If we cannot get money from the Conservative Government, I am grateful that Strathclyde region found the necessary money through the rates to keep the various urban aid programmes going. The hon. Member for Eastwood should apologise to the House and congratulate Strathclyde region for giving him the money to keep his own project going.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman. However, he should recognise that, although I certainly said that one project in my constituency is worthwhile, I am totally opposed to the unemployed workers' centre in Barrhead, which is a straight Labour party payola.

Mr. Lambie: The hon. Gentleman cannot have it both ways. He cannot congratulate the Labour-controlled Strathclyde region on giving money to one project and then say that is it is wrong for it to give money to a similar project in another town.

Mr. Stewart: It is not similar.

Mr. Lambie: Sometimes one may think that our debates have no influence on Government policy. However, I cannot complain about my own Cunninghame district council because it will not impose any increase in rates this year and will have a stand-still budget. I am taking the credit for that. I have continually challenged Ministers until they have come to realise the problems facing the district council and they have given the council extra money so that it can balance its books this year. However, the greatest increases in rates for the ratepayers in my constituency are the regional rates in Strathclyde, which will increase by 19 per cent. this year.

I appeal to the Minister to recognise that Strathclyde is one of the most deprived regions in Europe. Because of pressure from Members of Parliament and from local people, the local council has been forced to try to maintain vital local government services. At the same time it has been subjected to substantial reductions in the rates through the rate support grant by the Government since 1979.

The Minister stated that the increases proposed by Strathclyde were not justified. However, he did not mention that one of the most important elements in those increases was the fact that the council is trying to recoup the penalty and the clawback that was imposed on it because it did not keep to the guidelines last year.

The Minister appears to be in a reasonable mood tonight. Therefore, I appeal to him to agree to wipe the slate clean on last year's penalty and give Strathclyde the opportunity to start afresh. If the Minister does that, Strathclyde will have the opportunity to reconsider its budget. However, while he continues to be vindictive towards Strathclyde for maintaining the services that every Member of Parliament, councillor and ratepayer demands, he cannot expect Strathclyde to go against the majority of opinion in the region. I appeal to the Minister to allow Strathclyde to reconsider its budget without having to finance the clawback that the Government imposed because of its overspending last year, when it did not meet the guidelines.

I have great pleasure tonight in maintaining the tradition that I have upheld since entering Parliament of voting against rate support grant orders. Attacks have always been made against local authorities in the House. These orders continue that. Therefore, I hope that we shall get a Government in Scotland to deal with Scottish affairs so that the farce of the Tories in England determining how we, in Scotland, spend our money will end, and the Scottish people will spend their own money according to their priorities.

11.29 pm

Mr. Jim Craigen (Glasgow, Maryhill): This is not a generous rate support grant settlement, but we have seen worse in previous years. The Minister seemed to suggest that he is adopting a more relaxed view which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie) observed, is understandable in the run-up to a general election. How realistic, I wondered, was his reply that he expects a standstill in rate poundage plus 1p to accommodate some extras? Why was there a delay in the discussions with COSLA over the settlement on approved expenditure? The order, moreover, seems to have been introduced a bit later than is normal.

As education represents about half of the estimated rated expenditure, will the Minister tell us a little more about the cost of the teachers' settlement, the brunt of which will be borne by education authorities? Given the Government's wish almost totally to control the settlement of pay and conditions in education, I am surprised that they did not try to take education outwith the rating system altogether and make it a direct charge on central Government, perhaps by introducing a new educational support grant. Bearing in mind the proposed community charge, and this order for 1987, will the Minister give us some details about the final cost of the teachers' pay settlement?

Are the Government being realistic about the inbuilt figures for prices and pay? We are already seeing evidence that the Government's only achievement — reducing inflation—is starting to slip from their grasp. The retail price index, which will be adjusted next month with a new system of weightings, will continue in an upward trend towards the summer. Has proper account been taken of inflation and the pay settlements that may be expected in the local government sector? The Paymaster-General has been making ominous noises about the break-up of collective bargaining as we know it, which would have serious implications for local authority staff. I do not expect the Minister to answer the point tonight, but I hope that he can comment on the pay settlement, which represents a large proportion of local authority expenditure.

The Minister mentioned all the things that the Government have done over the years. Why has there been an 11 per cent. drop in real terms since the Conservative Government came to office in the rate support grant per head of population in Scotland? I quote from figures given to me by the Minister in a recent parliamentary answer to my request for details of the rate support grant per head of population in 1979-80 and in the year for which the most recent figures are available. The Government intend to move towards a new system of revenue support grant based on a per capita approach to the disbursement of rate support grant, so perhaps the Minister can deal with the point tonight.

What does the Minister have in mind for the unallocated margin of £73·6 million? He referred earlier to some unallocated expenditure in the education budget. Why has he chosen the figure that is in the order?

The Minister anticipated the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, South by saying that it was assumed that loan charges would be 10·4 per cent. Is that realistic? We are in the run-up to a Budget and a general election. The Chancellor would like to reduce interest rates. Certainly that would help those who have to pay mortgages, but it is often forgotten that it has a considerable impact on the expenditure of local authorities. No doubt the Minister will tell me that an order can be introduced later to take account of the change. I have noted that, when interest rates go up, it is some time before the variation order is produced, but when they go down the Government are very quick to take advantage of the shortfall.

On the rate revaluation rebate order, will the Minister tell us how much it will cost to administer the scheme? When the scheme was announced with a great hullabaloo at the Perth conference of the Scottish Tories, we were to get £50 million. Nearly half that figure was taken back by the Chancellor because it could not be taken up under the scheme as drafted. Will it cost more to administer the scheme this year even though less money will be claimed under it because of the changes that the Government are making in the variation order?

It does not seem that the document is as straightforward, as the Minister said. The order may be repetitious, as the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) suggested, although we have to watch the orders that come up year after year because it is amazing how the Government manage to distort the picture. The hon. Gentleman, who managed to set a box of matches alight at Holyrood palace, according to an article in *The House Magazine*, has to be watched. Although year after year these orders look the same, their make-up depends on the Minister and the political approach of the Government of the day. I hope the Minister will answer all these question.

10.37 pm

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen) is, I think, the only hon. Member who has asked specific questions. I hope to be able to answer at least some of them.

I was puzzled by the hon. Gentleman's suggestion that there had been some delay in our discussions with COSLA and in laying the order. There was no delay in our

[Mr. Ancram]

discussions with COSLA which took place on the usual timetable. There was a delay in laying the order, as I explained in my original remarks, because we decieded to wait until the teachers' settlement results could be fed into it. I think it was for the convenience of the House and of local authorities that there should be one order dealing with the rate support grant package for this year. Following many times when the hon. Gentleman asked for the figures to be produced earlier, the announcement of the aggregate Exchequer grant was made in July, which is earlier than usual, so I was puzzled by that question.

The hon. Gentleman asked for the additional cost of the main settlement over and above the interim cost of the April 1986 settlement. The cost was £14 million in 1986-87 and £60 million in 1987-88. There is no disagreement from COSLA on these figures. It was on the basis of these that additional provision was made—the £30 million in rate support grant which is in the order which we are discussing and also £8 million to deal with the costs for the current financial year.

The hon. Member also mentioned the unallocated margin to which I referred earlier. We set aside £50 million for education over and above the provision necessary to meet national standards in an undoubtedly important service. That £50 million has been distributed to education authorities in addition to their guidelines, calculated in the normal way. All education authorities, except one, have guidelines above assessed need next year — that one authority has a guideline 8·9 per cent. above its present budget. I believe that authorities have been given ample provision for education in this year. The hon. Gentleman asked about interest rates and he is correct, interest rates are taken into account after an order is laid and adjustments can be made at a later date. In the order that we are discussing tonight adjustment has been made for previous years for precisely that reason.

Turning to the general debate, I believe that my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) put his finger on an important point that is often forgotten when we discuss local authority expenditure — the fact that there are areas within local expenditure where savings can still be made by greater efficiency, avoiding duplication and, where necessary, ensuring that a most efficient service is obtained by putting those services out to tender. I have tried to persuade Scottish local authorities to do that for a long time. It is important that we remember that aspect when we discuss local government expenditure.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) made a predictable speech. It was rather longer than mine——

Mr. Dewar: It was five minutes shorter.

Mr. Ancram: I apologise. Certainly it was much shorter on information. The hon. Gentleman made the usual remarks about cuts in rate support grant. I do not know whether he noticed an answer given in the *Official Report* to his hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) on 15 December 1986. It set out the changes in real terms in the needs element between 1978-79 and 1987-88. Those changes were discussed in real terms, which is the world in which everybody has to live. If the hon. Gentleman studies that answer he will discover that the needs element in rate support grant went down in real terms by 0·1 per cent. over that period.

The hon. Member for Garscadden uses the phrase "volume terms" because he believes that it is better for his argument. He made an extraordinary assertion, if I heard him right, that local government spending was still below the 1978-79 levels. If he had listened to my earlier remarks, he would have heard me say that at last, after seven years, we have got local government spending, in real terms, below 1978-79 level. During that period we had tried to reduce that level by the various methods available to us. It was precisely because we achieved that objective that, this year, we were able to take a more relaxed view in terms of both the provision and the rate support grant that was made available.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) mentioned the minimum grant and welcomed the fact that it had been made available again in this year's order. He took credit for that and I certainly pay tribute to him for the representations that he made. However, the real credit must go to the hon. Member for Garscadden, who in 1985, made pleas on behalf of the councils of North-East Fife, Nithsdale, Ettrick and Lauderdale, Banff and Buchan, Eastwood, Angus and Gordon. He made a great deal of the fact that he felt that they were suffering and said:

"Their needs element has come down from £130 million to £94·5 million."—

that is the district councils.

"This substantial cut has led to a substantial crisis for many smaller district councils. They will suffer massive reductions in rate support grant settlement."

He went on to say to the then Secretary of State:

"he must think again about what he is doing to many district councils and local authorities generally."—[*Official Report*, 24 January 1985; Vol. 71, c. 1179.]

My right hon. and learned Friend and I have listened to the hon. Gentleman. It is strange for the hon. Gentleman to complain about the distribution under this rate support grant order in the light of his previous remarks.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 168, Noes 96.

Division No. 96] **[11.44 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard	Carttiss, Michael
Amess, David	Cash, William
Ancram, Michael	Chope, Christopher
Arnold, Tom	Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Ashby, David	Colvin, Michael
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*	Coombs, Simon
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*	Cope, John
Baldry, Tony	Corrie, John
Batiste, Spencer	Couchman, James
Bellingham, Henry	Cranborne, Viscount
Benyon, William	Currie, Mrs Edwina
Best, Keith	Dorrell, Stephen
Blackburn, John	Durant, Tony
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter	Dykes, Hugh
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas	Eggar, Tim
Boscawen, Hon Robert	Evennett, David
Bottomley, Peter	Fallon, Michael
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*	Farr, Sir John
Bright, Graham	Favell, Anthony
Brinton, Tim	Fletcher, Sir Alexander
Brooke, Hon Peter	Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*	Forth, Eric
Browne, John	Fox, Sir Marcus
Bruinvels, Peter	Franks, Cecil
Buck, Sir Antony	Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Burt, Alistair	Freeman, Roger
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam	Galley, Roy
Butterfill, John	Garel-Jones, Tristan
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*	Goodlad, Alastair
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*	Gow, Ian

Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harvey, Robert
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
Mather, Sir Carol
Merchant, Piers
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Nicholls, Patrick
Osborn, Sir John
Pawsey, James
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Proctor, K. Harvey
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Michael Neubert and
Mr. David Lightbown.

NOES

Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Anthony
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hardy, Peter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Haynes, Frank
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley, N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Johnston, Sir Russell
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael
Maxton, John
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Neill, Martin
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Redmond, Martin
Robertson, George
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Wallace, James
Welsh, Michael
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Allen Adams and
Mr. Chris Smith.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Revaluation Rate Rebate (Scotland) Order 1986, dated 17th December 1986, a copy of which was laid before this House on 19th December, be approved.

RATE SUPPORT GRANT (SCOTLAND)

Resolved,

That the Rate Support Grant (Scotland) Order 1987, dated 2nd February 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 4th February, be approved.—*[Mr. Ancram.]*

Orders of the Day

MINORS' CONTRACTS BILL *[LORDS]*

Order for Second Reading read.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 90(6) (Second reading committees).

That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Question agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of bills).

Scottish New Towns

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

11.56 pm

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): I am grateful for this opportunity to raise on the Adjournment of the House the housing capital allocations for Scottish new towns. The timing could not be better. As the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland will be aware, he required the Scottish new towns to submit to him revised capital estimates by 31 January. I assume that this debate takes place as he is starting to mull over the revised capital estimates that have been submitted to him.

That brings me logically to the only detailed question that I will put to the House on statistics. That is the question that I put to the hon. Gentleman earlier so he might have the maximum time to reflect upon it. However, it would be interesting for us to know what the total bid has been from the five Scottish new towns. I personally very much suspect that the total bid from those five development corporations will well exceed the £30 million per annum that the Minister has allocated among all five of them. It may well exceed that figure because the Scottish Office has put the new towns in an impossible position. That position stems from the Minister's decision to lift the moratorium on housebuilding in the new towns. That moratorium, as my hon. Friends the Members for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg) and for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie), who are present, will know, generated a rapid housing shortage in the new towns.

In the new towns there is an expanding young population. The members of that population perfectly predictably get married and look for houses which they cannot find in the new towns. I will not dwell on that problem because the Minister was courteous enough to see a delegation last October when we explained the problem to him. Subsequently he resolved to lift the moratorium on housebuilding for general needs.

That decision was most welcome because it showed a recognition on the Minister's part of the fact that there was a real housing need in those new towns. At the time he proposed that the new towns should aim to construct 1,400 houses over the next three years. Among all five Scottish new towns that target of 1,400 is not so impressive, but it is a welcome first step.

However, there is no point in authorising those 1,400 houses unless the Minister also authorises the money with which to build them. That brings us to the capital allocations to the new towns.

Before I come to the figures, it is worth noting that the housing capital allocation to the Scottish new towns is something of a misnomer because, hitherto, the Scottish Office has got away with a cheap system of housing capital allocation to the new towns whereby those allocations are almost wholly funded out of the sale of the houses in the new towns. Next year the total allocation will be £24·2 million. That will be met, to the tune of £20·4 million, from the revenue from sales of houses in the new towns.

Although it is called an allocation, in effect for the most part it is permission from the Scottish Office for new towns to spend the money raised by selling their houses. If, however, the new towns are to build those 1,400 new houses, it will be necessary for that allocation to rise substantially above what the new towns can expect from the sale of existing houses.

The Minister has not yet recognised that need. In the figures that he released last December, he allocated an additional £3 million expenditure for the forthcoming financial year, but that comes nowhere near releasing the resources that are needed for new build. What is the solution that he proposes? It is contained in his letter to the new towns, in which it is said:

"Ministers have taken a broad assumption that corporations will peg their aggregate rehabilitation expenditure at around £10 milion in each of the next three years."

That word "peg" conceals a substantial cut, nor will it be possible for new towns to "peg" that expenditure to £10 million spread evenly over three years, because in the nature of things, most of the new towns already have rehabilitation programmes committed for the next year. They will then have to spend substantially more than £10 million in the forthcoming year, and the assumption among them — the Minister will correct this if it is wrong — is that if they spend substantially more than £10 million in the first of the three years, they will have to spend substantially less in the subsequent two years.

The consequences of this are dramatic. Livingston has submitted a revised capital estimate on the assumption that it should cut its rehabilitation programme to free resources to build houses. The figures show that the rehabilitation expenditure of Livingston development corporation will fall from £3·5 million in the current financial year to £670,000 in 1989-90. That is to say that its rehabilitation programme will fall to less than one fifth of its present value within a three-year period. The consequences of that dramatic cut will be dire.

Too many of the houses in the new towns were built in the 1960s. My hon. Friends will have had similar experiences with such houses in their constituencies. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton), whom I am pleased to see in his place, will have visited many similar types of houses in the course of his Front Bench duties. In the new towns, we have that legacy of houses put up in the 1960s, when system housing predominated. We now have the familiar problems of such housing.

Livingston still has 800 flats with flat roofs, which have turned out to be marvellous devices for catching the rainwater. I have a constituent who has had his flat roof repaired 14 times but still has rain coming in through the roof. In fairness to the development corporation, I point out that it admits that there is no final solution to the problem other than the creation of pitched roofs.

Livingston also has a large number of houses that I hope are unique to it, known as the Jesperson type of housing. These were designed by a pure genius who so constructed the flats that each has a balcony, with a drying area to the rear, which stands on top of the roof of the lounge of the flat below. The problems that flow from this are easily grasped by anyone other than the architect.

The development corporation has an ambitious and comprehensive programme to rehabilitate and convert these system-built houses. The programme has been in full swing in a number of streets and has been successful. It has resulted in much more attractive housing, and it is popular with the tenants. That programme will effectively halt on the figures that the development corporation now has to contemplate as a result of the December letter.

In effect, the new towns are being asked to build new houses by halting the renovation of existing houses. That proposal is wrong on two counts. It is wrong first because it is irrational. The origin of the Minister's decision to lift the moratorium on housebuilding reflected the fact that there is real housing need in the new towns. That need can also be met by rehabilitating our existing housing stock. We have in Livingston, and I am sure that my hon. Friends have such a situation as well, houses that stand empty because they require substantial rehabilitation. There are 80 Bison flats standing empty because they are far too wet to let, and cannot be let unless there is substantial rehabilitation of the external cladding.

It is irrational to say that that rehabilitation programme must halt in order to release resources for new buildings when the resources will allow only the construction of a much smaller number of new houses.

Secondly, the decision is wrong because it is unfair. In effect, it is being said that tenants who live in houses that at present suffer from the problems of the system-built designs of the 1960s must expect to make the sacrifice to free resources for new buildings, and that families living in cold and wet houses must put up with it in order that we can build houses for those who have no homes at all and need new houses.

That is not a choice that the new towns should face. If the Minister forces that choice on the new town development corporations, he will turn his decision to lift the moratorium into a nightmare. I regret that. I welcomed the decision to lift the moratorium. It was a step in the right direction. It showed that the Minister recognised the need for new houses and that to meet the housing shortage in new towns we required additional homes for our people.

I ask the Minister to recognise that new towns cannot possibly meet the need for additional houses without extra resources. I urge him, as he considers the revised capital estimates that have been submitted to him by the Scottish new towns, to reflect on the total sums that they have asked for and recognise that he will need to put more resources on the table so that they can do the job that he has asked them to carry out.

Mr. David Lambie (Cunninghame, South): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak on the Adjournment debate and to support the general argument put forward by my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook). Like my hon. Friend, I was grateful when Irvine new town in my constituency was given permission to build 60 new houses over the next three years. That will certainly go a long way to solve the problem of increasing waiting lists, especially for second generation families.

There was a big announcement recently in Irvine about the Finnish Paper Company, Caledonian Paper, coming to Irvine and providing 1,000 to 1,500 jobs over the construction period of the paper mill, and 900 permanent jobs upon its completion. Irvine Development Corporation needs more money to allow it to build not 60 houses but perhaps double that number to accommodate the people who will come into the area to take part in the Finnish Paper Mill's exciting project.

Because Irvine development corporation now has permission to build 60 houses a year over the next three years, and with the arrival of the paper mill, private developers are moving in and building more private houses. We are developing an education problem as well as a housing problem.

In dealing with the financing of the new towns, will the Minister provide the money for Irvine development corporation to build a new primary school in the Girdle Toll area? This year, young pupils aged between four and six years will not be able to find a place in the existing local school and will have to be bussed to other schools within the area. Will the Minister allow Irvine development corporation the finances to build the school this year and to recoup the money over later years from Strathclyde regional council? If he does that, he will solve the problem and create a much happier new town.

12.9 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) for giving us the opportunity to discuss the housing responsibilities of the Scottish new town development corporations. The new towns' achievements in housing have tended to be somewhat overshadowed by their outstandingly successful record in industrial promotion. I hope that this debate will help to gain recognition for the corporations' record on housing, to clarify their current housing policies and priorities and to confirm the importance that the Government attach to the corporations' continued exercise of their housing responsibilities.

At the beginning of his speech the hon. Gentleman asked me specifically—and I am grateful to him for giving me time to reflect upon his question—about the new total bid from the five development corporations. Among all the figures that I have with me in the Chamber, I regret that I do not have that one. However, the new towns with which I have had recent contact, including the Irvine development corporation, have expressed their appreciation both of the lifting of the moratorum—I am grateful for what the hon. Gentleman said about that—and of the capital allocations that we have announced.

The policies that the Government have encouraged the corporations to adopt are expressly designed to facilitate the growth of viable and balanced communities. Wider opportunities for home ownership are, in our view fundamental to that objective. The level of home ownership in the new towns has traditionally been low, by Scottish standards. Over the past six years we have sought to redress that imbalance by introducing the tenants' right to buy and by allowing corporations voluntarily to sell houses to tenants who may not qualify under the 1980 legislation.

The corporations have long recognised that increased home ownership will help the towns to reach a balanced maturity, and they have engaged in house sales with vigour and enthusiasm. Home ownership in Livingston has doubled in the past six years, although I have to add that at 26 per cent. there is still room for further growth. I do not believe that the hon. Member for Livingston has done justice to the corporation's record on sales, nor to its significance in enabling new investment to be created, a point to which I shall return.

We also believe that corporations' housing activities should reflect the fact that the days of public housebuilding for overspill are past. The demand for new housing should, in our view, now be met in the main by the private sector. In line with this, over the past four years we have approved various initiatives by the corporations designed to increase the development of housing land by private builders and to encourage the provision of low-cost

[Mr. Ian Lang]

housing within private schemes. We gave the housebuilding industry a clear opportunity to consolidate its presence in the new towns by temporarily restricting the building of houses for general rental needs by the corporations. During my recent visit to Irvine new town I saw clear evidence of the success of this policy. That should help to meet the point raised by the hon. Gentleman in connection with the arrival of the Kymmene Stromberg paper mill.

I said that the private sector should be the main agent for newbuild. However, it should not be the only agent. The private sector cannot be expected to meet the complete range of housing needs of the new towns. By shifting the prime responsibility for the new general needs build on to the private sector, we have freed public resources for a range of special needs that the corporations are best fitted to meet, and for the improvement of the existing rental stock.

During the past six years the corporations have been free to make proposals for specially adapted and amenity housing, and we have allowed the new towns to bring forward substantial expenditure for the rehabilitation of their rental housing—a point to which I shall return, since it was rasied by the hon. Gentleman.

We have also been willing to reinterpret special needs in the context of the new towns. Last year my Department reassessed the case for a limited resumption of public sector housebuilding for general needs. I considered the corporations' views and listened to the representations of the local authorities concerned. I listened also to the representations of hon. Members, including those of the hon. Members for Livingston and for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie), and I examined demographic evidence indicating substantial future growth in new town households arising from the second generation.

I concluded that the housing needs of young couples and single people formed a distinctive category of special needs in the new towns and that the corporations should be equipped to help to satisfy these needs in order to maintain the population balance of their communities. Therefore we decided to ease the restrictions on new housebuilding for rent by the corporations. Corporations are new free to exercise their own judgment in determining their housing priorities as between newbuild and improvement. The outcome of our review illustrates again our concern to frame and adjust housing policies to achieve the overall objective of creating viable communities.

Our policies are succeeding. The proportion of owner-occupied houses in the new towns has risen from 21 per cent. in 1980 to 36 per cent. now, compared with the Scottish average of around 41 per cent. In three new towns — Glenrothes, East Kilbride and Cumbernauld — the level is now at or above the national average. Over 20,000 new-town houses have now been sold to their tenants. This is some 30 per cent. of the corporations' housing stock. Early in 1986, we gave corporation tenants an improved opportunity to purchase their homes by permitting the corporations to sell houses on terms corresponding to those later embodied in the Housing (Scotland) Act. Sales of houses are continuing at record levels.

With regard to new private housebuilding, output and activity rates have risen dramatically. Corporations have introduced a wide range of incentives to stimulate the private development of housing land including accelerated site disposal programmes and disposals to firms specialising in lower cost housing. The combined effect of those measures has been a substantial increase in annual completions from just over 500 houses in 1982-83 to over 870 in 1985-86. Private sector completions are estimated to top 1,200 in the current financial year. Over the past three years the housebuilding industry has substantially expanded and consolidated its presence in the new towns. The towns' credibility as locations for private housing investment has strengthened immeasurably.

The corporations' record in housing improvement is equally impressive. Over the past six years, the corporations have in aggregate spent some £76 million on the repair and rehabilitation of their rental stock. In Livingston in the same period, £16·5 million has been spent on the improvement of the corporation's rental housing. Across all five towns, hundreds of houses have been brought up to today's standards in terms of plumbing, heating, insulation, roofing and external appearance. Seventy-six million pounds of repairs and modernisation is a substantial investment, by any standard. I want to explain in more detail how this programme was financed, since this bears directly on the issues raised by the hon. Member for Livingston.

Housing capital expenditure by the new town development corporations is financed by loans from the National Loans Fund—that is, external borrowing—and by net receipts from house sales — that is, internal revenue. A gross programme of new housing investment for the towns is fixed annually, taking account of the corporations' commitments and priority works. In determining how this gross programme is to be financed, account is taken of corporations' own forecasts of receipts from house sales. The more new investment can be internally financed, the less drain there is on the National Loans Fund and, hence, on the public sector borrowing requirement. In any one year, the difference between the aggregate receipts target and the approved gross programme represents the amount to be financed by external borrowing.

Our policy has been to allow corporations to retain any receipts in excess of the annual target and to apply those to extra new investment over and above the gross programme. There is, therefore, a direct incentive to corporations to maximise their receipts. Over the past five years, corporations have consistently out-performed their sales targets. In each of the years 1981-82 to 1985-86, corporations were permitted to retain the excess receipts and to apply them to new works of their choice. Some £45 million has been available to corporations in this way, extending the scope of gross programmes very substantially.

Corporations have therefore been able to bring forward substantial expenditure on repair and modernisation. Spending on rehabilitation has proceeded at a higher rate than originally provided for in the Government's plans. That is not a criticism; it is a statement of fact. By anticipating expenditure that would otherwise have fallen in later years, the corporations have significantly reduced the amount of rehabilitation work that remains to be done.

I am not suggesting that corporations' housing stock presents no further major problems. Of course some problems of design remain to be tackled and the need to repair worn-out facilities will remain, but the rapid pace at which work of this kind has already been carried out leaves less to be done in future. In discussing with my

Department their cases for a resumption of new general needs housebuilding, the corporations recognised that choices within limited resources have to be made and that, if the moratorium were lifted, their priorities for the future would shift increasingly towards new build and that it might be necessary for modernisation work to proceed at a somewhat slower pace. But — and I stress this — it would be for the corporations to determine their investment priorities for 1987-88 and for later years. It is they who decide the relative need for improvement as against newbuild and they, within their overall allocations, will decide what resources will be applied to which purpose.

Mr. Robin Cook: Is the Minister saying that if the combined bids from the five Scottish new towns carry rehabilitation expenditure well above the £10 million figure that he recommended in his letter, he would be willing to sanction that form of expenditure on rehabilitation rather than newbuilds?

Mr. Lang: I think that that is a hypothetical question. The pressure has been for new build rather than rehabilitation. Given the substantial expenditure that has already taken place on rehabilitation, I do not think that the hon. Gentleman has presented a likely hypothesis. I should be willing to consider any such submission, of course.

I turn to the corporations' housing programmes for the next three years. When, last December, we announced the easing of the restrictions on new build, we made it clear that we intended to allocate extra resources to the development corporations to enable them to finance a new build programme. We said that £6 million more would be made available to new towns in 1987-88 for gross new housing investment than was allocated on a comparable basis in 1986-87. We said also that corporations would be permitted to plan ahead on the basis that, overall resources for housing investment permitting, they might expect to receive in aggregate a further increase of about £8 million on the gross programme, phased over the following two years.

The gross programme for 1987-88 stands at £24·2 million. Of that we expect the corporations themselves to finance some £20·4 million of investment, by applying receipts from house sales. The figure of £20·4 million takes account of the corporations' own forecasts and our assessment of the boost to sales given by the Housing (Scotland) Act 1986. In the current year, corporations are set again to break the aggregate receipts target of £18·3 million, and should achieve over £26 million in receipts. In the light of the corporations' current achievements, I am satisfied that the self-financing target for next year is both realistic and attainable.

The hon. Member for Livingston does not appear to endorse the principle of maximising the self-financing of new investment. I find this a curious position. My view is that if, as a result of tenants exercising their statutory right to buy, corporations achieve receipts with which to undertake fresh investment at no cost to public funds, this is to be desired. The investment is no less real because it is funded by the corporations. That programme that we have set for 1987-88 assumes a real increase in new investment over the last year. To the extent that this additional investment can be internally financed from house sales, this is in our view an entirely appropriate coupling of the corporations' role as willing sellers and as investors.

As for the level of receipts that we have forecast as accruing in later years, I have already explained that the target of £20·4 million for next year is entirely reasonable as against this year's probable achievement of over £26 million. As to later years, we acknowledge that future levels of sales cannot be predicted with complete certainty. We are therefore building in a measure of flexibility by assuming provisional receipts targets for 1988-89 and 1989-90 that are lower on average than the corporations have achieved in any year since 1982. If hon. Members representing the new towns reflect on this and recall from the Government's statement on 5 December 1986 that we have allowed corporations to plan on the basis of a gross programme of around £32 million by 1989-90, they will appreciate that we are planning for a substantial net contribution to the new towns' housing programme by the end of the decade. By that time, on present plans, our contribution to new town housing investment should increase by up to £18 million, depending on the overall resources available. This is a major supplement to the existing programme and it reflects our appreciation of the demands for rental housing which the corporations expect to face over the coming years.

The provisional allocations for 1987-88 were based on corporations' own reports on their committed and priority projects. In the case of Livingston, the gross allocation of £5·7 million covers a priority special needs development as well as commitments of nearly £4 million on major rehabilitation schemes, including those in Knightsridge 4 and Craigshill, which were approved by my Department last year. As the hon. Member for Livingston is aware, the corporation made no bid for resources for general needs housing in 1987-88. I am surprised that he does not appear to share the corporation's own appreciation of the extent to which its priorities in rehabilitation have been taken into account in setting the gross allocation. I should point out also that the receipts target set for the corporation for next year is lower than the corporation achieved in 1983 and 1984. The corporation itself appears to consider this not unreasonable.

The picture that emerges from the corporations' own forward programmes is not one of corporations starved of resources to meet housing needs. I freely admit that where corporations have appeared able in some measure to finance an increased programme from increased receipts we have allowed for this. In the case of Cumbernauld, East Kilbride and Glenrothes, we believe it reasonable to expect these corporations to finance their gross investment programmes for 1987-88 out of their own resources based on sales targets that are substantially lower than they have achieved each year since 1982. But that does not diminish the volume or value of new work that will be undertaken.

The Government have made provision for a new towns' gross housing capital programme that in three years' time will have increased by 65 per cent. We have done this in direct response to the case made by the corporations for a resumption of general needs housebuilding. We have made conservative assumptions about the extent to which this programme can be financed by reinvestment of sales receipts. On present plans net Government funding will be £18 million higher in three years' time than at present. We believe that the increased investment could provide up to 1,400 extra houses for rent by 1990—that is meeting 78

[Mr. Lang]

per cent. of the rental housing needs identified by the corporations in their submissions to me. Within the forecast gross programmes, corporations will still be able to spend at least £10 million a year on improvements to their existing rental stock. If receipts should exceed forecasts, corporations will have freedom to spend the additional income on new investment according to their own priorities. These facts confirm that the Government's record on new town housing is sound. Our policies work and there is and will continue to be adequate financial backing for them.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-five minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 19 February 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

YORK CITY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

CITY OF WESTMINSTER BILL *(By Order)*

TEIGNMOUTH QUAY COMPANY BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON DOCKLANDS RAILWAY (BECKTON) BILL *(By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday 26 February.

Oral Answers to Questions

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

EC (Two-tier Pricing)

1. **Mr. McQuarrie** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the impact on British sheep producers of a two-tier pricing policy.

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Gummer): I apologise for the absence of my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, who is in the USSR, where tomorrow he hopes to sign an agreement with the Russians.

We successfully resisted the Commission's proposal for a two-tier support system for sheep at last year's price fixing. The system proposed would have penalised efficiency and deterred structural improvements, and would have disadvantaged our farmers by about £8 million.

Mr. McQuarrie: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the average United Kingdom flock is four times greater than that in the EEC? Does he agree that the comments of the alliance leader in support of the two-tier structure would, as the president of the National Farmers Union has said, annihilate the British sheep industry?

Mr. Gummer: I am sure that my hon. Friend is right and that the two-tier pricing system would do nothing but harm to Britain. The two-tier pricing system suggested by the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) could mean that cereal farmers would transfer to sheep production. That would damage not only the cereal farmers but all who produce sheep in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Livsey: What negotiations will the Minister enter into this year to ensure that the sheepmeat regime continues successfully in the United Kingdom? Is he aware that the commissioner, Mr. Andriessen has stated that there will be a review this summer? I am glad that he has acknowledged that the alliance has no plans for a two-tier pricing system for the sheep industry.

Mr. Gummer: We shall seek a prudent pricing policy for all major commodities. We must continue to fight for the key beneficial elements of the sheepmeat regime and resist discriminatory cuts. The right hon. Member for Devonport did suggest that he accepted the possibility of two-tier pricing for sheepmeat.

Mr. Adley: Is my right hon. Friend aware that many members of the Dorset National Farmers Union believe that the arrangements for lamb and other products from New Zealand are a considerable disadvantage to them? Can he state whether that agreement will remain indefinitely?

Mr. Gummer: We believe that we owe a particular debt to New Zealand. We sought to negotiate permanent arrangements for the access of New Zealand products into the Community when we joined it, and we stand by our promise.

Mr. Home Robertson: I apologise for the temporary absence of my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John), who is not in Russia. I presume that the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has gone to the Soviet Union to learn something about public relations.

Before the Minister gets too carried away about the deficiencies of SDP policy, may I gently remind him that his policies are not going down too well at present with the NFU or with the Department of the Environment? Will he hazard a guess as to how much longer it will be before increased sheep production on low ground leads to surplus mountains of lamb under the present chaotic trends?

Mr. Gummer: We are used to the doom and gloom of the Labour party. Opposition Members complain if something is in surplus, but they also complain if there is no surplus. However, sheepmeat is not in surplus. We produce an extremely good product and I have no doubt that we shall continue to dominate the market.

Falklands Fisheries

2. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has had regarding the improvement of fishing opportunities for British fishermen around the Falklands.

Mr. Gummer: I have had occasion to discuss with a number of British companies their plans for fishing around the Falklands. Through joint venture arrangements, British companies have interests in more than 70 vessels licensed for the 1987 squid fishery, in addition to having taken up three licences for British flag vessels. That is a considerable improvement upon last year.

Mr. Lloyd: Is the Minister aware of reports in the media that British fishing is being disserviced by this licensing system? The Spanish have already been granted 36 licences, compared with the three that the hon. Gentleman mentioned for British ships. What steps will he take to ensure that the British deep water fleet will have an opportuniy to fish in these valuable waters?

Mr. Gummer: I have fought continuously to encourage the British fleet to seize any opportunity available to it and I shall continue to do so. It is my intention that the British fishing fleet should take its proper part in the world fisheries, and I shall continue to press that.

Mr. John Townend: Has my right hon. Friend considered the suggestion by a leading member of the deep sea industry, who lives in my constituency, that the Government should negotiate with foreign countries to allow their fishing boats to have fishing opportunities in the Falklands waters in return for our industry being given fishing opportunities in their waters?

Mr. Gummer: I have seen that report. No doubt it will be considered not only by me but by my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary, within whose ministerial responsibilities a good deal of this matter falls.

Dr. Godman: On the assumption that such fishing activities in Falkland waters will be undertaken by, say, vessels of more than 50m overall length, will such trawlers be allowed to fish in United Kingdom waters when not fishing in the south Atlantic?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman must accept that the system that we use to restrain the ability to fish in order to be in line with the availability of fish in British waters and in European waters as a whole could not be destroyed by the situation in the Falklands. We would have to keep the rules as we have them. One could not give special permission or special opportunities to those who happen to fish in the Falklands waters.*[Interruption.]* Those Opposition Members who know nothing about the fisheries regime — such as the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) who, as usual, shouts from a seated position—will know that the hon. Gentleman who asked the question knows what the answer means.

Mr. Bowen Wells: How much revenue will the Falkland Islands Government gain from the licences issued so far?

Mr. Gummer: I cannot tell my hon. Friend the answer to that question. It is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary.

Mr. Randall: will the Minister encourage the Falkland Islands Government to give far greater priority to issuing licences to British companies involved in joint ventures? At the moment it is cheaper for countries such as Poland to get a licence, which in fact is a foreign flag licence rather than a joint venture licence.

Mr. Gummer: I am satisfied that British interests were more than fairly accommodated in the allocation of licences, but I will look at the point that the hon. Gentleman has raised.

European Community (Two-tier Pricing)

3. **Mr. Ralph Howell** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received on the implications of adopting a policy in the European Economic Community of two-tier pricing.

Mr. Gummer: We have received such representations, many of which point to the likely discrimination against the United Kingdom, of the two-tier pricing system and remark that the leader of the SDP's two-tier pricing policy would mean that only 30 per cent. of British grain would gain Community support, as against as much as 80 per cent. of continental production.

Mr. Howell: I thank my right hon. Friend for his reply. Is he aware that these proposals have been totally dismissed by the NFU and by its president, Simon Gourlay, as they woud mean that farmers in Britain would miss out tremendously compared with the rest of the European Community? Furthermore, will he give serious consideration to an overall set-aside system to reduce surpluses?

Mr. Gummer: As my hon. Friend knows, we have been pressing the set-aside system in the European Community, and we shall continue to do so. It is now part of the proposals on the socio-economic scheme. I agree with my hon. Friend that the proposals put forward in the Bledisloe lecture were serious for Britain and would have meant that British farmers would have suffered losses and continental farmers would have gained.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is the two-tier principle that is wrong and that once this alliance-backed policy is accepted—it would cut out most British farmers—the argument would no longer be one of principle but only one of degree?

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend is perfectly right. It is clearly wrong to discourage the most economic producers of cereals. That is not a sensible way to ensure that farming develops properly. The way to deal with the problem of surpluses is to reduce the land area used for growing cereals by enabling people to do something else on marginal land.

Mr. Home Robertson: Whatever else may be said about the two-tier pricing system, it is at least a policy, which is more than can be said for what is coming from the Government. If the shambolic performance last week was actually supposed to be the launch of a policy, does the Minister seriously expect a diversification package worth £25 million to have a significant impact on a surplus problem which is costing the country £1,600 million? I commend to the Government the positive and comprehensive ideas put forward by the Labour party in its Green Paper on agriculture.

Mr. Gummer: It is a little difficult for the hon. Gentleman to commend to us a Labour party Green Paper which was published at the personal expense of the Labour spokesman on agriculture because the party would not pay for it. It is extremely difficult to take that document seriously because, as I understand it, it runs counter to Labour party policy and does not mention the Labour party's proposal to rate agricultural land.

Sir Anthony Grant: Is my right hon. Friend aware that in condemning the foolish two-tier pricing policy of the SDP the president of the National Farmers Union said in effect that the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) did not have the faintest idea what he was talking about? Would the right hon. Gentleman not be better informed and make less foolish remarks if he took the trouble to turn up at Question Time when agricultural matters are dealt with?

Mr. Gummer: I am sure that my hon. Friend is right about that, but I find it even more surprising that at the NFU meeting last week—at which I was present—the

hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), who is the alliance spokesman on this subject, told the farmers that the 140-tonne proposal had never been put forward, even though it was in the Bledisloe lecture.

Agricultural Holdings (Rates)

4. **Mr. Soames** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the impact on the net income of the average dairy farmer in the United Kingdom if rates were imposed on farm buildings and land.

Mr. Gummer: No assessment can be made of the impact of rating on specific sectors, but the value to the agriculture industry as a whole of the current derating policy is of the order of £430 million a year. Any departure from this policy would clearly have a devastating effect on the profitability of the industry in general and of the dairy sector in particular.

Mr. Soames: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the Conservative party, unlike all the Opposition parties and factions, has no intention of introducing the rating of agricultural land? Does my right hon. Friend agree that it would significantly raise farmers' costs and would be likely to destroy a very large number of vital jobs in the countryside?

Mr. Gummer: It would also increase the price of food. That is the policy of the official Opposition, but I cannot help my hon. Friend on alliance policy. The Liberals announced their intention to tax all land in the document "These are Liberal Policies", which was published in 1986, but I understand that in a Standing Committee yesterday the Liberal spokesman on the countryside said that he no longer believed in it, so I do not know where the Liberals stand.

Mr. Beith: Has the right hon. Gentleman forgotton that it was from the Conservative Benches that on 21 May 1985 the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) introduced a Bill to rate agricultural land and that he and his Minister had to follow Liberal Members into the Lobby to defeat that attempt to rate agricultural land? Will he take it from me that the Liberal party is not, was not and will not be—any more than the rest of the alliance—in favour of rating agricultural land? Will he stop trying to spread falsehoods and concentrate on the crisis facing the agriculture industry?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman now tells us that the Liberals were against rating agricultural land in 1985, in favour of the taxation of agricultural land in 1986 and are now against it in 1987. Perhaps they thought that there would be an election in 1985 and that is why they have changed their ideas again this year.

Mr. Hawkins: Can my right hon. Friend tell me how long it would take to rate agricultural land, and the likely cost of doing so?

Mr. Gummer: I cannot give details, and I do not believe that the Labour party has worked out that part of the programme. The cost would, of course, be additional to the large sums that the Labour party is proposing should be spent out of taxation. That may be why the Liberal party turned to a straight taxation system rather than a rating system.

Mr. Deakins: As local authority services in rural areas contribute to the prosperity of agriculture and those who work in it, what would be the impact if those services were not available?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman is perfectly right. Those services help the agricultural community, and that is why we do not believe that it would be sensible for the cost of those services to be placed on the cost of food. Indeed, the Labour party supported us in our decision not to put VAT on the cost of food.

Mr. Marland: Is my right hon. Friend aware that Gloucestershire county council, under alliance control, has passed a resolution to rate agricultural land and buildings and that the decision was welcomed with relish by David Halford, the alliance leader of that council?

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend confuses me still further. Last year the alliance was in favour of rating or at least taxing agricultural land, but now it is against it. In Gloucestershire, however, the alliance is in favour of it, which makes it very difficult for voters to decide what are the true policies of the alliance.

Mr. John: Will the right hon. Gentleman give an assessment of the effect of the poll tax on farmers and their families?

Mr. Gummer: The community charge that is proposed for Scotland, and which we intend to introduce throughout Britain, will place a reasonable burden on people throughout the community, at exactly the same level, but it will not be levied on agricultural land. Therefore, it is uniquely different from the policy of the Opposition. I remind the hon. Gentleman that he told the NFU that he hoped to persuade his party to change its policy on rating before the election, and I can understand why.

Farm Incomes

5. **Mr. Speller** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to improve the real level of farm incomes.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Donald Thompson): After a drop last year farm incomes this year have shown an increase of 21 per cent. The best way to improve on that improvement is to bring supply and demand into better balance.

Mr. Speller: I thank my hon. Friend for the first part of the answer. May I remind him that in the last year for which figures are available the incomes of lowland beef farmers in the south-west went down by 31 per cent. and that those of the upland beef farmers went down by more than 40 per cent.? Will he take corrective measures in regard to the suckler cow premium and a major revaluation of the green pound?

Mr. Thompson: For suckler cows the maximum possible rate of payment in 1987 will be around £33·40. The current rate is £24·74. The level of the green pound is kept under continuous review, and the recent hard-won devaluation shows that we are prepared to act when necessary.

Mr. Kirkwood: Will the Minister return to the question of the present value of the green pound? What steps are

the Government taking to ensure that the beef sector in this country is protected against the present rate of the green pound?

Mr. Thompson: As I mentioned, the maximum rate for the suckler cow premium is going up.

A large number of cows will be coming on to the market to be culled as the milk quota goes down by 9·5 per cent. The Government and the Commission are taking careful note of those considerations while discussing the next round of price fixing.

Sir Kenneth Lewis: Does my hon. Friend agree that the best improvement in regard to farm incomes is that they should be realistic? The Government are seeking to achieve stability in the market and they should be thanked for that instead of being knocked about by the NFU.

Mr. Thompson: The Scottish NFU is on the right track and I am sure that the rest of the NFU will quickly follow. I agree with my hon. Friend that the best way to improve farm incomes is to stop spending money on intervention and start spending it on farmers and farming.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before I call the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) to ask his question, I must point out that there is a misprint on the Order Paper. The word "international" should read "interested". I believe that the Minister knows that.

Conservation

6. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it the policy of his Department to hold regular meetings with international bodies on conservation issues affecting agriculture.

Mr. Donald Thompson: It is already the policy of my Department, in close co-operation with the Department of the Environment, to participate fully with interested or international bodies, according to their timetables, in discussions on conservation issues affecting agriculture.

Mr. Davies: Now that the Minister and his Department have had time to reflect on the fiasco of last week's statement on the future of agricultural land, is he aware of the damage that he is doing to the future of our agriculture by refusing to give proper consideration to questions, of environmental protection and conservation? Will he acknowledge that there can be no secure future for agriculture until his Department gives proper consideration to those questions, and does he accept that the best way to secure that input into his Department's thinking is to arrange to meet on a regular basis public bodies which have conservation as their prime concern?

Mr. Thompson: The best protection of the rural economy and the environment is a properly informed agricultural Department, such as MAFF. Yesterday the hon. Gentleman attended the debate on environmentaly sensitive areas and he knows that MAFF and the Countryside Commission have a venture in the Broads to encourage the conservation of the grazing marshes. The farm and countryside initiative is useful for the environment, the code of good agricultural practice avoids water pollution, and there are guidelines on housed livestock, all of which help conservation. I could continue at length if you, Mr. Speaker, would allow me.

Mr. Conway: Does my hon. Friend agree that the best way to ensure conservation is to use the voluntary method practised by those with the greatest expertise at conserving the countryside, namely, the farming community?

Mr. Thompson: Any basis for a beautiful countryside, which is what most people regard as environmentally acceptable, must be the farming community. They must form the basis of any such policy.

Mr. Maclennan: Is the Minister aware that last week, at the annual general meeting of the NFU, the Minister of State, the right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer), said that he believed that decisions on the countryside should be taken by those who live there, not by weekenders? How does the Minister square that with the decision announced by the Secretary of State for the Environment that MAFF will no longer be consulted on planning matters in the countryside?

Mr. Thompson: The first and second parts of the hon. Gentleman's question do not screw together properly, which is perhaps an alliance failing. Weekenders go to the country to live in their caravans at weekends. The beauty of the countryside should be determined by people who spend all week working in and about the country and rural areas.

Food Surveillance

7. **Mr. Stevens** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has yet reached any conclusions on the 17th report of the steering group on food surveillance entitled "Survey of Mercury in Food".

Mr. Donald Thompson: The report recommends that monitoring of foods for mercury and intakes of mercury by special groups of consumers be undertaken. Arrangements for this monitoring are currently being made by my Department.

Mr. Stevens: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply, particularly his commitment fully to monitor mercury intakes. Will he confirm that the mercury level in food and drink in the United Kingdom is less than one tenth of the safety level recommended by the World Health Organisation?

Mr. Thompson: My hon. Friend is correct. Over the past 15 years we have had substantial reductions in mercury discharges, and food and drink is safe from any mercury contamination.

Dr. Godman: With regard to the report, will the Minister confirm that shellfish and white fish stocks in the north Atlantic are utterly and completely free from mercury contamination?

Mr. Thompson: I should not like to confirm that shellfish and white fish stocks are utterly free from mercury contamination. I said that food sold in Britain is fit to eat and safe. Most of the mercury contamination that flows into the North sea flows in from continental rivers, over which we have little control.

Food Aid

8. **Mr. Dixon** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the latest amounts of *(a)* butter and *(b)* meat distributed in the United Kingdom under the European Economic Community food aid scheme.

Mr. Gummer: Releases authorised so far from intervention stores in the United Kingdom represent 15 million packs of butter and 3·15 million portions of beef.

Mr. Dixon: Has the Minister had any report of local difficulties in the uptake of the scheme? There have been reports of all sorts of problems in the distribution of this food. That is not the fault of the charities involved, because they were given little notice, no information and no resources to carry out the organisation of the scheme. If those reports are true, will the Minister ensure that those for whom the food is meant receive it?

Mr. Gummer: Charities have welcomed what we have done. The release of stocks was indeed done rapidly, but the cold weather occurred and we wanted to do it as quickly as possible. If we had done it at length, I am sure that the Opposition would have complained had the butter gone out in June. We tried to send the food off as quickly as possible. There are places in which distribution has been better than in others because some charities have been better organised in some places than others. We are trying to help in every way possible. It is a remarkable fact that Britain got off the ground first. We have distributed more than any other country in Europe and have done it more efficiently. Our charities are better run.

Mr. Burt: I thank my right hon. Friend for his comments about the charities involved. Will he spare a moment to thank the charities for the excellent work that they have done in distributing the food? If it becomes clear that we have not been able to distribute as much as we would like, will my right hon. Friend, in company with his colleagues in Europe, consider extending the deadline so that more of the stock can be distributed to those who need it?

Mr. Gummer: I cannot give agreement to that at this stage. We are monitoring the position extremely carefully because we want to see how efficient it is. I am impressed by the charities. I commend particularly the Salvation Army and the Womens Royal Voluntary Service for their work. I am also pleased to see the support that the butchery trade has given to the charities to help with the cutting up of the meat.

Mr. Hugh Brown: I recognise that the Department is monitoring the scheme, but what steps have the right hon. Gentleman or the Secretary of State for Scotland taken to put Members of Parliament in the picture about what quantity of food can be expected in any geographical area, if not in any constituency? Has the right hon. Gentleman given guidelines to the voluntary bodies on that?

Mr. Gummer: I distributed a note to all Members of Parliament saying which charities were working in this matter and how the system would work. I advised all Members of Parliament to get in touch with me if there were any particular problems. If the note has not reached them, it is because it has not come from their Whips' office. The note was provided, and if there were any particular problems, I asked for hon. Members to get in touch with my office. My office has dealt with any Member of Parliament who wanted help, and I am happy to speak on any detail about which an hon. Member is concerned. The charities have been given general guidelines. I have left it to them to do what they do best, which is to go to the people whom they know in the way that they find most effective.

Mr. Colvin: Will my right hon. Friend add Age Concern to the list of charities to be congratulated, because, along with the WRVS, it has done a lot of work in my area? Will he also have words at an early date with his friends in the Department of Health and Social Security? I feel that greater liaison between his Ministry and the DHSS is important if we are to get over to people in need the message as to who qualifies for this food. Currently, there is a slight breakdown in communications.

Mr. Gummer: I commended those two charities because the others which have helped us so much centrally, as well as other smaller charities, have relied on them to a great extent. I add the Red Cross to the list of charities which have done a lot of work for other charities. I am not underestimating the work done by the other charities which have been co-operating.

I warn my hon. Friend about his comment with regard to the DHSS. We tried to operate a scheme in Europe which enabled the food to go through the charities that had a regular, continuing relationship with those most in need so that we did not have a bureaucratic system which involved saying, "You get it only if you fit into a particular situation. There is that token. You must wait in line." We want a freer system which operates under the guidelines that we have given. That is why we have kept this operation in the voluntary sector. That is the right way to to it.

Mr. Corbett: Is the Minister aware that until about a week or 10 days ago not a single slice of beef and very little butter had been distributed in Birmingham and the rest of the west midlands? Will the right hon. Gentleman take steps to ensure that if extra assistance to the charities involved in the scheme in Birmingham and the west midlands is needed his Ministry will provide it?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman may be a little behind the times. I was in the west midlands yesterday, where I helped to distribute the butter which was part of the 5 tonnes of butter going to Wolverhampton alone. The hon. Gentleman has probably got it wrong. If there is a difficulty, I shall certainly look into it for him.

Mr. Cormack: Is my right hon. Friend aware that, commendable as the scheme is, the amount of food involved is very small? I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is not today negotiating away large surplus amounts to the Russians at knock-down prices.

Mr. Gummer: I think that 15 million packs of butter is quite a lot of butter—we should not be curmudgeonly about the amount of food that is going out in this way—but the scheme will not solve the problems that we have had with stocks. We have sought to stop the stocks from growing. A decision to that effect was the successful outcome of our negotiations in December. We still have to get rid of a very large quantity of butter, some of which is not comparatively new butter—such as the butter to which we are referring—but has been there for some time. I certainly do not rule out the opportunities to sell that butter in other markets.

Mr. John: As, by common consent, the right hon. Gentleman and all of us are grateful to the charities for their work, will he set their minds at rest by clarifying at whose cost the meat and butter are to be distributed? The

Government are paying for the cost of inward distribution, but will the charities have to bear the fuel costs of their distribution of the butchered or packaged foods?

Mr. Gummer: We discussed in great detail with the charities what the Commission allows in terms of costs. We have gone back to the Commission to suggest that some improvements can be made. I hope that we shall be able to make them. We have a fixed amount for the distribution costs of butter and beef. We are, of course, paying for the cost of buying the milk and cheese at the most suitable market for the charities. We are trying to meet the costs as much as possible. We are discussing with the charities whether they can give any other help. Considerable public funds have been made available for this project, and I think that that is a very satisfactory answer.

Mr. Charles Morrison: Does my hon. Friend agree that, on the whole, the distribution of surplus food is working well? However, some of the charities and some of the people working for them are a little nervous about the fact that they might be acting in breach of the regulations. Does my right hon. Friend agree that in marginal situations it is better that the charities should err on the side of generosity rather than on the side of bureaucracy?

Mr. Gummer: The Commission made it very clear in launching what was, by its nature, a rapid scheme that it would look with that attitude in mind at the way in which the scheme was carried out. That is a sensible approach. Of course, I am willing and happy to discuss the scheme with any charity which is concerned about how to interpret the guidelines and the Commission's proposals.

Radiation Contamination

9. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the continued existence of sheep and lambs contaminated by radiation emanating from the Chernobyl nuclear accident.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Radiocaesium levels in the majority of sheep within the restricted areas in Cumbria, Wales and Scotland are stable or declining slowly. Extensive live monitoring of sheep which have left the areas has demonstrated that levels fall rapidly when the sheep graze uncontaminated pasture. Some 42,000 of these sheep have been tested to date and fewer than 0·1 per cent. have failed.

Mr. Hamilton: How many farms and sheep are still in the controlled areas? How soon does the hon. Gentleman expect that the controls will be lifted? Does he recognise that some of those farmers are angry about the delay in receiving compensation payments and their inadequacy? Does the hon. Gentleman understand that this problem shows the great dangers that exist as a result of radiation and nuclear power?

Mr. Thompson: To answer the four questions as they were asked, there are 466 holdings, 315 in Wales, 150 in Cumbria and only one in Scotland. We have been and are monitoring blue-marked sheep in anticipation that, in the near future, we can make relaxations in the restrictions. I can well understand that farmers are anxious about the future and about the compensation. The compensation has been made in three tranches. We are still talking with farmers. At present we have compensated to the tune of £4 million. We are anxious to remove farmers' anxieties.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The Minister referred to contaminated pastures. Does that mean that he accepts that there is contaminated silage? What monitoring is going on of the contaminated silage to ensure that it does not, at any stage, enter into the food chain?

Mr. Thompson: On the basis of testing and experimental work we can advise farmers that silage and hay can be safely fed to animals without special precautions. Foodstuffs derived from animals fed on silage and hay are being tested to ensure that the position remains satisfactory and that there is no danger whatsoever to public health.

Beef Herd

10. **Sir John Farr** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the size of the beef herd at the latest available date.

Mr. Gummer: 1,300,000 head in June 1986.

Sir John Farr: I am grateful for my right hon. Friend's reply. Is he aware of the economic strain that beef finishers are under today? Will he assure the House that he and his Department recognise the value of the work that the traditional beef finisher is putting in in producing beef cattle in this country off grass in the traditional way, and that that is a skill that is still needed in Britain today?

Mr. Gummer: I very much agree with my hon. Friend's comments. That is why we fought so hard to ensure that we had a non-discriminatory policy in the Community, that we kept the beef variable premium scheme, that we increased the suckler cow premium and that we ensured that, with the reduction in intervention, the British farmer suffered less than any other farmer in the whole of Europe. That is a proper response to my hon. Friend's point.

Mr. Haynes: Is the Minister aware that I have some farming in my constituency? Is he also aware that those farms in my constituency that produce beef produce beautiful, delicious beef? Is he aware that the message that he brings back from Europe is not good enough? We want more and more beef produced in this country—English beef for English people. We do not want that rubbish from across Europe.

Mr. Gummer: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would like to know that we are 96 per cent. self-sufficient. I agree that the beef industry has major difficulties. I hope that he will tell his beef farmers why the Labour party intends to rate agricultural land, and see what they think about that.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: Does my right hon. Friend agree that both he and his right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food should be congratulated on what they have achieved for the beef industry? Nevertheless, will he bear in mind that the very substantial stress in the industry caused by the green pound differential and adverse monetary compensatory amounts does not lead to confidence in either the short or the long term and that that problem must be addressed? Will he bring all the pressure that he can to bear on the Treasury and on the Commission to get that problem resolved?

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend knows that we shall be discussing the green pound in the price negotiations that

are about to begin. I am glad that he supports what the Government have done in this sector. Obviously we are determined to support the sort of policies which mean, for example, the retention of the BVPS for two years so that there is some degree of continuity and confidence as a result.

Mr. Home Robertson: Is the Minister aware that the failure to operate the hill livestock compensatory allowance was one of the many factors that led the National Farmers Union to pass a vote of no confidence in the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food last week? Has he had time to consider the terms of that resolution, calling on the right hon. Gentleman to get his act together or to get out? Which will it be?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman would do well to remember that the policies put forward by his party are so disastrous that they are not taken at all seriously by the farming community. Indeed, they are not taken seriously by his own party, because he and his hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) had to pay for their own policy document because the party was not even prepared to fund it.

Horticulture

11. **Mrs. Roe** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the value of the horticultural output from commercial holdings in 1985 and 1986.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The value of horticultural output from commercial holdings in the United Kingdom for 1985 was estimated at £1,171 million and is forecast at £1,234 million for 1986.

Mrs. Roe: I thank my hon. Friend for his reply. Does he agree that the horticulture industry makes a major contribution to the national economy and will he ensure that the extra help for marketing announced in his ALURE package will be available to horticulture?

Mr. Thompson: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. Marketing is indeed a most important aspect of horticultural production, and all other production. We shall give any help we can, through our various agencies, to help marketing in horticulture.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Gareth Wardell** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 19 February.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be visiting Yorkshire later today.

Mr. Wardell: Are there any circumstances in which the right hon. Lady's Government would prevent a British company falling into foreign hands?

The Prime Minister: If we were to say that we would automatically prevent a British company from falling into foreign hands, we would prevent a great deal of inward investment that is welcome in this country.

Q2. **Mr. Speller** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 19 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Speller: Will my right hon. Friend consider the anomaly over television licence fees for the elderly? Is she aware that if one is in warden-controlled sheltered accommodation which is council-owned one pays 5p per set per year, but if one is in private residential care or any other form of housing one pays the full fee regardless of age or income? Would it not be fairer if all people of pensionable age had the opportunity to pay the same fee based upon means to pay, not just upon age?

The Prime Minister: I note my hon. Friend's suggestion. However, as he will be aware, the House debated that matter recently. I do not believe that it is fair, as a general rule, to exempt particular groups from the licence fee. My hon. Friend's proposal would cost some £80 million, which would add considerably to the cost of the licence fee for others, including many pensioners, who would still be required to pay it.

Mr. Kinnock: Is the Prime Minister aware that the Secretary of State for Defence said in Washington yesterday that if any part of the strategic initiative programme

"we are involved in went, in our view, outside the treaty"—

that is the ABM treaty—

"we wouldn't want to be involved."?

Is that now also the position of the Prime Minister, or is she going to be yet again the presidential doormat?

The Prime Minister: I think that the right hon. Gentleman would do well first to consult my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence to see exactly what he did say. He will find that it did not resemble exactly what he said. The position is as I have outlined it previously. First, we have no locus in interpreting the ABM treaty. Secondly, deployment is clearly a matter for negotiation, as we have agreed. Thirdly, we have received satisfactory assurances from the United States that there will be consultation about any significant change of policy in relation to SDI research. Fourthly, the Government fully support the SDI research programme, which is permitted by the ABM treaty. It is vital to our defence that the West should always be at the forefront of new technology.

Mr. Kinnock: I think that the Prime Minister should consult her right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence, since clarity is all-important in this issue, both for the American President and, more importantly, for the British people. Is the Prime Minister aware that, when asked yesterday what he would do if the United States said that it wanted to test SDI technology in space, the Secretary of State for Defence said:

"The outcome might be that we agreed with what was proposed or might not agree."

Since, on Tuesday, the Prime Minister started off by supporting the narrow interpretation of the ABM treaty but by the end of Question Time she was supporting the broad interpretation, exactly where does she stand?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman has suggested that I should consult my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. That is precisely what I did do this morning and that is why I gave the reply that I did.

Mr. Sumberg: In relation to the north-south divide, has my right hon. Friend noted the remarks of Mr. Kenneth Livingstone, that far too many northern Labour MPs know nothing of life in London and all they do know about are the brothels and wine bars of Westminster.?

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is all this part of the Prime Minister's responsibilities?

Mr. Sumberg: Will my right hon. Friend join me in condemning this disgraceful slur on the north of England and on the hard-working northern Members of Parliament on both sides of the House?

The Prime Minister: I am not going to get involved in that one.

Q3. **Mr. Pike** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 19 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Pike: Is the Prime Minister not worried about the reported links between cancer and nuclear installations?

The Prime Minister: The report to which the hon. Gentleman is referring has been, or will be, placed in the Library of the House when it is available. In fact, its production has been accelerated so that it can be available before the debate on Sizewell. I understand that many people have interpreted it totally differently. Its purpose is to find out the facts and it is for others to make the assessment.

Q5. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 19 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Colvin: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Agriculture Council, under the United Kingdom presidency, took a major and historic step last December when it tackled the mounting problem of food surpluses? Will she acknowledge that the total change of direction that the whole of the agriculture industry is now having to face will be both painful and difficult? What will the Government be able to do to assist the industry in this process of adaptation, bearing in mind the calls for a five-year transition period and the devaluation of the green pound?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that the Agriculture Council last December made a great effort officially and in a very practical way to tackle the problem of food surpluses in the Community. I know full well that the adaptation will be painful for farmers, but, as my hon. Friend is aware, we already give considerable national help to farmers in addition to that which they get from the CAP, for example, in capital grants and in support for special areas. Support for special areas totals £141 million.

I think my hon. Friend is aware that my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food plans to publish next month a document describing in greater detail how the Government's policies towards farming are being adjusted to reflect changes in agriculture and the potential in the rural economy as a whole. With regard to the green pound, that will be a matter to be considered at the annual price fixing. As he knows, there is at present the review of the agro-monetary system.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: Does the Prime Minister agree that lack of adequate housing is a major impediment to labour mobility and causes great misery in many parts of the country? Will she spend some time today looking at the housebuilding record of her Administration since 1979, which will show that, after eight years, this Government have managed to get only 200,000 new houses started in the private and public sectors last year, when Mr. Harold Macmillan, in his period as Minister of Housing, after four years, was able to build 300,000 houses?

The Prime Minister: It is not only public sector housing, as the hon. Gentleman is aware. The dwelling stock has increased by 1·4 million. That is an enormous increase during the lifetime of this Government. Capital spending on the renovation of English council housing has increased from about £480 million in 1978-79 to an estimated £1,300 million in 1986-87. So there are more houses and better renovated houses.

Q6. **Mr. Cash** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 19 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Cash: Does my right hon. Friend share my deep concern that certain Left-wing teachers in London have banned the video which would have enabled children to be properly informed about sex attacks, simply because the police recommended that it should be shown? Does that not demonstrate that those teachers could not care less about child abuse?

The Prime Minister: I think it absolutely disgraceful that a few Left-wing teachers in ILEA should attempt to jeopardise children's safety in this way. I believe that parents will be appalled, and rightly so, that their children are put at risk because of this anti-police demonstration by Left-wing teachers.

Q7. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 19 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Did the Prime Minister not make a bit of an ass of her Chief Whip last night, when she allowed Downing street to bypass him and use the hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones) to arrange the tabling of a motion attacking the Labour leader?

The Prime Minister: I have myself been the victim of attacks from the hon. Gentleman and many others, and I have never squealed or complained about it. But may I make it absolutely clear that I for one, regardless of the hon. Gentleman, welcome the agreement reached by my right hon. Friend the Chief Whip and the Chief Whip of the Labour party that we concentrate on policy matters. I have always tried to do that and shall continue so to do.

Hon. Members: Tell that to Edwina Currie.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It sounds like a rabble.

Mr. Forman: In the course of her busy day, can my right hon. Friend find time to consider the disappointing level of civilian research and development in this country compared with Germany and Japan? As a former trained scientist herself, can she look closely into the matter to see

that everything possible is done to improve our position, since, in the long term, if we do not pay attention to this matter there is a danger of its damaging us in international competitiveness?

The Prime Minister: I know that there is a very important debate in another place today. May I point out that overall net Government expenditure on research and development is at a record level? United Kingdom Government-funded civilian research and development as a proportion of national output exceeds the level in Japan and the United States. My hon. Friend mentioned Germany. It is also true that for all research and development our expenditure as a proportion of national output exceeds that of Germany, so we have a much better record than many people realise.

Q8. **Mr. Michie** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 19 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Michie: May I bring the Prime Minister's attention back to the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike), which was not whether the report will be placed in the Library or whether there is a different interpretation, but whether she is worried about the report, which links cancer with nuclear installations?

The Prime Minister: Unlike some hon. Gentlemen, I prefer to read a report before I pronounce upon it.

Sir John Farr: May I ask my right hon. Friend whether she will have a chance today to look at the reports of the difficulties in raising finance encountered by those engaged in promoting the Channel tunnel? When she has had a look at those reports, will she assure the House that in no way will the Government put up funds should such people be unable to raise the finance?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend knows, we are glad to reaffirm the Government's general support for the Channel tunnel project. As I have made clear in the past, no Government money will be provided. I think that both the French Government and our Government remain enthusiastic about the project. It is one of the most challenging of our time. It will provide many man years of work and many thousands of jobs. I hope that the finance will be forthcoming for this project and that this generation will be able to rise to this challenging adventure.

Rover Group

3.32 pm

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and President of the Board of Trade (Mr. Paul Channon): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement concerning the Rover Group.

I am pleased to be able to announce today the Government's approval of the Rover Group's 1987 corporate plan. The plan is reviewed annually to cover a rolling period of five years ahead; the strategy in this plan, which relates to the period 1987-91, will evolve in that period to meet market developments. In accordance with usual practice, I am today placing in the Library of the House a summary of the plan excluding commercially sensitive details.

The plan sets out a positive course for the continuation of Austin Rover as a major producer and leading exporter of cars made in Britain. The programme of model collaboration with Honda will be taken forward with a new medium sized car, the AR8, for which a manufacturing agreement should shortly be concluded. The future relationship between the companies will of course continue to develop in the light of experience, but it is the intention of both companies that the relationship should be a long-term one and should endure beyond the life of existing design and production contracts. The Government very much welcome this joint intention to continue to strengthen links in the future.

The corporate plan provides for the new K series engine to be taken forward to full production and used in Austin Rover's smaller engined cars. This engine will equip the company for the next decade with a new high economy engine designed to meet new emissions controls and will also make a major contribution to Austin Rover's strong presence in the small car sector, which, with the planned further development of the model range, is a vital element in the company's marketing plan.

Turning to Land Rover, the plan takes account of the launch of Range Rover in the United States this year, which will be a major step in diversifying Land Rover's market base.

On the commercial vehicle businesses, my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry told the House on 13 January that the sale of Leyland Bus to a management buy-out had been completed. I told the House on 2 December that Rover Group was also holding commercial discussions with DAF in relation to Leyland Trucks and Freight Rover, and separately with Paccar in relation to the trucks company. Following these negotiations, Rover Group and DAF have proposed that Leyland Trucks, DAF Trucks and Freight Rover, shall combine to form a new Anglo-Dutch joint venture. As recommended by the Rover Group board, the Government have accepted these proposals, which create a company with the capability to achieve a major presence in the European commercial vehicle market. The agreement will also include the associated parts operations and certain overseas operations. These proposals build upon important existing distribution links between the companies. RG will take a 40 per cent. shareholding in the new grouping based on the value of the assets it brings to the merged operations and will have board representation. DAF will hold the remaining 60 per cent. Market conditions permitting, it is the firm intention of RG and DAF to float the company within two to three years.

Within the joint company Freight Rover, which is planning to invest in a major model replacement programme, will continue to manufacture vans at its Common lane site in Birmingham. Leyland will continue as the focal point for truck manufacture in the United Kingdom, and I expect the Albion plant to have a continuing role in the joint operation as a producer of axles.

These decisions take place in the context of severe over-capacity in Europe. As I made plain in my statement in December, all the commercial options open to Rover Group in relation to the trucks business would involve significant rationalisation and restructuring with inevitable job losses. I regret these. The Scammell plant at Watford will be closed and its production transferred to Leyland. The engine and foundry plant at Leyland will not be part of the new company and activities will be gradually run down for closure by the end of 1988. Some 1,700 jobs will be lost through those closures and a further 560 through slimming of the Leyland and Albion operations. Employment levels at Freight Rover are expected to be maintained.

I believe that this agreement offers the best prospect of building a secure long-term future for Leyland Trucks and Freight Rover and the House will be pleased to know that the plan developed by the two companies envisages significant expansion of truck production at Leyland including for export and an important expansion of the export of Freight Rover vans.

As part of this restructuring, the Government intend to write off the accumulated debts from Leyland Bus and Leyland Trucks left in Rover Group, and the restructuring costs resulting from their sale. The Government have notified the European Community Commission of this intention and the normal procedures are in train. The Government intend to provide up to £750 million for this purpose. I am laying an order today under the Industry Act 1980, and Rover Group will hold a general meeting in March.

The proposals which I have announced today will strengthen both Rover Group and the vehicle industry in this country. Success now depends on achievements in the market place. Mr. Day has focused sharply on the need for commercial success in recent months, and I am encouraged by news that Austin Rover's market share so far this year is sharply up on that of recent months. With new marketing initiatives, increasing sales, recent successes in the fleet market, such as the orders by major car rental companies, and the launch of the Sterling and Range Rover in the United States this year, Rover has the opportunities and skills to succeed.

In short, these proposals will give the go-ahead to Rover Group's corporate plan; safeguard the manufacture of trucks within the United Kingdom in the context of a new European joint venture; and free Rover Group from the accummulated debt of the truck and bus businesses. I am certain that the House will support that.

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): Is the Secretary of State aware that everyone in the House will wish success to the Rover Group in competing in overseas markets and increasing sales? However, is he further aware of the dismay that will be felt on both sides of the House at the

fact that 2,400 jobs are to go, that the engine plant at Chorley is to disappear completely, like the foundry at Farrington, and that the Scammell plant at Watford is to be closed?

With regard to the Rover corporate plan, the Opposition welcome the commitment to the AR8 and the K series engine for which we have long pressed. What has happened to the AR6 project? Is it included in the corporate plan?

Can the Secretary of State assure us that the stronger links envisaged with Honda will not lead to a merger on the lines proposed for Leyland Vehicles and DAF? What is the Government's intention about the future ownership and development of Land Rover about which the statement is significantly silent?

I want to consider the major elements in the Secretary of State's statement about Leyland Trucks. Is it not crystal clear that, on the basis of a 40 per cent. to 60 per cent. share of the equity in a joint company, DAF will have clear control of the new merged operation? Is the Secretary of State aware that the 1985 DAF annual report states:

"One of DAF Trucks' policy aims is to maintain the company's independence"?

In an interview in the *Financial Times* of 22 December, Mr. van der Padt made it clear that his company would retain its own identity and engineering capabilities. Is it not clear that he has achieved his objective but that the British Government have not achieved theirs?

Why has Freight Rover—a very successful company with increasing sales, an increasing work force and a strong market performance—been included in this sale? Is it being included as a sweetener for DAF? Why must we sell a profitable company or surrender control of it? Is it not ironic that we appear to be surrendering control of Leyland Vehicles because it makes a loss and surrendering control of Freight Rover because it makes a profit? What is the value of the Rover Group's 40 per cent. share in the new company? *[Interruption.]* The Chancellor of the Exchequer says that we will discover that when it comes to the flotation. It is important to discover it now before we decide whether this is a good deal. Clearly the Chancellor is happy to remain in ignorance, but I hope that the House will want to know the value of the assets that are committed to the joint venture. If and when flotation occurs, what will happen to the proceeds of the 40 per cent. share? Will they go to the taxpayer, or will they be used to finance future development in Austin Rover? What sort of financial support did Austin Rover ask for from the Government in the corporate plan and what has it received?

What we are witnessing today is the effective surrendering of the control of the British truck and van industry, and no Government should be proud of that.

Mr. Channon: By the tone of his questions the right hon. and learned Gentleman shows that he is not living in the real world. To hear the right hon. and learned Gentleman one would not get the impression that this truck business has been losing £1·5 million a week. It has lost £300 million over the past five years. We have achieved an agreement under which it will be part of a European scale operation with a turnover of £1 billion, and it will be the fourth largest truck company in Europe. An increased number of trucks will be sold and the volume will be considerably increased. That is good news for the future of the truck industry in Britain.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman asked what the Rover Group asked for. It asked for what is in the corporate plan and it has been given everything that it asked for. The corporate plan will be published in the normal way and placed in the Library. It contains everything that the Rover Group asked for. The right hon. and learned Gentleman is disappointed because he is trying to pretend that the Rover Group asked for something that the Government did not give it. The Government did what the Rover Group wanted because we have confidence in the commercial future of that company. I hope that the House understands that.

The advantages of this sale for Freight Rover are enormous. There will be firm plans for the future of the company, with the design and development of a new model range for manufacture at the Common lane plant. There will be opportunity to develop a substantial export business to Europe. There is a good chance that by the 1990s exports could be as much as 20 or 25 per cent. of the company's production. That is good news for Freight Rover and its continuation. There has never been any suggestion of Honda merging with the Austin Rover Group.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman asked me about the AR6. There is already an investment of about £200 million in the K series engine and the related gear box. That is evidence of the Rover Group's continuing commitment to the small car sector. The timing of further investment is a matter for the company to decide.

Mr. John Mark Taylor (Solihull): Does my right hon. Friend accept that those of us who have always regarded Leyland as an unnatural aggregation are very pleased with his statement and with the continuing process of finding separate destinies for the subsidiary parts of the Rover Group? Would he care to put a time scale on the privatising and floating of Land Rover?

Mr. Channon: My hon. Friend will recall asking me that question a little while ago. We should like Land Rover to be returned to the private sector within a reasonable period. That cannot be considered until we are sure that it is in an excellent position. I am confident that Land Rover will soon have the best possible future as a manufacturer of a renowned British product. My hon. Friend will find that it is an extremely satisfactory position and proceeding well.

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): Is the Secretary of State aware that the announcement about the long-term relationship with Honda is welcome and that my hon. Friends and I wish it well? Is he further aware that the announcement about the trucks division is a sad epitaph on the eight years during which the Government have been responsible for British Leyland? What bids and proposals were considered for that division? What consideration was given to the bids by Lancashire Enterprises Limited and Paccar? Was consideration given not to a 60:40 split, but to either having Leyland control over the Anglo-Dutch enterprise or to having at least a 50:50 split?

Mr. Channon: I am grateful for what the hon. Gentleman said about Honda, and I am glad that he supports the collaboration.

On the merger, the only bids were from DAF and Paccar and I advised the House of that in early December.

[Mr. Channon]

The Government endorsed the view of the Rover Group board that DAF's was the best of the bids, which is why we proceeded with it. The deal involves a merger of the two companies, not a sale of assets. It is a reasonable valuation and an exceedingly good deal for the truck industry. Therefore, I disagree strongly with the hon. Gentleman's comments about the past seven years. The future expansion of the industry is on the road and looks good.

Mr. Robert Atkins (South Ribble): Is my right hon. Friend aware that my constituents do not take kindly to the activities of the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), who does not have even the courtesy to be here to listen to my right hon. Friend's statement? The hon. Gentleman made inaccurate remarks about the plants, job losses and locations in my constituency and others.

Does my right hon. Friend agree that the deal offers the best possible future both for my constituents and for those who work in Leyland? The alternative of remaining in the Rover Group is unacceptable on the ground that it would probably mean more job losses and eventually the closure of the plant. Can my right hon. Friend confirm that there will now be continuity at the Leyland assembly plant and the design and development testing track? Can he also confirm that there will be exceptionally generous — *[Interruption.]* If Opposition Members cared so much about people's jobs, they would be quiet. Can my right hon. Friend confirm that exceptionally generous redundancy offers will be introduced over a period? Will he stress to the Rover board that when the flotation occurs shares should be made available to the company's employees?

Mr. Channon: Yes, I shall certainly do what my hon. Friend has suggested about the flotation.

I am astonished that the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) is not here this afternoon, after his announcement yesterday and having placed an early-day motion on the Order Paper. He gave the misleading impression that 20,000 jobs would be lost. That was a disgraceful remark. I am entitled to say that in his absence because he should have been here. He has caused a great deal of damaging uncertainty to those involved. he should be thoroughly ashamed.

My hon. Friend is entirely right about the alternative solutions that are available to the company. I am convinced that this is the best deal and that it offers the best future for Leyland, the people whom my hon. Friend represents and those employed at Leyland. Difficult decisions have been taken. There will be continuity for the Leyland assembly plant. Redundancies are a matter for the Rover Group and its employees. I am happy to confirm that it is making what I hope people will think to be generous proposals, and I hope that they will be welcomed.

Mr. George Park (Coventry, North-East): The Minister said that success depends on the market place. That being so, I wonder whether, in agreeing to merge Leyland Vehicles with DAF, he took into account the fact that, in November of last year, Leyland Vehicles took the lead in the market. It registered 805 trucks of more than 3·5 tonnes, compared with 658 for Daimler-Benz and 256 for DAF. Leyland maintained its lead. Given these figures and the need to reduce excess capacity, which I accept, would it not have made more sense for the merger to have taken place in the reverse direction, rather than to lose control of a strategic part of our industrial base, with consequent redundancies? If the climate of economic growth is as the Government say it is, surely this is not the time for the Government to lose their nerve in supporting key sectors of industry.

Mr. Channon: The hon. Gentleman is quite right in drawing attention to Leyland Trucks' share of the British market. He must understand that the company has lost £300 million over the past five years. As I told the House, it is losing £1·5 million a week. In those circumstances, the solution that he advocates — that is, of taking over DAF, which is a profitable company at present—simply was not on offer. I am convinced that, in all the circumstances, we shall see a much stronger commercial vehicle industry in this country with the rationalisation that will take place and with the emphasis on the export of light trucks. We shall see a joint venture—a merger of the two companies — which will be a powerful organisation in Europe and which will lead to more strength for the company.

Sir Reginald Eyre (Birmingham, Hall Green): Is my right hon. Friend aware that he is to be congratulated on the realism of his proposals and that the underpinning of Austin Rover that will be achieved by the Government's further commitment that he specified is to be welcomed? Will he confirm that, with the joint venture proposals affecting Freight Rover, there will be no loss of jobs at the Common lane factory in Birmingham? Will he confirm also that the prospects of the joint truck venture will be improved by the availability of the sales network in Europe that DAF has built up?

Mr. Channon: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and thank him for his question. I can confirm that there is no reason to assume that there will be any loss of jobs at the Common lane site or in Freight Rover in general. I confirm also that Freight Rover will benefit in the way that he said. This offers an exceedingly good opportunity for Freight Rover in the future.

Mr. Gregor MacKenzie (Glasgow, Rutherglen): Does the Secretary of State accept that, as was pointed out by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), 2,500 fewer people will work in the motor car industry as a result of the arrangements that he has announced? The Secretary of State made passing references to the Albion motor works situated in Glasgow, an area of exceptionally high unemployment. Hon. Members for the Glasgow divisions wish to know precisely what he meant when he said that there was a future for the Albion works. What positive guarantees will he give? The Minister spoke also of the 560 jobs that are to be lost in the Leyland and Albion operations. How many, if any, will be lost in the Glasgow Albion works?

Mr. Channon: The right hon. Gentleman is quite rightly concerned about the Albion plant. I understand that. There will be rationalisation, as I said in my statement, but I believe that Albion has a continuing future as a manufacturer of axles. That would not necessarily have been true under all the options that were available to me. That should be welcomed. It is important that Albion should continue to manufacture axles for the merged

company. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will welcome that. Of course I cannot tell him to the exact figure what the results will be. Perhaps he will be in touch with the company about that matter, but I am glad to say that, as I have already announced, there will be a continuing future for Albion.

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): Although I do not welcome any plant closures, will my right hon. Friend please accept that his news today is the only chance for genuine, long-term jobs in Leyland Trucks? Will he also please confirm that the redundancy terms will be generous and that some of them will be half a year's salary, plus statutory redundancy, and that advice centres will be set up in areas such as Watford to help to re-employ those people who will be losing their jobs, thus filling skill shortages in the Watford area and helping to satisfy the demand in the many new industries that have been established in that region?

Mr. Channon: I confirm what my hon. Friend says. Obviously the company will be discussing this matter with its employees, but the company tells me that the redundancy terms are indeed generous.

On my hon. Friend's point about this being the best solution—and, indeed, on the point made by the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. MacKenzie) a moment ago—the solution that I have announced today is not what is causing redundancies. There is massive over-capacity in the industry. Whatever solution was announced, there would, unfortunately, be no alternative but rationalisation in this industry. The House ought to understand that, as I told it last December.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Why should this House believe the promise of future security from this Secretary of State who washed his hands of the Climax affair and who handed the Austin Rover group, following British Leyland, into the hands of the fellow who butchered the shipbuilding industry and who is now going to butcher the car industry? Why should we believe his promise when today he announces that 2,500 families, in his terms, are being rationalised? Where we come from we call it the dole.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I shall take it in a minute. — *[Interruption.]* Order. Hon. Members should not refer to strangers in the Galleries.

Mr. Channon: I have already explained to the House why rationalisation of the truck industry is needed in this country. That is an unfortunate fact, but the hon. Member must recognise that the truck companies are losing £1·5 million a week.

As for his general question about the car industry, the hon. Gentleman can choose to believe what he likes, but I believe—and I think that most hon. Members will support me—that the proposals for the Rover Group in general that I have announced today offer the best prospects for its continuing commerical success and for the continuing success of Austin Rover as a major producer and leading exporter of cars made in Britain. We have to take action, and we have accepted the Rover Group's corporate plan. I believe that it has a very good chance of success.

Mr. Steve Norris (Oxford, East): Will my right hon. Friend accept that Austin Rover's commitment in the corporate plan to maintain volume and to continue the production of the small car range will be very reassuring to those of us who have been worried by misleading press speculation to the contrary in recent days? Will he accept from me that, coming on top of the 500 new jobs that have been announced for the Montego line at Cowley, his statement will be very good news in my constituency and that it will reassure that skilled, dedicated and now growing work force?

Mr. Channon: I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend. I, too, am very pleased indeed that the Rover Group has recently taken on 500 additional people at Cowley. That helps to give the lie to those who are painting such a picture of gloom. The prospects for this company can be very good indeed, provided that sensible plans are adopted—as I hope they will be today.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): Will the Secretary of State explain what he means by a joint venture when the foreign competitor has the major share? Will he also say what consultations took place with the trade unions and the employees? Will he accept from me that thousands of people have been left in the dark at Leylands? Will he also say who will manufacture the power train and the cabs of the future? Will it be DAF? If it is, that means that Leyland Lorries will become a screwdriver plant. Who will manufacture the military vehicles that at present are made by Scammell? Finally, will he go along and explain the real world to the redundant workers at Chorley, Leyland and Watford?

Mr. Channon: The hon. Gentleman will not take on board the fact that this company has had a series of appalling losses in the past few years and it was essential — whatever Government were in power — for this company to be rationalised. What I have announced today will provide a better future for the production of trucks at Leyland.

The military contract will be transferred to Leyland and will be more secure.

On the question of the joint venture, I described fully in my statement the arrangements that we are making in this merger — the share of the Rover Group in that merger and the eventual intention to float the shareholdings of the DAF shareholders as well.

The Leyland company will put something in employees' pay packets today concerning the merger and, of course, there will be consultations in the normal way through the usual procedures of the company.

Mr. Iain Mills (Meriden): Can my right hon. Friend remind the House just how much money this Administration have spent on supporting the Austin Rover Group? *[Interruption.]* I am grateful to the Opposition for their help. I have two questions — *[Interruption.]* The Opposition appear to find this matter amusing. I thought that they took it seriously. What effect will the £750 million write-off have on the future of my constituents who work for Land Rover? Will my right hon. Friend clearly state that the skills of DAF in having a European network of distribution and manufacture will make it a good partner for Leyland Vehicles?

Mr. Channon: I can give my hon. Friend that assurance. My hon. Friend asked me how much money had been

[Mr. Channon]

spent on the Rover Group. The Varley-Marshall assurances for the associated debt came to more than £2 billion. Some Opposition Members try to peddle the idea that the Government have not supported Austin Rover, but that is absolutely nonsensical.

As regards the effect of £750 million write-off, one of the most important effects is that it will remove the millstone of the accumulated bus and truck debts from the shoulders of the car production of the company.

Mr Jack Straw (Blackburn): Does not the Secretary of State understand that his decision today is a betrayal not only of the British manufacturing industry but of thousands of people in Lancashire who depend upon Leyland for their employment and prosperity? Does he also accept that, whatever the difficulties of the European truck manufacturers, the difficulties of Leyland will be made far worse by his dogmatic and incompetent approach to the problem? Since he has decided upon the total closure of the foundry and engine plant at Chorley and Leyland, where will the engines for the Leyland trucks come from?

Mr. Channon: The hon. Gentleman makes wild statements but refuses to tell the House what alternative plans are available. He is well aware that what I am trying to do is to provide a better and more secure future for Leyland and those who are dependent on the truck industry in Lancashire.

Mr. Straw: Where will the engines come from?

Mr. Channon: I will deal with that if the hon. Gentleman will allow me. The result of the Leyland truck decision that I have announced today—the effect would have been the same whatever the decision — is the rationalisation of that industry. As a result Leyland will produce good light trucks for the merged company. That will result in a massive increase in exports. There will be a substantial part of engine requirement for Leyland sourced from United Kingdom manufacturers. I believe that the prospects for the components industry and the trucks are better under this proposal than the alternative proposals.

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the survival of literally thousands of small businesses depends on their continued ability to provide component parts to the Austin Rover Group? Has he a word of encouragement for them today? What effect does he believe his announcement will have on them?

Mr. Channon: I can help my hon. Friend on that point. My announcement will ensure a securer future for the Rover Group and will therefore mean a securer future for the component manufacturers. I believe that she can tell her constituents who are involved in the components industry that my announcement today on the Rover Group will provide component manufacturers with better opportunities, provided they are reliable, produce good quality goods, deliver on time and charge the right price.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Will the proceeds of the sale go to the Government or the company? Is it not true that the great majority of engines will, following this deal, be built in Holland and shipped to Britain?

Mr. Channon: It will depend on the sort of engine. The light engines will be manufactured in the United Kingdom and, over a period of time, more heavy engines will be built in Holland. *[Interruption.]* I do not know why the Opposition find that so astonishing. It is perfectly obvious that that will occur as a result of rationalisation. That is what I announced in my statement. Opposition Members should pay attention. As a result of rationalisation, we will have a better truck industry throughout Europe and it will be achieved as a result of this Anglo-Dutch joint venture.

The proceeds of the sale will go to the owners of the company.

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): Is my right hon. Friend aware that more than 1,000 people in Shrewsbury work at Perkins Engines? Approximately 300 of those workers manufacture the Eagle engine that is supplied to Leyland. My right hon. Friend's announcement that the heavy engines will be manufactured in Holland is of no comfort to those constituents. By the same token, I am sure that the House will agree that we are faced with an appalling situation because there has been much scaremongering on the radio by the Liberal spokesman who has neither the courtesy nor the guts to be in the Chamber to question my right hon. Friend.

Some questions need to be clarified on the Paccar offer. That offer would have enabled a better United Kingdom manufacturing base to be maintained as Paccar wishes to expand its European market, unlike the Dutch group that wishes to rationalise that market. What were the dates of the Paccar and DAF offers, the financial difference between the two and the percentage of the British manufactured content in the proposals? Does my right hon. Friend concede that this issue is not just one of European unity but of British jobs and the British manufacturing base? In that sense, the Paccar offer would have been far more welcome to the people of Shrewsbury.

Mr. Channon: I appreciate my hon. Friend's concern about his constituents in Shrewsbury and those who work for Perkins. Whatever the solution reached, there were bound to be different effects to different component manufacturers. There is no clear, black and white standpoint—it would affect different people in different ways. I assure my hon. Friend that we considered the Paccar proposals with great care, and indeed I welcome Paccar's investment in Britain.

We had to decide what proposal gave the best future for the company, and the Rover Group recommended to me that the DAF proposal was the better on the grounds that I have outlined to the House. For that reason, and that reason alone, we agreed to accept the recommendations of the DAF proposal because it provided better choice.

Of course we considered the Paccar proposals extremely carefully. I can appreciate my hon. Friend's concern.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): The Secretary of State has admitted that the engines for the heavy vehicles will not be built at Leyland. Does that mean that Britain will no longer be a volume engine truck producer? Where will the engines come from for the remaining Leyland bus group? Does it mean that Britain will no longer be able to design, build and deliver abroad a British bus?

Mr. Channon: No, the hon. Gentleman exaggerates. The intention is that over a period of years the Dutch will

concentrate more on the heavy end of the market and the British on the light end. That is what is meant by rationalisation in this case. There will be more work for Leyland as a result of that and more light engines will be produced in Britain than previously.

Mrs. Ann Winterton (Congleton): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the decision in connection with Leyland Trucks will strike dismay in the hearts of the manufacturing sector? I refer, as many of my hon. Friends have done, specifically to the components industry. What guarantees or information can my right hon. Friend give to the House about the British content of Leyland and the new series of vehicles in future as opposed to the Dutch content? Is he aware that major Leyland customers much preferred the Paccar option and that, conversely, the decision announced today may bring a silver lining to Sandbach in my constituency because those customers will, I hope, turn to the vehicles of Foden and ERF, which latter is the last independent British truck manufacturer left?

Mr. Channon: I know that my hon. Friend has a great deal of experience and knows the industry well. I hope that Foden and ERF will be successful. However, I cannot agree that the DAF deal is inferior to the Paccar deal, as she implied. We examined both extremely carefully and took account of the clear recommendation of the Rover group.

On the question of components, the DAF proposals envisage significant and continuing sourcing requirements in the United Kingdom—for example, for the majority of components in light trucks, suspension units, axles, engines and cabs. DAF intends to increase its purchasing in the United Kingdom. I am satisfied that the proposals will not have the fearsome effect on the component industries which my hon. Friend fears.

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): I accept the benefits of continued collaboration between Honda and Rover, but does the Secretary of State recognise that it is crucial that he gives a clear commitment to the long-term future of Rover as an independent British company, not least because of the damage that he caused the company when he tried to sell it to Ford?

Mr. Channon: As I said in my statement, the plan sets out the continuation of Austin Rover as a major producer and leading exporter of cars made in Britain. That is our plan and we shall achieve it.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Does my right hon. Friend accept that there will be widespread relief and genuine satisfaction that the Government share the view of many of us in the midlands that Austin Rover has a great future as a British company? Does he agree that that is shown by the writing off of £750 million? Does he agree that that is justified by the fact that it has obtained £184 million worth of fleet orders and has a splendid new vehicle in the Rover Sterling? Does he agree that, with this backing Rover must now save itself, its workers and our city's future through its own endeavours?

Mr. Channon: I agree with my hon. Friend. He mentioned fleet orders and it is encouraging that the group has received orders from Hertz, Avis, Europcar and others. The Government have done everything that the Rover group has asked them to do, and now it is up to it in the market place. I have every confidence that the group will succeed.

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): Since the Secretary of State talked about realism, may I tell him that the unanimous view of both unions and management at the Cummins plant in north-east England, where several hundred of my constituents work, is that the proposed merger with DAF is the worst possible thing that can happen to the United Kingdom car component industry? What estimate has he made of job losses in the car component industry? As he has yielded 60 per cent. in the merger plan to DAF, what guarantee can he give either on the heavy or light truck vehicle market that DAF will not use this as a means of transferring production to Holland?

Mr. Channon: The company will be placed under joint ownership. Rover group has 40 per cent. with a seat on both boards. Both DAF and Rover want to make the company a success and to float it successfully in 1989 or thereabouts.

It is extremely difficult to quantify the effects on Darlington. I know that hon. Members are worried about that and I have seen correspondence about it. There will be some gains in light engines and losses on heavy heavy engines. I hope that the position in Darlington would not be affected enormously by either of these proposals. Obviously that is a matter mainly for the company to consider, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will get in touch with it.

Mr. Roger King: Does my right hon. Friend accept from me that the people of Birmingham will feel great relief and confidence as a result of his statement this afternoon, first, because Freight Rover will be a partner in a European truck and van making operation which will involve it in having large sums for new model products which it wishes to introduce, and, secondly, because in my constituency his endorsement of the K series engine will enable us to continue to make a considerable number of small and super-mini cars for a discerning world market?

Mr. Channon: I agree with my hon. Friend; he is right. Freight Rover has an excellent future under these proposals and the K series engine will be of great value to the company. The future of Longbridge looks extremely good. I welcome my hon. Friend's support, and I am sure that he is right that this will receive widespread support in Birmingham.

Mr. Jim Craigen (Glasgow, Maryhill): The Minister talked about expectations for the Albion plant and mentioned the options available to him. Can he be more specific about the assurances that he exacted about the future of the Glasgow plant and about the make-up of the 560 job losses?

Mr. Channon: I should like to help the hon. Gentleman as much as I can, but, if I am to be strictly accurate, all I can say is that under the proposals Albion will continue to supply axles to the new joint venture company. I hope that he finds that of some reassurance.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): Will my right hon. Friend get it into his Department's head that the interests of the Rover Group are not identical with those of the British components industry? Why was the Paccar deal not preferred to the Dutch auction of British jobs?

Mr. Channon: I accept my hon. Friend's initial remarks: the interests of the components industry may or may not be exactly the same as the interests of the Rover Group. Different matters must be considered. I considered all those factors before accepting the Rover Group's proposal. If the Paccar proposals had been better, the Government would have accepted them. For all the reasons that I have given to the House, we believe that the DAF proposal is superior, which is why we accepted it.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): Is the Secretary of State aware that what he has said about the AR8 and the K series engine will be welcomed in Birmingham and the west midlands? Can he clarify the position of the AR6? Will he also please explain how exporting more than 2,000 jobs and ending large truck engine production will do anything to protect our manufacturing base?

Mr. Channon: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's remarks about the AR8 and the K series engine. Everyone regrets the job losses, but they were inevitable under any commercial solution. I hope that the House will understand that. The losses are not caused by the DAF proposal, but would have occurred under any conceivable commercial proposal that the House had to consider. That is because for years there has been massive overcapacity in the commercial truck industry in Europe with massive losses. At present Leyland's losses are running at £1·5 million a week. There will be investment of about £200 million in the K series and related gearbox. That is the continuing commitment to the small car sector that the Rover Group is showing. Obviously the timing of further investment will be for it to decide and, no doubt, it will bear in mind what the hon. Gentleman has said.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the car components industry is crucial to the west midlands? Given those circumstances, will he do everything to encourage the company — I welcome his announcement — to buy British where everything else is equal? With regard to Leyland, is my right hon. Friend aware that the Opposition will never learn that any enterprise cannot trade at a loss forever?

Mr. Channon: I agree with my hon. Friend, and I shall certainly do what he wants. I hope that the House realises that in the long term manpower levels in component firms will benefit from the fact that Freight Rover and Leyland Trucks will have a higher rate of production. That must be good for the component industry.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Why can the Dutch Government build trucks when the Tory Government cannot? The only thing that the Government are capable of is sending a boy genius from Guinness to the Dispatch Box to tell us that we shall get rid of another 2,500 jobs in Britain.

Mr. Channon: I have explained that on innumerable occasions. What I have been trying to tell the House, and I think the House as a whole understands it, is that this will increase production and provide a securer future for the truck industry.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): Is my right hon. Friend aware that he deserves the congratulations of the House and the country on preserving a manufacturing base for trucks in Britain? Is he aware that the strength of the DAF organisation, with its distribution in Europe, will enable us to build a new company which is capable of competing with its strongest rivals in Europe? Is he aware that, far from there being 2,500 job losses, which are regrettable, what would have happened, if he had not made this proposal to the House, is that we would have lost more than 5,000 jobs with the closure of the Leyland trucks factory?

Mr. Channon: I hope that the House realises that, with this joint venture, we shall have one of the largest commercial vehicle companies in Europe, with a European-scale operation, volume increasing and a larger number of trucks being produced. That must be good news, not bad news.

Mr. Derek Spencer (Leicester, South): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Labour party does not understand the difference between a business which is a wealth creator and a business which is a wealth consumer? For far too long, Leyland Trucks has been a voracious consumer of wealth. The best chance that we have of turning it into a wealth creator is the arrangement that my right hon. Friend has announced.

Mr. Channon: I entirely agree with my hon. and learned Friend, and I am grateful to him.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): How much will this merger cost the taxpayer?

Mr. Channon: We shall write off the debt in the bus and truck operations. In some senses, one could say that that has already been lost. I can assure the House that there will be no further call on the Rover Group for the losses—which I hope will not exist—in buses and trucks in the future. That is good news for the taxpayer.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): Does not the creation of 500 new jobs at Cowley demonstrate that, if the British car industry produces cars of the quality that people want to buy, it leads to more jobs on the production line? The greatest burden that Austin Rover at Cowley now carries is the Oxfordshire Labour party. The Labour-controlled city council and the Labour-dominated county council are vying with each other as to who places the greatest percentage increase in rates on Rover, and the greatest burden on businesses by extracting further rates from them.

Mr. Channon: I am not in the least surprised by what my hon. Friend has said. I am sorry to hear it.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): That is not true.

Mr. Channon: If my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) says that it is true, I am sure that it is.

As to the prosperity of Cowley, as my hon. Friend points out, I am glad that Austin Rover has recently taken on 500 people. I am glad that it has also won orders in the fleet car sector. That is extremely good news.

Mr. Kenneth Warren (Hastings and Rye): May I support my right hon. Friend's conclusion that this is a good deal? Unless there had been such a deal, there would have been no jobs at Leyland Trucks. I support the statement that was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton), but, in evidence given to the Select Committee on Trade and Industry last week, the

directors of Leyland Trucks told the Committee, in public session, that there had been no consultation between them and the corporate directors of Rover as to their future.

Mr. Channon: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his support. What I have announced today is the considered opinion of the Rover Group, which the Government have independently considered. The Government came to the view that it is in the national interest that this proposal should go forward. It is the best opportunity that we have; it is a good opportunity. I hope that it will be widely welcomed. It is good news for the car and truck industry and Freight Rover.

Mr. John Smith: The Secretary of State said that Rover will have two seats on the board. How many seats are there on the board? Will the right hon. Gentleman tell us how many jobs will be lost in the Netherlands truck industry and the extent to which capacity in the Dutch motor vehicle industry will suffer as a result of this merger?

Mr. Channon: The right hon. and learned Gentleman omits an important point — *[Interruption.]* I am surprised that Opposition Members do not like me answering the questions that they keep asking me. The right hon. and learned Gentleman omits the important fact that the DAF operation is profitable. It has been making money, whereas Leyland Trucks has been losing hundreds of millions of pounds over the years. That is the difference between DAF and Leyland Trucks. That is why these steps have had to be taken. Any alternative steps that would have had to be taken would have been worse than these proposals, which provide a secure future for the truck industry.

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I shall take points of order after the business statement.

Business of the House

4.27 pm

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement on the business for next week.

MONDAY 23 FEBRUARY—There will be a debate on the report of the Sizewell B public inquiry on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

TUESDAY 24 FEBRUARY — Remaining stages of the Ministry of Defence Police Bill *[Lords]*.

Motion on EC documents relating to the Commission's proposals for the provision of free food to the most needy. Details of the documents concerned will be given in the *Official Report*.

Motion on the Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order.

WEDNESDAY 25 FEBRUARY — Opposition Day (9th Allotted Day). Until about seven o'clock there will be a debate entitled "Priorities for the Elderly". Afterwards there will be a debate entitled "Health Care and Services for the Elderly". Both debates will arise on Opposition motions.

Motion on the annual report from the European Court of Auditors for 1985. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

THURSDAY 26 FEBRUARY — Consideration of Lords amendments to the Teachers' Pay and Conditions Bill.

FRIDAY 27 FEBRUARY—Private Members' motions.

MONDAY 2 MARCH—There will be a debate on Welsh affairs on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

[Tuesday 24 February Relevant European Documents

(a) Unnumbered Intervention food to meet hardship

Wednesday 25 February

(b) OJ C321 The European Court of Auditors' Report for 1985

Relevant Reports of European Legislation Committee

(a) HC 22-vii (1986-87), para 1 and HC 22-viii (1986-87), para 2

(b) HC 22-ix (1986-87), para 1.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): May I thank the Leader of the House for granting a debate on Welsh affairs as near as possible to St. David's day?

We have just had a statement from the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on Leyland Truck, which gave us news of a £150 million write-off, major job losses and further industrial retreat under the Government, all to provide a bargain package for a foreign competitor that will strip the company, if not shut the company or substantial parts of it.

In view of those circumstances, and the continuing pressures on Bedford vehicles at Bedford and Luton, and other difficulties in the motor vehicle industry, can I ask the right hon. Gentleman to provide us soon with the opportunity, in Government time, for a debate on the motor vehicle industry in the United Kingdom?

There are serious implications for the Scottish economy in the closure of the Caterpillar tractor plant at Uddingston, near Glasgow, with the loss of 1,200 jobs. I understand that the Prime Minister's approach to the company has been rebuffed. Two weeks ago I asked if the Leader of the House would arrange a debate on the issue in Government time. Will he now do that?

[Mr. Neil Kinnock]

Today, as the right hon. Gentleman knows, the House of Lords is debating its Select Committee report on research and development in Britain. In view of the serious conditions arising from under-funding, the brain drain and proposed further cuts, and the grave warnings which were given yesterday by the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals, will the Leader of the House see that we have a debate in the near future in this House on all these matters, that are of great national interest, as one of his right hon. Friends earlier asked the Prime Minister?

Will the right hon. Gentleman arrange, as soon as possible, a debate on the proposed privatisation of Rolls-Royce? The Government are selling off the best known name in engineering—nationalised at a previous date by a Government which the right hon. Gentleman supported—and selling it off for next to nothing. It is vital that the House is able to give its view on this further effort to rip off important national British assets.

In the light of yesterday's announcement by the Secretary of State for the Environment that he is scrapping more of the Government's pernicious legislation affecting local government services, will the Leader of the House arrange for a series of statements by Ministers to tell the House what other legislation is to be scrapped? Such a move would no doubt help the Leader of the House by giving him the time to allow me and other right hon. and hon. Members to raise the questions which are of real importance to the people of this country.

Mr. Biffen: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for the restrained and courteous way in which he put his six points, doubtless within the terms of the Wakeham-Foster concordat on revised relations. I accept his congratulations on having the Welsh affairs debate as near St. David's day as possible. Indeed, if it were on St. David's day, we would all be here on a Sunday. That reform would not have marked me out as a welcome innovator.

The right hon. Gentleman mentioned the statement which we have just heard from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. It was an important statement which was highly welcome to the Government. The right hon. Gentleman rightly observed that the announcement involves, among other things, a substantial write-down in Treasury finance. I shall, of course, consider the possibilities of having a debate on the motor industry, as the right hon. Gentlman requested.

The right hon. Gentleman requested a debate on the closure of the Caterpillar plant in Scotland and on research and related topics, not least in the context of the consideration today of those subjects by their Lordships. Both matters are of general interest throughout the House. We might consider through the usual channels what facilities we can provide.

I note also the right hon. Gentleman's request for a debate on Rolls-Royce. That is also a matter that could most profitably be pursued through the usual channels.

Finally, I have to dissent from the right hon. Gentleman. He said that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment had announced the scrapping of legislation. I thought that a great deal of my right hon. Friend's time was devoted to saying that it was only postponed. I have no wish to speculate on how these matters will proceed, but I suspect that many Conservative Back Benchers would carefully attend to these topics in some general election at some future date. The request for a series of statements in relation to the scrapping of legislation is unnecessary, and I think that it was put forward in a mischievous sense.

Mr. John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): Will my right hon. Friend allow time for a debate on the teaching of English in our schools because, under the new GCSE proposals, it appears that that will be phased out? After all, is not history a pillar of our society and to be ignored at our peril? May we hear about King Alfred and the cakes, about Queen Elizabeth I inspecting the troops at Tilbury and, of course, about those innumerable occasions when we beat the French?

Mr. Kinnock: It would not include next Saturday.

Mr. Biffen: It should go on record that the Leader of the Opposition said that it would not include next Saturday, because that would mark out just what are his powers of prophecy.

My hon. Friend raises an important point. In the context of our present education reforms, especially in the GCSE, there is a lively interest in the manner in which English is taught. I shall draw my hon. Friend's points to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Will the Leader of the House try to find time for a debate on the prayer in the names of my right hon. Friends the Members for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) and for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) against the order imposing charges on milk producers for unsolicited inspections by officials of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food?

Many Conservative Members have signed early-day motion 601, which draws attention to these extra charges.

[That this House calls upon the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, not to impose charges on milk producers for unsolicited inspections by his officials which are any higher than the charges imposed on restaurants and cafés for visits by public health inspectors, or on factories for unsolicited inspections by the Health and Safety Executive.]

Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that these charges are of considerable concern throughout the House and that the dairy industry is very worried about this unnecessary imposition?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman's long-standing commitment to the dairy industry is well known. On that basis, of course, I look charitably on his remarks and say that this matter perhaps could be considered through the usual channels.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip—Northwood): I remind my right hon. Friend that, whereas certain parts of the legislative programme can be judiciously postponed, the same does not apply to the space programme? Will my right hon. Friend persuade our right hon. Friend the Minister for Information Technology to come to the House at an early date to announce his Department's decisions on the British national space programme, as a report from the British National Space Centre has been sitting on his desk for many weeks?

Mr. Biffen: No doubt my hon. Friend will have noted that the Department of Trade and Industry is the first

Department listed for questions on Wednesday. I shall refer his comments to my right hon. Friend the Minister responsible for space technology.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): May we have a debate on disablement in addition to the debate which we had last Tuesday? I am sorry that during that debate I said that it was all about the Prime Minister's veracity. I said that in the heat of the moment, and I should like to withdraw it completely. The debate was about the Prime Minister's selective use of statistics. We want to answer those selective statistics in a further debate.

Mr. Biffen: It is characteristic of the right hon. Gentleman's generosity that he should seek to withdraw words that he thought might prove offensive to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. I give him as a solace the fact that there are

"lies, damned lies and statistics."

Therefore, if a statistical analysis is at the centre of the dispute, I think that we should all be rather generous.

I shall consider the right hon. Gentleman's other point, but he has already drawn my attention to the fact that we debated the topic only last week. I know that it is one that raises general interest in the House.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): I know that my right hon. Friend is aware of the concern expressed by my constituents and others about excessive development, especially in the south-east of England, and future planning policy. They are especially worried in the light of recent speeches by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) on behalf of the official Opposition, in which it appears that the Labour party is in close alignment with the developers to continue a policy of excessive development. May we have a debate at an early opportunity so that we can discuss the matter further?

Mr. Biffen: This is a matter of national concern but, even more, one of regional concern in the area part of which my hon. Friend represents. I shall certainly bear my hon. Friend's point in mind.

Mr. James Hamilton (Motherwell, North): Bearing in mind that the Prime Minister has written to the Caterpillar tractor company in America about the drastic closure of the Caterpillar plant in my constituency, will the right hon. Gentleman seriously consider the request made by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition for a debate on this serious matter? As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, 1,221 people at the factory have been made redundant and the factory has closed. In an area in which 22·1 per cent. of the population is unemployed, surely the subject warrents a debate so that we can come to a conclusion and retain the factory.

Mr. Biffen: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman very much appreciates the concern and interest that is being shown in the Caterpillar plant closure by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. I shall bear the hon. Gentleman's remarks in mind in the context of the answer that I gave the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): Will my right hon. Friend inform the House that Monday's debate will be on a motion to adjourn the House? Will he confirm that there will just be a discussion on the report in general and that no decisions will be made? Does my right hon. Friend expect a vote to be taken?

Mr Biffen: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The motion is drawn in such terms because my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy has said that he wishes to hear the views of the House before he takes a decision. In those circumstances, I cannot see what purpose a vote on a motion for the Adjournment of the House will achieve.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): Is there any prospect of a debate on road safety? Is the Leader of the House aware that there is great anguish in my constituency at the death of Lisa Szymczak, aged 14, on a road where some of us have been trying for a long time to get safety measures adopted for the children at both of the major schools in that area, but that Government funding has been quite inadequate? The local authority has provided only a small number of crossings each year, as opposed to the large number that are required, and everyone seems to push the blame on to someone else. How many more tragedies will there be before the Government will help local authorities to deal with those matters?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. and learned Gentleman raises a topical matter. Doubtless he will have noted in any case that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport is first for questions on Monday. I suggest that, at least initially, he tries his luck on that occasion.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Will my right hon. Friend consider a debate on the power and abuses of local authorities? Will he especially join me in offering sympathy to the Leader of the Opposition because, without having a Local Government Bill before it, the House has been unable to curb some of the Left-wing abuses that have occurred in my local authority, which now has a Nicaragua training officer at a salary of £9,216? That is the current arrangement in Leicester. There is a "go gay" policy in Leicester. The rates increase has been reduced to 4·9 per cent. as a good electioneering point.

On the campaign for more houses in Leicester, I discovered in a parliamentary question that Leicester has 947 empty council houses. Will my right hon. Friend therefore provide time for us to highlight the obvious abuses of Left-wing loony councils that spend our money as ratepayers to promote Labour party propaganda on the rates?

Mr. Biffen: The weekly unfolding drama of Leicester matches anything that can be produced by "EastEnders". I will consider my hon. Friend's request that Government time be made available for such a debate, but in the meantime I hope that he will also try to see what opportunities he can take elsewhere in the parliamentary programme.

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): When the Leader of the House reconsiders through the usual channels the need for a debate on the privatisation of Rolls-Royce will he also take into account the importance of our aerospace industry, the effect of privatisation on the people employed in that industry and its effect on widespread areas of the country such as north-east Lancashire, which suffered drastically when that company was last in the private sector?

Mr. Biffen: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point that the aerospace industry in itself might possibly be an

[Mr. Biffen]

appropriate topic for a debate, since that would incorporate Rolls-Royce, but those are matters for further consideration.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Does my right hon. Friend share my concern and that of the public on the position of the family and the fact that it is under repeated attack from many sides? Is he aware that I held a conference in my constituency on that theme——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Gentleman please relate his point to the need for a debate?

Mr. Greenway: I am coming to that, Mr. Speaker.

Will my right hon. Friend consider allowing a debate on that topic as a conference on that theme in my constituency last Saturday addressed by Cardinal Basil Hume, a professor on the subject of AIDS and the leaders of the Sikh, Hindu, Muslim and Free Church communities with Bishop Maurice Wood, drew an audience of hundreds over many hours. It highlighted the concern felt there and across the country on this important subject?

Mr. Biffen: Of courser j 3-8 my hon. Friend is absolutely right in identifying the role of the family in the context of many of the social problems that now beset the world of politics. I cannot immediately offer the prospect of a debate in Government time upon that topic, but I shall certainly bear those points in mind.

Mr. Donald Coleman (Neath): I join my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition in welcoming the Welsh day debate on 2 March. As the Leader of the House is aware, I have had some experience of the speeches of Conservative Members on Wales. In the light of that, will he take note of his motion on the Order Paper today on short speeches? Will he advance that somewhat further so we might perhaps have a decision about that earlier than seems to be the case at the present time?

Mr. Biffen: I confess to lethargy at once, but it is lethargy at what is possibly the fruitless task of seeking a broad measure of unanimity before that proposal was written into Standing Orders as opposed to merely a Sessional Order. However, I accept the hon. Gentleman's spur.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): I know that my right hon. Friend is a keen student of European Community matters. He must be aware that, as this year unfolds, the budgetary problems in the Community are likely to become more acute. Is my right hon. Friend prepared to give the House time so that it may give its support to the Government in their strong stand against any further expansion of the European Community budget, and especially to express its desire that there should be no so-called intergovernmental agreements that fall outside the budgetary arrangements and the Fontainebleau agreement in order to continue strict financial discipline within the Community?

Mr. Biffen: I appreciate my hon. Friend's point; it is probably true that most of our Community debates take place within the framework broadly suggested by the Scrutiny Committee, but I shall look at that point further.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): On that very topic, on the third debate on Wednesday next relating to the EEC auditors' report, is the Leader of the House aware that that massive report is qualification on qualification of those accounts? Will he, by seeking the assistance of the Comptroller and Auditor General, see that the motion that goes down in relation to that document reflects the contents and flavour of its criticism?

Mr. Biffen: I was not aware, but I am certainly not surprised and I will look at the point about the motion.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): Will my right hon. Friend consider providing a debate in the next few weeks in prime time on the subject of AIDS? I know that there was one debate at the turn of the year, but things have moved on since then through the Government's publicity campaign and the increasing awareness of the public of this dread disease and the anxieties that arise. In all the circumstances, Parliament should have the opportunity of considering the position as it is now.

Mr. Biffen: I take note of my hon. Friend's request. No one can deny that it is a most important topic, but perhaps for the moment I could leave it there.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Will the Leader of the House consider arranging an urgent debate on political asylum and refugee status, especially in the light of the extraordinary attempts and lengths to which the Government have gone over the past six days to expel 58 Tamil refugees, including several families, at Heathrow? If he can arrange such a debate, will he, as a preface to it, get the Foreign Secretary to telephone the high commission in Colombo to send a written report to the Minister of State, Home Office? The right hon. and learned Gentleman could then no longer say at the Dispatch Box and outside the Chamber that those people have no reasonable fear of persecution or that they are package tour political refugees. That high commission could tell him that, in recent weeks, 15 Tamil bodies a day are discovered in Jaffna in the northern peninsula of Sri Lanka and that the position is not much better in the civil war area of the east.

Mr. Biffen: I have no reason to doubt the good faith or the accuracy of any remarks of my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary on this matter. At present the matter is before the courts. I do not wish to comment further, except to say that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has acted in the public interest and with widespread public support. I can offer no prospects of an early debate.

Mr. Steve Norris (Oxford, East): May I commend to my right hon. Friend early-day motion 424, which he will know is supported on both sides of the House and which deals with community care for the adult mentally ill and mentally handicapped people.

[That this House, noting the Government's response to the Report of the Select Committee on Social Services on Community Care for Adult Mentally Ill and Mentally Handicapped People, HC, 1984-85, 13, calls for an early debate on the replies to the Committee's recommendations, in view of the widespread and continuing concern.]

Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind that that unanimous report deals with one of the most important health care issues before us today and does not deserve simply to lie upon the shelf? It addresses some of the most important considerations before the National Health Service today.

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend is absolutely right in identifying the importance of that topic. In the immediate future anyway, there is no available Government time for a debate upon the subject, but I shall bear his point in mind.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Has the Leader of the House had an opportunity to study early-day motion 626 concerning the treatment of asylum seekers?

[That this House is alarmed that the Home Secretary tried to remove 58 Sri Lankan Tamil asylum seekers from Britain after refusing to allow honourable Members to place stops on their removal in accordance with the procedure laid down by this House; is further alarmed that after notification of their intention to seek judicial recourse he further tried to remove them; notes with satisfaction that this attempt to circumvent the due process of law was thwarted; is concerned at Her Majesty's Government's attempts to renege on their obligations to asylum seekers; and demands an undertaking that there will be no recurrence of this disgraceful episode.]

It has already been signed by 16 hon. Members and it draws attention to the way in which the Home Secretary and the Minister of State, Home Office sought to circumvent the due process of law in seeking to remove 58 asylum seekers from this country before their case could be properly considered.

Does he not feel that, in view of what happened to those 58 people and the condition in which many Tamil people are living in Sri Lanka, it is essential that the matter be debated? Is he not also aware that unless there is some confidence that the British Government are prepared to uphold their obligations to the United Nations charter concerning people seeking asylum, it is essential for the matter to be debated in the House so that the Government's position can be clarified?

Mr. Biffen: I am fully aware of the early-day motion on the treatment of asylum seekers in the name of the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn). However, I am sure that he will appreciate that my reply to his hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) has covered the points he has raised.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Does the Leader of the House recall a most unhelpful reply that he gave me to a parliamentary question about the use of Westminster hall? Does he not think it scandalous that such a large space should be unused for so long? Will he arrange for a debate so that we may discuss some of the proposals for a better use of that facility, certainly by some of the arts groups in London such as dancers, musicians and painters who would like to use the space? The people of London and visitors could come to see it and we could turn Westminster hall back into the thriving heart of the Palace of Westminster that it once used to be.

Mr. Biffen: I do not want the hon. Gentleman to be under any misapprehension. I now give a personal view; I think that one of the great attractions of Westminster hall is how little it is used.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): In the light of the publicly declared concern by the Leader of the House on developments in the City over the past 12 months, will he arrange for the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to make an interim statement as to the nature of inquiries being carried out by the Department of Trade and Industry inspectors into various City institutions?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity to raise that subject when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry is top of the list for questions on Wednesday.

Early-day Motions

4.54 pm

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. We always abide by your decisions and try to take your advice. It would be helpful if you could give a little guidance and clarification to the House. Over the past two or three years there have been a number of early-day motions which have attacked not only the personal integrity of the Prime Minister but members of her family. Indeed, they have included statements which, if repeated outside the House, would be actionable. Would you tell the House in what way those early-day motions differ from the proposed early-day motion tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Shipley (Sir M. Fox), which was rejected by you? Is there a difference, or has there been a change of ruling? We need to know exactly where we stand in the future.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I, like most other Back Benchers, have become aware over the past 12 hours or so of the events yesterday and during the evening, and we have heard through the media about a certain involvement of yourself and the Chief Whips. Could you let me and other Back Benchers know exactly where the House now stands with regard to statements, either in the form of early-day motions or, indeed, unsupported and unsubstantiated allegations and statements made in the House about individuals either in the House or outside? We need to know where we stand now, the importance of what has happened over the past several hours, and the effect that it will have on Back Benchers on both sides of the House, particularly those who have been prone recently to make unsubstantiated allegations, so that we know exactly what may or may not be done within the House.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I was in my constituency yesterday and I came back to the House at about 7 o'clock and went to the Table Office wishing to sign the three early-day motions in question, all of which I supported. I would be grateful to find out from you when it was decided that hon. Members were no longer able to sign those early-day motions. Was one of the reasons the fact that the Leader of the Opposition was alleged to be anti the monarchy? If that had been removed, would that early-day motion have been——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Since the matter has been raised, I shall clarify the position. I do not usually refer in the House to rulings that I have made in private. However, the House may wish to know that last night I directed that three early-day motions submitted by the hon. Member for Shipley (Sir M. Fox) and others about the Leader of the Opposition should not be printed. That was at 7.30 in the evening. In my opinion they were irregular and not a proper subject for debate, being, in the words of "Erskine May" — the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) will find it on page 382—

"designed merely to give annoyance."

This gives me the opportunity to say that I deprecate the Notice Paper being used for personal attacks by one hon. Member upon another, and I hope that the House can conduct its affairs without recourse to such attacks.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of the support that the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) has just been giving you in making your ruling, may I draw your attention to early-day motion 550 and ask that your ruling be made retrospective in view of the embittered, hateful and totally untruthful statement that the hon. Member for Workington makes about my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Liberal party when he says that he should

"advise the House what sums have been paid or agreed to be paid to the Alliance by Mr. Ernest Saunders and when and how such payments were arranged"?

It was suggested by the hon. Member for Workington that Mr. Ernest Saunders was offered a peerage by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Liberal party. That is unsubstantiated and untrue. Therefore, I hope that you will also rule on that.

Mr. Speaker: I do not think that we want to have a debate upon this. I cannot make rulings retrospective. Every motion that is outside the normal scope is brought to my attention. I cannot recollect that long ago whether that particular motion was so brought to my attention. Nevertheless, I hope that the statement that I made today will make its impact on the House, because we should use our freedom of speech and the freedom of the Notice Paper with the greatest care particularly if we impute any motives or dishourable conduct to those outside the House who have no right of reply.

Mr. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I should like to clarify the record. The hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) referred to two amendments, one of which is mine. The one referring to money was tabled by the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn).

Mr. Alton: The hon. Gentleman added it.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I did not. I tabled the amendment that appears before that. The hon. Gentleman has not read the first amendment. If he reads it he will note that I asked the Leader of the Liberal party to make a statement. Perhaps the subtlety of it has escaped the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Alton: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. As my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Liberal party has tabled an amendment to that proposed amendment, I hope that the hon. Member for Workington will withdraw his insinuations.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I thought that the purpose of your ruling yesterday was to try to get the House to behave like adults and, if at all possible, like gentlemen. If that was the purpose of the exercise, I certainly support it.

Mr. Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman.

Orders of the Day

Banking Bill

New Clause 2

As amended in the Standing Committee, considered.

OBJECTION BY DIRECTION OF THE TREASURY

'(1) The Treasury may direct the Bank to serve a notice of objection under this section on a person—

(a) who has given notice under section 21 above of his intention to become a shareholder controller of any description of an institution; or

(b) who has become such a controller without giving the required notice under that section,

if it appears to the Treasury that, in the event of his becoming or, as the case may be, as a result of his having become, such a controller, a notice could be served on the institution by the Treasury under section 183 of the Financial Services Act 1986 (disqualification or restriction of persons connected with overseas countries which do not afford reciprocal facilities for financial business).

(2) No direction shall be given in a case within subsection (1)*(b)* above more than three months after the Treasury becomes aware of the fact that the person concerned has become a controller of the relevant description.

(3) Any notice of objection served by virtue of a direction under this section shall state the grounds on which it is served.'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Brought up, and read the first time.

5 pm

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Ian Stewart): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this we may discuss the following: Government new clauses 3 and 4.

New clause 6 — *Regulations regarding changes of control*—

'Without prejudice to the provisions of subsection (9A) of section 36 of this Act the Treasury shall after consultation with the Bank make regulations including regulations applying sections 21 to 24 with appropriate modifications to enable the Bank to apply to a significant shareholder the restriction provided for by section 24(2)*(b)* of this Act.

Government amendments Nos. 7 to 11.

Amendment No. 12, in clause 22, page 16, line 23, leave out 'and' and insert 'or'.

Amendment No. 13, in page 16, line 32, at end insert—

'(1A) Where the Bank considers that it may be contrary to the interests of the United Kingdom, or any substantial part thereof, for a person who has given a notice under section 21 above to become a controller of the description in question of the institution it shall inform the Treasury; and if the Treasury is satisfied that it would be contrary to those interests for him to become a controller of that description of the institution it may direct the Bank to serve a notice of objection on him.'.

Government amendment No. 14.

Amendment No. 15, in page 16, line 33, after 'objection' insert 'under subsection (1) above'.

Government amendments Nos. 16 and 17A.

Amendment No. 17, in page 17, line 6, after 'objection' insert 'under subsection (1) above'.

Government amendments Nos. 18 to 24, 32 and 38.

Amendment No. 59, in clause 102, page 74, line 17, leave out '15 per cent.' and insert '10 per cent.'.

Mr. Stewart: It might be for the convenience of the House if at this stage I confine myself to describing the purpose of Government new clauses 2, 3 and 4, and then, if I catch your eye at a later stage, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and with the leave of the House, I can respond to a debate which will no doubt touch on a number of wider issues in relation to the other new clauses and amendments.

New clause 2 deals with reciprocity. The Financial Services Act contains power to refuse, remove or modify the authorisation of an institution whose country of origin does not offer to British institutions reciprocal facilities for financial business. These provisions apply to banking, investment and insurance businesses and were introduced to help British firms gain access to overseas markets, but because a substantial part of banking business is based on short-term deposits it is possible that a threat to revoke or even to impose conditions on a bank's authorisation will have adverse effects on public confidence in the institution and so be against the interests of its depositors.

The new clause would allow the Treasury to direct the Bank of England to object on reciprocity grounds to the acquisition of controlling shareholdings in British banks before that takes place and if necessary to block voting rights on the shares or to require divestment. These provisions could apply if the potential shareholder's country of origin does not allow British financial institutions equivalent access to its markets.

New clauses 3 and 4 relate to unsuitable shareholders. During the Committee stage of the Bill, anxieties were expressed by hon. Members on both sides about the effectiveness of the Bank of England's powers to prevent substantial shareholdings being built up by persons who might be unsuitable on prudential grounds. I undertook to introduce a clause that would require anyone acquiring 5 per cent. or more of the shares in a bank to give notice to the Bank of England of such a holding and to provide information required by the supervisors. I also said that I would bring forward another clause to extend the Bank of England's powers in relation to 15 per cent. shareholdings to cover such shareholdings at any time, and not merely at the point of acquisition. I believe that the two new provisions contained in new clauses 3 and 4 will greatly strengthen the Bank of England's powers in relation to undesirable bank shareholders.

Dr. Oonagh McDonald (Thurrock): Clause 2 is certainly an advance and I welcome the way in which the Economic Secretary has moved some way towards accommodating the views and anxieties that were expressed in Committee. We do not oppose that move in any way.

New clauses 3 and 4 offer a welcome response to the anxieties that were expressed in Committee, especially about the percentage of shareholding. We are glad that the Bank of England will have to be notified of the existence of significant shareholdings as defined in new clause 4. These new clauses are welcome additions to the Bill.

I beg to move amendment No. 13, in page 6, line 32——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady cannot move the amendment at this stage. It has been selected for debate with this group of new clauses and amendments. If the hon. Lady wishes to press her amendment to a Division, I shall at the appropriate time ask her to move the amendment formally.

Dr. McDonald: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I shall ask for a Division on the amendent.

[Dr. McDonald]

It is important that, in addition to the proposed changes in new clause 2, the additional powers mentioned in amendment No. 13 are added. The concern and anxiety felt by hon. Members on both sides of the House relates to the foreign takeover of British banks, partly because we expect the Government to rely on the clearing banks to be responsive to economic and monetary policy. We expect British banks to be more inclined to act in the national interest.

We recognise that there is a risk of British banks being taken over by foreign banks, particularly Japanese and American banks, whose stock market valuation is far greater than that of the main British clearing banks and might therefore wish to take over one of these banks in order to be even more firmly established in the activities of the City of London than they are at present.

It is interesting to note the way in which Japanese banks operate in this country. They concentrate on wholesale distribution, central and local government, energy and water suppliers, and building societies. They pick out the safest part of the market and lend very little to traditional United Kingdom manufacturing industries. One cannot help wondering what the impact would be on the availability of finance for industry if British clearing banks were taken over by Japanese banks that are operating in this fashion in the City.

We want to see British concerns remaining British. It is proper for such a view to be expressed not just to financial institutions but to manufacturing industry. As each day unfolds, we are sorry to note that the Government have no such desire to see manufacturing or any other concerns remaining in British hands. We are firmly of that view because of various statements that have been made. We would like to see British concerns—be they financial or manufacturing—remaining British and providing jobs and services in this country to the benefit of Britain.

The provision in new clause 2 depends on reciprocity. I understand the Economic Secretary's reasons for introducing the new clause, but that is not enough to ensure that British banks remain British. The chances of a British bank being able to take over a major Japanese bank or a major American bank are remote, because it would not be able to afford to do so, whereas the converse seems to apply. The chances of a British bank being taken over by a foreign bank are much more likely.

If we think of the major problems in the banking sector over the past 15 years or so, we find that the Bank of England has had to rely on the main British clearing banks to rescue banks that failed, first, in the secondary banking crisis of 1974, and again in the Johnson Matthey case. British banks were persuaded by the Bank of England to join in those rescue attempts. They may have done so with reluctance, and it may have required pressure from the Bank of England, but nevertheless they responded. They may not have played as big a part as the Bank of England might have wished, but they did respond.

I wonder whether a London clearing bank run from Tokyo or New York would have been quite so willing to engage with the Bank of England in rescue attempts. Such a bank might have transitory reasons for wishing to do so—it might wish to gain acceptance or popularity here—but we could not rely on that. Therefore, it is important from many points of view that the Government have reserve powers to ensure that a bank remains British if it is considered in the national interest for that to happen. That is the purpose of my amendment. It goes beyond the provisions of new clause 2 and I think that it is right that it should do so.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): In Committee I raised a similar amendment to that on which the hon. Lady has just addressed the House because I felt it important to draw attention to what would happen if one or two of our main clearing banks were acquired by a foreign banking institution. I had, I suppose, Japan as much in mind as any other country. I wish to put on record the fact that I, and no doubt many of my colleagues, greatly welcome the arrival of the Japanese in the City of London. I believe firmly in the liberalisation of the market place in all matters, and in particular to relation to banks and financial institutions. Having said that, and having regard to the fact that we are also concerned in the Bill with prudential banking, I believe that there is an important question to consider in regard to prudential legislation.

We could easily get into a position where, for example, the Midland bank, with a capitalisation of about £1·9 million, would be easy prey to Namura with a capitalisation of £19 billion. The word "predator" is used loosely. With the economy doing as well as it is doing under this Government, and because many people would like to invest in this country, we would be unwise to leave ourselves exposed to the taking over of our major banks by institutions based in foreign countries, although we have much to learn from, for example, the Japanese on management in Nissan in the north-east and elsewhere. If it was not the Japanese who wanted to take over a major bank, it might be the Americans or the Germans. I do not think that I am taking a little Englander approach in being cautious about what could happen if we had that scenario.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): My hon. Friend speaks of the need for the liberalisation of trade and he knows that the City of London depends on that, yet he argues in effect for the restraint of trade. Does he not believe it possible that America, and the protectionist lobby in America, might respond and thereby inhibit the workings of the City of London?

Mr. Cash: My hon. Friend perhaps has not taken account of the fact that our banking system is different from the banking systems in Japan, in the United States and in Germany. In the United States there are about 14,000 banks. In Japan there is a strong centralised banking system in which the Bank of Japan plays a pivotal role. In Germany the Bundesbank is part of the constitution. The distinction has to be borne in mind. I hasten to add that I am not going down the route of the amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald)—quite the opposite. Indeed, as I was about to say, it is on record that I abstained on this amendment in Committee precisely because I wished to ensure that the Government had ample opportunity to consider other aspects of the arguments that I put in Committee; in particular the arguments relating to sections 183 and 185 of the Financial Services Act 1986, having been a member of the Committee which considered that measure.

5.15 pm

The amendment which my hon. Friend has proposed is very important, because it ensures reciprocity. We went

into this question in Committee on what is now the Financial Services Act. Hon. Members on both sides of the House will remember the arguments. We insisted upon, and got, reciprocity. I argued in Committee that we should have that as a minimum, in conjunction with monopoly and mergers legislation, to ensure that our banking system was not at risk. As I have said, if our main clearing banks were taken over by institutions based in other countries we would be severely at risk.

I go further. If other countries were to allow us into their banking systems on the same terms, my concern would be greatly allayed. At the moment it is not possible for us to get into the banking systems of other countries. The use of the reciprocity provision will enable us to make sure that there is a fairly even playing field. The matter could usefully be discussed under the GATT. No doubt my hon. Friend the Minister and his colleagues will do that. I congratulate them on the way in which they have treated the subject.

If any one of our clearing banks was taken over by a banking institution in one country, inevitably a bank in another country would want to take over another of our banks. It is precisely because we have only four main clearing banks that we need to be prudential in the legislation.

There is a further question, which we also discussed in Committee. I am referring to the efficacy of the monopolies and mergers legislation to deal with the other limb of the argument, which is not merely that we want reciprocity, but that we want control in the public interest in the context of monopolies and mergers legislation. My hon. Friend may recall that I said in Committee that, because the monopolies and mergers legislation was under review, it was difficult for us to know what would emerge. At the moment we run on the basis of competition guidelines, but there are questions whether that will be the case when the the review is completed. Therefore, it is difficult to assume that the competition law devised to deal with current policy will necessarily be the same in, shall we say, 18 months' time when, as I confidently assert, this Government will be handling the problems and the difficulties, as we always do with great competence and skill, of the ever-expanding liberalisation of the financial markets and the contraction of the time span, the time scale and the global village that we have to occupy.

The review of monopolies and mergers is central to the question of how we balance the sensible provisions of reciprocity which have been introduced by my hon. Friend — with, I have no doubt, the full approval of the Chancellor of the Exchequer and all the other members of the Cabinet. This is not a question of playing games. It is a question of serious economic, political and diplomatic importance.

The question is whether the monopolies and mergers provisions as they now stand will be adequate to deal with the situation. There are serious problems relating to the presumption that applies to references under the current monopolies and mergers provisions. Some would argue that it is the wrong way round, that all mergers are regarded as being in the public interest and, that one can make an adverse reference only if a case is regarded as against the public interest. That is something that I am sure will be reviewed, and it is of immense importance in the context of banking legislation and of any monopolies or mergers that might arise in the banking world.

Furthermore, there is no domino effect as between one decision and another. Unlike most of our other legal situations and cases, we do not, when considering monopolies and mergers legislation, operate on the basis of precedent. Each case is taken ad hoc. Therefore, I share the view of my hon. Friend when he ribbed me slightly over my reference to the Hong Kong and Shanghai bank as a precedent. He was quite right to point out that it is not possible to draw too much of a conclusion from that decision, but, as changes and the review are taking place, I believe that it is important to put on record the principles underpinning the application of the monopolies and mergers legislation to banking. I would be grateful if my hon. Friend could make a few remarks on that when he replies to the debate.

Another problem is the role of the Bank of England. There are people who believe that the status of the Bank of England has diminished to some extent. I do not believe that this is the case. It is important that we get that firmly on the record. It is crucial that the Bank of England should exert significant and substantial influence on legislation of this kind. I congratulate the Bank of England and, indeed, the British Bankers Association on their great help during the Committee's proceedings.

My hon. Friend will know that I am happy with the provisions relating to reciprocity. For the reasons that I have given, I shall not follow the hon. Member for Thurrock on her national interest point, although I suspect that the argument will rumble on. I shall watch the matter with great interest and with some sympathy, but for the underpinning reasons, not for the reasons that the hon. Lady has brought forward.

I have put down one or two other amendments which deal with the question of significant shareholders. I believe that there is a serious problem affecting merchant banks. My hon. Friend will recall that while I was absent on one occasion he kindly notified the Committee that an amendment was to come forward on Report and I was allowed about 30 seconds—I am not complaining, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for a minute—in which to deal with the question of significant shareholders. This is a problem that has attracted a great deal of attention in the City of London and I hope that I may be allowed to go into this question.

With reference to the Government's proposed 5 per cent. provision in relation to the significant shareholder clauses, the problem, in a nutshell — I said this in Committee — is that it does not incorporate any sanctions in the event of a person being deemed not fit and proper. The position is that the Bank of England may request information from a 5 per cent. shareholder, but if the bank considers that that person is not fit and proper it can take no further action unless the shareholding is increased to 15 per cent. At that point—this is crucial—the provisions applying to controller shareholders are triggered.

The proposed provision has a deficiency. It does not recognise the serious practical implications and consequences to a deposit-taking institution and its business of a significant shareholding being in the hands of a person considered not to be fit and proper. Those serious implications and consequences are heightened rather than reduced by the public announcement of the shareholding that takes place under the Companies Act 1985, so the result may be the reverse of that intended.

[Mr. Cash]

It seems to me that there is no good reason for objection to a shareholder who is judged by the Bank to be fit and proper and whose intentions as a shareholder are in the interests of the deposit-taking institution. I believe that judgment must be made on a case-by-case basis. The purpose of the supervisory regime is to regulate the situation where the fit and proper requirements are not, or are not likely to be, met. It is in the interests of deposit-taking institutions, the Bank of England and the reputation and status of the City of London as an international financial centre that that should be so.

The nature of the business of deposit-taking institutions, particularly those operating in international markets in the corporate and in the Government sector, sets them apart from other commercial enterprises. Whereas an unwelcome shareholding of 5 per cent. might not affect either the management or the business of most commercial enterprises, it can have a damaging impact on a deposit-taking institution.

It is therefore important not only that there should be a requirement for the 5 per cent. shareholder to give written notification to the Bank of England and any further information that the Bank may request, but that the Bank should be able to take further action should it view the shareholders as not fulfilling the fit and proper requirement. As the Bill currently stands, a shareholder who is not considered fit and proper could, nevertheless, increase his stake by 200 per cent., to 15 per cent., over and above the level of 5 per cent. at which he must notify the Bank of his shareholding.

Under clause 24(2) the Bank is afforded powers to impose one or more of four restrictions on a shareholder controller on whom an objection notice has been served. In the case of a significant shareholder — which is defined as someone holding 5 per cent. or more, alone or with associates, which follows clause 102(3)*(c)* — it is appropriate that the Bank should have a sanction available to suspend voting rights for the part of any shareholding in excess of 5 per cent. should the Bank find that the shareholder is not fit and proper. The voting rights so suspended would be reinstated in the event of the sale of shares to a person who, alone or with associates, would hold less than 5 per cent. or who would thereby hold more than 5 per cent. but be deemed to be fit and proper. The shareholder would therefore not be prohibited from making a trade investment in terms of the dividend income of his shares and any capital uplift on his holding.

In introducing a clause dealing with a situation in whch a person requires a holding of 5 per cent. or more, the Government have recognised that there should be a mechanism for monitoring and investigating that person. However, that provision may not be adequate to prevent damage to the business occurring when a person who is not fit and proper continues his stake. It is necessary that the Bank of England should have power to take positive action before the sanctions at the 15 per cent. level become available. That power should simply be the ability to suspend the voting rights for that part of the shareholding in excess of 5 per cent.

5.30 pm

I make no apology for having explicitly and carefully explained the circumstances that underpin the new clause. The argument is complicated, but necessary. I am certain that my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary will have listened to my argument with some interest and great care. I sincerely hope that at the appropriate time he will respond and the matter may be taken forward.

Finally, I want to consider the minor amendment, No. 12. It involves the substitution of the word "or" for "and" in clause 22. I sincerely hope that my hon. Friend will approve the amendment on the basis that it does not alter very much, although it seeks to achieve a great deal.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): I do not want to follow the line pursued by the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) in his brief, courageous and exciting speech which had a stunning, if not mesmeric, effect on the Conservative Benches. I hope that the hon. Gentleman's speech succeeds in getting him a job with either the British Bankers Association or the Bank of England, for which he was clearly angling in the early part of his speech.

I welcome the support of the hon. Member for Stafford for amendment No. 13. The hon. Gentleman's argument about the effect of the Government on the British economy is one of the major arguments for amendment No. 13. The Government have produced a position rather like a fire sale or a sale of damaged goods in the major part of the economy and especially in manufacturing. That has allowed overseas organisations to enter this country with the prospect of taking over the damaged goods which the Government's economic policies have created in the market.

The hon. Member for Stafford produced a strong argument in favour of amendment No. 13. I do not wish to disparage the hon. Gentleman's support because I know that he always has the courage to carry through his bold declarations and to follow them up with his vote. If it becomes necessary, I hope that he will do so on this occasion.

I want to speak only briefly. I would have liked to be able to speak for longer, but my new clause 5, which would have reconstructed the Bill to provide for a banking commission, has not been selected, although it was important. I hope that there has been no subterranean interference by Barclays bank, Otley road, Shipley to sabotage my amendment. However, that is now out of the scope of the argument.

My hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) did not speak to amendment No. 59, but will the Economic Secretary to the Treasury tell us whether the basic intention of that amendment is, as I presume it to be, covered by the new clause? I hope that it is and I hope that that is why my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock did not refer to it. I believe that the amendment is worth while, but I believe, too, that it is covered by the new clause.

The financial community is becoming more and more internationalised and intermeshed. There is clearly real cause for concern about penetration into banking institutions in this country. As our institutions become more international, so other institutions are moving into this country and the two sets of institutions — abroad and here — are in increasing likelihood of merging. Therefore, we must pay more attention to that problem.

Banking is a crucial institution in the economy. It is, as we say in Grimsby, sui generis and therefore requires the Government's particular attention. I hope that the Government would want to pay some attention to the national interest which is not necessarily served by foreign

takeovers of British banks, given the ramifications of those banks and the way in which their tentacles extend into the whole economy.

My hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock said that she was primarily concerned about the high street banks. That is correct, but we should also be concerned about the whole range of banking. Because of banking's unique nature, there is a special need for concern. That would be met effectively by amendment No. 13. That amendment does not say necessarily that the Treasury has to ask a bank to lodge an objection to every possibility of foreign takeover or intervention, it just states that the bank "may". In other words, it leaves it to the Treasury's discretion. In that context, the Treasury is the custodian of the national interest, which, particularly in banking, must be safeguarded even if the Government pay so little attention to it in other aspects of the economy.

Sir Julian Ridsdale (Harwich): I want to support new clause 2. I was very interested in the Opposition's argument, especially their desire to place an additional safeguard against the huge strength of Japanese banks and financial institutions. There is a question of balance at the moment and I believe that the balance that the Government have achieved is about right.

It is terribly difficult to decide in these matters. In dealing with the Japanese at the moment in banking, we are not receiving the reciprocity of treatment that we should, either on the Tokyo stock exchange or in Tokyo itself. I should like to believe that new clause 2 is a warning shot to our friends who claim that it is their intention to create a freer trading system. We have a fair trading system at the moment. The Tokyo system is not completely open —as I would like it to be—and the City of London is far more open than Tokyo.

Those of us who deal and talk with the Japanese banks and business houses impress upon them as hard as we can the necessity for more open markets. That is the advice that I have been giving. However, I believe that the balance that the Government have achieved in new clause 2 is about right. I understand the Opposition's fears, but I would not go as far at this stage as they have gone, especially in connection with the United States. I remind the Opposition that the Midland bank bought the unfortunate Crocker bank. Perhaps it would have been better if the Midland had not done that. Nevertheless, we want to maintain an open banking system, not a closed one. Therefore, I support new clause 2, but would not want to go as far as the Opposition suggest at the moment.

Mr. Ken Weetch (Ipswich): I rise to support amendment No. 13 and I shall not be long about it. This amendment is of considerable importance because it seeks to asert the national interest in matters of bank control.

According to clause 21, anyone who intends to become a controller of an authorised bank must give notice. The Bank of England can object to such a notice on various grounds. For example, it can object if it considers that that person is not fit and proper or if the depositor's interests are at stake. These are wise precautions, but they are not sufficient.

We should protect ourselves in the Bill from the potentially damaging repercussions of foreign control over a British bank. There is a danger that we may be talking at cross purposes here and I accept the final point made by the hon. Member for Harwich (Sir J. Ridsdale). The purpose of this clause is not to exclude foreign banks from the City of London, but to take steps when there is a chance that the repercussions will be damaging. We are talking about specific and not general intervention.

I take the point that the prosperity and the activity in the City of London has been enhanced by the activities of foreign banks. Nobody would gainsay that. We are talking about potential events. Amendment No. 13 should make the Economic Secretary think carefully. The arguments that I shall put forward in support of that are not mine. They have already been advanced by the Bank of England itself in an inquiry at which the Royal Bank of Scotland was the object of a takeover by the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation and the Standard Chartered bank.

At that time, the arguments were clearly set out and their validity has not altered. First, the possibility of foreign control could interfere with the interests of the depositors of the bank. One cannot separate prudential matters from matters of national interest. It could well be that foreign control would make it more difficult to protect depositors' interests. Foreign ownership could well intefere with prudential supervision.

Secondly, if we were talking about a major clearing bank, it would make the Bank of England's task of financial control of the money supply, bank lending policy and the creation of control of credit much more difficult. Those dealings would be rendered more difficult if ownership and control were not in the United Kingdom.

Thirdly, banking and finance are becoming more international. At the same time, the distinction between types of banking and commercial investment functions is becoming increasingly blurred. As time passes, British banks will become more susceptible to foreign takeovers. We should not always resist mergers of this kind, but sometimes we should, and that is what the clause is about. In time, foreign control may reach a point at which no further foreign penetration is desirable. The national interest would then be at stake and amendment No. 13 would enable the Government to intervene on those grounds.

Fourthly, such intervention in the case of a foreign takeover could have an effect upon a region of Britain. The most quoted example is the one about which I have already spoken, the Royal Bank of Scotland. In Committee my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen) gave chapter and verse about the reservations north of the border regarding that very point. The point should be repeated and underlined.

Amendment No. 13 proposes that the Bank of England should be responsible for adjudicating in the national interest. The argument against that is that the bank's purpose should always be prudential and not political. Who are we kidding? Very often the Bank of England acts in a political way and there should be no difficulty about that. If the Bank of England does not know what Britain's political interests are, the Chancellor of the Exchequer could soon tell the bank precisely what is at stake. The national interest should figure largely in this Bill as the first point for consideration.

5.45 pm

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary on fulfilling a number of commitments that he made in Committee by bringing forward the new clauses. I admit that I am probably in a

[Mr. Anthony Nelson]

minority of one about new clause 2, because I have some reservations about the implanting in legislation of protective measures that seek to provide reciprocity in the provision of financial or banking services.

That is not so unusual outside the House and many commentators, not least the *Financial Times* during the passage of the Financial Services Act 1986, took the view that it was wholly inappropriate for reciprocity provisions to be built into that Bill, which was principally concerned with investor protection. The commentators said that the importation of provisions specifically to try to put a lever on a foreign country or Government to allow reciprocal investment or banking facilities had nothing directly to do with investor or depositor protection. For that reason, I voted against that provision during the passage of the Financial Services Bill. Similarly, in Committee I expressed reservations about this Bill and about whether this new clause and the idea behind it are relevant to the basic purpose of this legislation, which is to provide an enhanced degree of depositor protection.

This is essentially a protectionist measure about which we ought to be circumspect. We should be reluctant to leap into legislation too soon because Britain has little to gain from erecting even contingent protective barriers. The prosperity, growth and vibrancy of the City of London rests as much as anything on the freedom of access that many foreign companies and countries have to it. The fact that the City has achieved such excellence is a reflection of the special skills and the freedom of integrity maintained in the City up to now.

I admit that new clause 2 is compatible and follows logically from what is already law in the Financial Services Act. If it is perceived to be of value, perhaps as a bargaining tool for Ministers in the context of the former Bill, it could reasonably be argued that it should be imported into this Bill as well. We must question whether it will genuinely be a spur to Japan or to other countries with strong financial services or banking industries to open their gates to us, or whether it will be a futile gesture and a bit of huffing and puffing to give the impression that we are doing something.

In my judgment, the plans of the Japanese financial and banking institutions will continue unchanged whether or not this clause is imported. The influence and financial muscle power that they deploy and the quality of many of the services that they offer, especially in international banking, are likely to make the growth of Japanese banks a secular trend. While I have some reservations, it is not my intention to resist new clause 2. New clause 3 fulfils an undertaking given in Committee by the Economic Secretary.

I should like to speak about new clause 4 in the context of what was said about it by my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) because there seems to be some misunderstanding. Basically, notification of acquisition of a significant shareholding comes into effect when somebody acquires or maintains a 5 per cent. shareholding. As I understand it, my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary undertook in Committee to bring forward this new clause because of pressure from many hon. Members on both sides of the Committee. He said that a threshold of 15 per cent. would be retained, at which point the bank would have a right to decide whether a person was fit and proper to have such shareholding and, if not, certain sanctions should be imposed. Some Committee Members said that 15 per cent. was too high.

My hon. Friend the Economic Secretary said—*it* was a reasonable and sensible compromise—"I share some of the sentiments behind that representation. I take the view that perhaps some requirements ought to exist when someone acquires more than 5 per cent., and the fact that he has to register and notify his shareholding at that stage will be taken into account if he increases his shareholding to 15 per cent., when different provisions come into effect."

That seemed to me to be wholly reasonable, given the impossible administrative burden of taking sanctions against someone who is deemed arbitrarily to be unfit and improper when his shareholding is over 5 per cent. If we went the whole way on this provision, I believe that it would undermine to some extent the 15 per cent. provision.

My hon. Friend the Economic Secretary has kept faith with the Standing Committee. He has taken account of the views expressed on both sides of the Committee about notification at a lower level, and we should not impede the progress of the new clause.

Amendment No. 13, in the name of the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald), prompts the thought that one has to be careful to define exactly what situations will or should trigger an assessment by the Government or even the Bank of England of a takeover. When someone becomes a 5 per cent. shareholder in a company—especially a bank—there are requirements for notifying that shareholding. Although 5 per cent. is a significant shareholding, it is not an effective or controlling shareholding, although it may buy the person concerned a seat on the board. When the shareholding rises to 30 per cent. it will not only effectively control the organisation or bank concerned but trigger a requirement to the effect that an offer must be made to the rest of the shareholders, in the case of a public company, to acquire it.

What happens now, without amendment No. 13? If a domestic or foreign organisation or bank acquires such a holding and seeks to use it as a springboard to acquire the whole of the bank, the case may be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. So we must ask whether the competition and public interests requirement in the Fair Trading Act, about whether a takeover should or should not be allowed, necessitates a rather novel and very specialised amendment such as this.

Admittedly, the Industry Act 1975 provides for a comparable right to prevent in the last resort a foreign takeover of a manufacturing company in this country when the national interest is involved. However, that legislation was not of the Conservative Government's making. It was a Labour Government's Act and it is not surprising that the hon. Member for Thurrock now seeks to introduce a clause that is compatible with it.

That is not in itself a compelling reason to accept the amendment. The Fair Trading Act provides wide enough discretionary powers to refer cases to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission so that a foreign predator can be questioned by it and, if necessary, a political decision can be made. That was what happened in the case of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, the decision about which I thought was wrong. The report on that matter was one of the worst that the Monopolies and Mergers Commission has ever produced. The decision was

political. It concerned a so-called attempted foreign takeover and the Secretary of State of the day had no difficulty in referring it to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: What about the House of Fraser?

Mr. Nelson: I should love to talk about the House of Fraser.

Mr. Jim Craigen (Glasgow, Maryhill): As the hon. Gentleman reminds us, the Hong Kong decision was a political one. In the light of what he has said, it is as well that he was not the Minister responsible for taking it. Is not the hon. Gentleman reading too much into the amendment? We are not trying to establish a ring fence. We are simply seeking to take out an insurance policy that may or may not be used.

Mr. Nelson: I accept the hon. Gentleman's remarks. Equally, he should concede that he and the hon. Member for Thurrock must show that the existing provisions are inadequate. Moreover, they have to argue that there are special compelling reasons applying to banking that do not apply and would not be allowed to apply to the rest of industry. This is a special and more restrictive insurance provision, to use the hon. Gentleman's phrase.

Of course the banking sector is important, but it is by no means unique. I believe that the amendment would imperil the freedom of the City and, more importantly, the principle that matters such as this should not be dealt with on a sectoral basis. If we want changes in the rules of competition or in the way in which a proposed merger is referred or politically decided, we should grasp the nettle and consider the matter in the context of the whole of industry.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Does my hon. Friend agree that, although the hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) referred to a foreign takeover, amendment No. 13 mentions no foreign entity? If the amendment were included in the Bill, would it not be possible for discrimination to take place at the suggestion of the Bank of England and on the decision of the Treasury, not on the ground that the person was a foreigner but on quite different grounds?

Mr. Nelson: My hon. Friend does the House a service by drawing attention to that fact. The ambit of the amendment certainly goes wide. However, much of the debate has surrounded the possible threat from offshore predators and that is the most obvious kind of circumstance in which the amendment might be used.

As my hon. Friend has said, it could be put to a different purpose. We should be suspicious of this kind of planning and control. I support the new clause.

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): I rise briefly to support the broad sweep of the new clause and amendments that the Government have introduced and the amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald). I must begin by declaring an interest. I am an adviser to Barclays Bank.

I should like to refer to what the hon. Member for Harwich (Sir J. Ridsdale) said. He spoke of getting the balance right, and that is what we are trying to do in the Bill.

The hon. Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) exaggerates the impact of the amendment. I prefer the belt-and-braces approach proposed by the hon. Member for Thurrock and her hon. Friends to leaving things as they are. We need as much freedom as possible, and to that extent I agree with the hon. Gentleman. It is vital that British banks have the right to operate abroad.

The Midland bank takeover has been mentioned, and there are other examples of British banks operating overseas successfully — more successfully than on that occasion. We do not want to stop that happening. Neither should we stop the enormous contribution which overseas banks make to this country.

There is no doubt — here I part company with the hon. Member for Chichester — that other financial centres of the world, not least Tokyo, have proved tough nuts to crack. All the evidence suggests that the only way to crack such nuts is by being tough oneself. I think that the reciprocal arrangement is entirely justified. It is necessary to ensure that we have the right sort of arrangements to obtain the freedom that we want.

6 pm

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): The hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen) said that the purpose of amendment No. 13 was not to erect a ring fence, but the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) spoke of the necessity for British banks to be able to operate abroad. Will that not be perceived as a ring fence and as a protectionist measure by foreign banks?

Mr. Wrigglesworth: The proposers of the amendment can speak for themselves, but I do not see it in that way, and would regret it if it were seen in that way. It seems to me to provide a degree of flexibility to ensure that there is no ring fence. It also provides the opportunity for direct action to be taken in this important sphere. Again, I disagree with the hon. Member for Chichester, because I consider that to be necessary.

Banking is different from industry. The banking institutions can have such a profound impact on the national economy — not only on individual firms and sectors of industry, but on the economy as a whole and on individual parts of it according to regional or other distinctions — that the national interest must be expressed in the way that it is. That is why I support what the Government are doing, but with the addition of our amendment.

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): My purpose in speaking is to seek some additional elucidation about the Government's purposes, and to find out my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary's views on what powers the Government would have were the Bill to be enacted with the addition of the Government's new clauses.

It is well within the bounds of possibility that a Japanese or German bank would try to take over a significant British bank. My concern is not with the merchant banks or with the smaller banks — and I should declare my interest as public affairs adviser to a merchant bank. The merchant banks would expect to fend for themselves in the rough and tumble of the international financial world, and would be well able to do so. The process of mergers and the joining of financial forces within the City of London is already well under way. My concern is with the position that would arise if a takeover bid were mounted for one of our clearing banks.

[Mr. Alan Howarth]

The clearing banks are unquestionably vulnerable to such an attempt. Even the American money centre banks are vulnerable to possible takeovers by the large Japanese banks.

An academic economist could mount a powerful case in favour of allowing such an event. There are good arguments against protectionism. It can be argued that Britain, as a relatively small economy with an exceptional stake in international trade, stands to lose more than other economies by resorting to protectionism. It could also be argued that it is never good for a business not to feel vulnerable either to competition or to the ultimate threat of takeover. It could be argued that essentially banks are no different from other businesses.

On the other hand, it can be and has been argued this afternoon that banks are different—that they are crucial to the financing of British industry, and that they have an indispensable part to play in the implementation of the policies of the Government of the day -- monetary policy, credit policy, and so forth.

The economic arguments are quite finely balanced, but I favour the case against protectionism. I believe that the internationalisation and liberalisation of the financial markets will bring great benefits to this country and to the world economy. I welcome the contribution of the Japanese in the City of London, and I am very apprehensive about the predilection of the Labour party for the direction of investment, of which there was more than a hint in the speech of the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald).

However, the political arguments point rather powerfully in the other direction. I do not believe that the public would accept a proposed takeover of one of our clearing banks by a foreign bank. We in this country have an amiable idiosyncrasy: we like bankers. In the United States, the bank robbers — Jesse James, Bonnie and Clyde — are the goodies; the bankers are the baddies. But we in Britain rather like bankers, and tend to say, "Please don't shoot the banker." Any political trouble that might arise from, for instance, a proposal that parts of British Leyland should be taken over by General Motors or DAF would be a vicarage tea party compared with the force of public anxiety and disapproval over an attempt by a foreign bank to take over one of our clearing banks.

The Government of the day would be rather hapless politically if their powers were not clear-cut to resolve such a situation. I should therefore be grateful if my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary would elucidate the position following the enactment of the legislation.

Will a notice of objection such as is adumbrated in new clause 2 amount to a veto by the Government, or by the Bank of England acting on the Government's behalf? Is it inconceivable that the Government's view might differ from that of the Bank of England? If a notice of objection is not a veto, what other powers have the Government? Are their powers under the Fair Trading Act and the possibility of reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission adequate to enable the Government, if they felt that it was in the public interest, to prevent an outright takeover? Would the competent Minister be entitled to refer a bid to the MMC if the Director-General of Fair Trading had not advised him to do so? Is he certain that the director-general would advise him to do so?

The question of monopoly might arise. One could imagine — there is a touch of fantasy in this — the Industrial Bank of Japan, with a capitalisation of £29 billion, or the Sumitomo bank, with a capitalisation of £32 billion, deciding that it would have the Midland bank for breakfast at a capitalisation of £1·5 billion, Lloyds bank for elevenses at £2·6 billion, the National Westminster bank for a slightly heavier lunch at £4·5 billion, and Barclays bank for a relatively light supper at £3·7 billion. The total capitalisation of the four British clearing banks is £12·3 billion, only just over one third of the capitalisation of the Sumitomo bank.

That is a fantastic situation. The monopoly question would fairly and squarely arise and we could deal with it, but the question of monopoly would not so definitely arise if piecemeal attempts were made to take over British banks. For example, Deutschebank, Dresdnerbank, Mitsubishi bank and Fuji bank might each decide to help itself to a clearer. What does my hon. Friend think the position would be in relation to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission if such a development started to unfold?

If a bid were referred to the commission, the process of scrutiny would be lengthy and subjective. There have been phases when the criteria by which the MMC has to work have been less than perfectly clear and we cannot be absolutely sure that the result of a reference would be rejection. One imagines that that would be the result, but we cannot be sure.

Let me also ask my hon. Friend about the reciprocity provision in new clause 2. It seems to me that, as other hon. Members have suggested, that factor would not be sufficient in every foreseeable case to enable the Government to prevent a takeover. One can imagine a takeover bid occurring at a time when the markets in other countries, such as Japan and Germany, had been made more effectively open. I am happy to say that, thanks to the strenuous and skilful efforts of my right hon. and hon. Friends at the Department of Trade and Industry and my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary, we are making good progress towards that liberalisation. Therefore, the reciprocity factor might be irrelevant. It seems to me that the "fit and proper" consideration might also be irrelevant. How can we realistically say that the Deutschebank and the Sumitomo bank are not fit and proper to run banking businesses in this country? If we consider their financial capacity and the general standards by which they run their business, they are.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) referred to the Industry Act that was passed by the previous Labour Government. There is a view that that Act provides powers to enable the Government to prevent or veto a takeover without reference to the MMC. However, there is another view — that, since those powers have never in fact been used in more than 10 years, they have effectively ceased to be current and valid. What is my hon. Friend's appreciation of the Government's powers under the Industry Act?

My questions in sum are these. Will the Government have the power to act directly to prevent a takeover that they do not consider to be in the national interest? If not, why are they content to rest on the existing legislation, plus this new legislation?

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): I come to this stage of the debate with all the trepidation and diffidence

of someone who has not participated in the Committee stage of such a Bill, with all its technicalities. I want to express a view along the lines expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth), but in a slightly different direction. I have always believed, as he does, in free trade as having been the base for the wealth that has been developed by the free world, this country and our friends and partners throughout the world. I recognise also the increasing role that the financial sector is playing in the wealth-creating process, and not just in this country or in the European Community where we are trying to persuade our partners of the virtues of the free movement of capital, as well as of goods and people. We have persistently tried to preach to them how openness in capital markets will be of the greatest benefit to all members of the Community, and also the world's financial markets.

It is against that backgrounid that we must look at the basic questions raised during the debate about the balance to be struck — as mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich (Sir J. Ridsdale) — between the national interest and the benefits of the free movements as we have perceived them in the past and as we hope to enjoy even more in the future.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon, I ask the Economic Secretary to explain the role that he envisages that the Financial Services Act 1986 might play through some parts of its provisions, or alternatively the Fair Trading Act, both of which may have a role to play in any assessment either in reciprocity or public interest provision, especially when we are discussing an overseas bid or an attempted takeover of a crucial part of our banking sector. That could equally apply to one that is strictly domestic.

Therefore, the question arises whether, in view of the measures available under the present legislation, we want to go yet further in a Bill that is as important as this, with its role in the financial sector, in signalling yet a further move in a more protective or inward-looking direction. That must be a crucial consideration. While we look to the City and the financial sector to play an increasingly important role in the development of a worldwide financial sector, would it be wise or make sense for us to signal in this Bill that we want to start looking ever more inwardly, and that somehow we are afraid of what it involved in the financial sector in terms of give and take?

Much has been said about the Japanese, but we should also bear in mind the Americans whose role is every bit as crucial as that of the Japanese. We are all aware of the increasing tendency for protectionist arguments to develop in the USA. Great strides have been made in opening our financial and economic markets in the past and the benefits that we have gained from them show us how important it is not to allow even our friends in the USA to use anything that we do here to develop their protectionist arguments and potentially to damage the development of the financial sector in this country, the United States, and beyond. From all the speeches made so far in the debate, that appears to be the key consideration.

6.15 pm

We look to the Economic Secretary to reassure us about what is already on the statute book to help us to take the necessary steps for the future. My predilection is for a free market and a free and open approach rather than to introduce unnecessary additional measures that involve vague concepts of the national interest, and that could be brought in unnecessarily to counter the markets. I hope that my hon. Friend can give us those reassurances because I do not want to support amendment No. 13. I am sure that he will find it easy to reassure the House on those points so that we do not find it necessary to support amendment No. 13.

Mr. Leigh: I wish to speak briefly in support of new clauses 2, 3 and 4. As my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) said, reciprocity is of great interest and importance. However, as my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich (Sir J. Ridsdale) said, it is also important that we should consider it in a balanced way. My hon. Friend the Economic Secretary has proposed a compromise. I do not think that the blunt instrument of the Financial Services Act 1986 will make much sense in banking terms. The provision that my hon. Friend outlined of blocking a freeze on voting rights should deal with the problem.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich said, the new clause is a compromise that we should accept. The fact that notice must be given at a 5 per cent. shareholding will ensure that a shadow will be cast back from the 15 per cent. limit. That will give my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary a chance to step in in the case of unsavoury shareholders. Therefore, in terms of reciprocity and unsavoury shareholders, we are striking the right balance.

I am concerned about amendment No. 13. The hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) has put forward an attractive argument. He always argues his case moderately and sensibly. He suggested that, as clearing banks were important to the economy, there should be a fallback clause. Indeed, one Opposition Member said that it was simply a ring fence.

As I said in my intervention in the speech of the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth), who did not answer my point, perceptions are important. My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) said that the City of London relies on perceptions and on its history as a centre of free trade and financial institutions. If we were to accept amendment No. 13, we would damage those perceptions. Again, as my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire said, we should be worried about the protectionist instincts in the United States of America. Our banks have as much access to the American financial market as the American banks, but we should always be wary of the spectre of American protectionism. We should consider it in terms of balance and accept that what happened with the proposed takeover of the Royal Bank of Scotland, where the Monopolies and Mergers Commission stepped in under the Financial Services Act, is a sufficient safeguard.

The Opposition argue that banks are crucial to the economy. It is precisely because they are so crucial that there is no way that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry would not refer such matters to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. I have no doubt that there would be a similar result if there were a proposal from a Japanese bank. All in all, this is a fair compromise and we should accept my hon. Friend's case.

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): I join in the general welcome given to new clause 2. Reciprocity is an important principle for financial markets, particularly when we discuss the markets in this country that have had open

[Mr. Tim Yeo]

access to participants not only from this country, but from abroad. There is nothing protectionist about enshrining the principle of reciprocity in our legislation. We seek to break down barriers put up in other markets. When the Japanese and Americans give British players in these markets the same rights as we give them, by all means let us look at the Bill and the Financial Services Act 1986 and ask whether we need to amend or open them further. At the moment, by putting reciprocity in it, we are going a long way to removing protectionism. It is quite the reverse to suggest that there is anything protectionist about the principle of reciprocity in our financial markets and the legislation that governs them. I welcome new clause 2.

How does my hon. Friend see this legislation working in practice? I have some anxiety about how the principle of reciprocity will be tested. My hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) produced some striking figures. He quoted the total capitalisation of the four British clearing banks as being little over one third of that of the Japanese bank, the Sumitomo bank. That is the position at present. With fluctuations in exchange rates, volatility in exchange markets and the fact that exchange rate movements tend to be overdone, at some time—particularly in the unlikely event of there being the whiff of a threat of a change of Government—the pound might fall dramatically, and this might open up an opportunity for an opportunist approach by a Japanese bank. Far from costing one third of their capitalisation to swallow up all four of the British clearing banks, it might cost a fifth, a tenth or a twentieth. Because of currency movements as well as other factors, British banks might be vulnerable.

In those circumstances, who can conceive of a British institution being able to take over a Japanese bank that is quoted at a price 10 or 20 times greater than the size of the British institution? How could it do it?

Mr. Christopher Hawkins (High Peak): As someone who did not serve on the Committee, I share my hon. Friend's great concern about what reciprocity means in practice. America might say, "Yes, you can buy some banks in America," but it has 14,000 banks. I do not believe for one moment that the Americans would let us buy one third of their banking system. An American bank could buy NatWest, and that would be one third of our banking system gone in one hit. The Monopolies and Mergers Commission would not help. It would argue that another bank buying a British bank might ginger up competition, not reduce it, because it would not be a reduction in the number of banks in Britain.

Mr. Yeo: The differences between our banking system and the American banking system are far-reaching and fundamental. Not only could a British bank not buy up one third of the American banking system, but an American bank could not do so, either, under their present legislation. They have problems in reaching any comparability with us.

I ask the Minister to address the matter of reciprocity. It looks fine to me in theory, but, in practice, will it mean anything? If a British institution genuinely wanted to buy a Japanese bank, if it were ever in a position to do so, would it be able to do so? There is a danger that reciprocity is still a one-way access for foreign institutions to use their hard currency assets to acquire British institutions at perhaps moments that are favourable to them but are unfavourable to us.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) made an important point. We must be fair to Opposition Members. After all, politically they are in such a parlous condition at the moment that it is incumbent upon us to be fair to them. Amendment No. 13 does not mention foreign takeovers. It is designed to block any takeover that we regard as being against the national interest.

I put to my hon. Friend the Minister a hypothetical but not totally inconceivable situation. Under the existing legislation, the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, the other powers in the Bill and so on, will it be possible to deal with the situation that I am about to describe? Let us suppose that Mr. Ivan Boesky, with all the substantial assets that he acquired by one means or another over the past few years, decides to go into the British banking business by acquiring a major British bank. To do so, he does not wish to become the chairman or a director of the bank, but he produces a few experienced bankers who will operate through a new business form for the purpose of acquiring, say, Barclays bank. Let us suppose that there is enough equity base in the new company so that there is no question of any prudential factor arising and that the whole operation is adequately financed.

With existing powers, whether under this Bill or under some other legislation, will the Government be able to block a takeover of that sort which they regard as undersirable, not because it involves any unnecessary financial risk on the part of the institution, not because there is inadequate management—the Barclays management will still be there, backed by additional management perhaps from the United States—but merely because the ultimate shareholder is someone whom we may think is not wholly suitable to control a British institution? Would the powers in amendment No. 13 help in that respect? I should be grateful if my hon. Friend would address that point. I shall listen with great interest to his reply.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): Many hon. Members who served on the Standing Committee will no doubt remember the arguments that were deployed in relation to a matter similar to that raised by amendment No. 13. We should reflect on the arguments that were deployed then. One of my objections to amendment No. 13 is that it imports the general and rather vague notion of the national interest. The problem with that general and rather vague notion is that the definition of "national interest" can vary from time to time, according to the political complexion of the Government of the time. My hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) did us a great service by pointing out that, under the terms of amendment No. 13, this could apply equally to British and overseas companies. The vague notion, which can be used to block all sorts of proposed mergers or takeovers in the vague concept of the national interest, is a dangerous road for us to go down.

I support the concept of reciprocity. I supported it when I was a member of the Standing Committee that considered the Bill that became the Financial Services Act 1986 and again when the Standing Committee considered this Bill. I pointed out that we did not need to go any further than invoking clause 183 of the Financial Services Act to achieve our objectives. I am interested to see that

my hon. Friend, in drafting clause 2, has provided specific machinery for the use of the Financial Services Act. That will be helpful. Had we relied on the Act as it stood, it would have required the Treasury to give notice directly to a potential acquirer, whereas, through this Bill, we propose to enable the Bank of England to give directions. It is therefore helpful that the amendment quite clearly sets out the procedure to be followed in such circumstances.

My hon. Friend will no doubt remember that, in Committee, I asked him whether he considered that somebody who financed a series of acquisitions by separate people might be caught under this clause. He was kind enough to write to me to say that he considered that, if a number of people acted in concert, that circumstance would be caught. Will the Minister confirm that the word "associates" in subsection (2) of new clause 4 includes somebody who financed a series of transactions and that, therefore, it will have the effect of preventing such transactions?

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams (Kensington): I support my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) who drew attention to the embarrassment of the Bank of England in the event of a deposit-taking institution being invaded by someone whom the bank did not consider fit and proper acquiring shares. I hope that my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury will have been impressed by my hon. Friend's remarks, which I felt were convincing. It would be wrong that the bank should be frustrated until such a person had actually acquired a 15 per cent. holding. I hope that, at a later stage of the Bill, the Economic Secretary will do something to it which makes it possible for the bank to act more strongly in such a case.

Mr. Ian Stewart: A very large number of questions have been asked during the debate. Rather than go through them individually, I think that it would be better if I were to group them into three subjects: substantial and controlling shareholders, reciprocity, and the national interest powers. By doing so, I shall be able to answer all the points of substance that have been raised. I say that with one exception. My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) referred to amendment No. 12 and suggested that there should be a reference to "depositors or potential depositors" instead of "depositors and potential depositors". I am grateful to him for mentioning that point.

6.30 pm

Although elsewhere in the Bill the correct expression is indeed "depositors or potential depositors", the context here requires "depositors and potential depositors", for this reason. The provision is saying that the bank may issue a notice of objection, unless it is satisfied that both existing and potential depositors are safe. If the amendment were accepted, the provision might prevent the Bank of England from acting in cases where only one class of depositor was threatened. This particular case is the other way round; it is a kind of double negative. I hope that I have answered my hon. Friend's point.

The first of the three main subjects to which I referred was substantial and controlling shareholders: substantial shareholders with 5 per cent. or more of the shareholding of a bank and controlling shareholders with 15 per cent. or more of its capital. The new clauses provide two points at which the supervisor becomes interested in such holdings. First, at 5 per cent. the shareholder has to give notice to the supervisor that he has such a holding and thereafter he has to provide information to the supervisor and respond to his inquiries. At the 15 per cent. level he has to satisfy the supervisor that he is fit and proper in the context of a holding of that amount, which can be described as a controlling shareholding in a bank.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford, supported by my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams), expressed anxiety about the position of those who hold shareholdings of 5 per cent. or more but who do not hold shareholdings of 15 per cent. or more. The hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) referred me to amendment No. 59, which suggests the substitution of 10 per cent. for 15 per cent., and asked me whether it was relevant to these provisions. The hon. Gentleman is quite right.

I suggested in Committee, and I am now bringing forward on Report, provisions that do not change the 15 per cent. test — the original provision in the Bill — by setting it at 10 per cent., but I meet the point that was raised in Committee, that anxiety could arise about holdings of less than 15 per cent., by two means. First, I have introduced the new 5 per cent. test. Secondly, I have strengthened the 15 per cent. test so that it is not just a single hurdle to be safely negotiated and then forgotten but a continuing requirement for responsible behaviour by existing shareholders. Taken together, I believe that the two provisions amount to adequate protection against undesirable shareholders.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford said that there are no sanctions against someone who does not seem to be suitable. However, the problem is that 5 per cent. —and perhaps a figure above 5 per cent.—is not a level at which a very great deal of influence can be exercised over the conduct of a bank. In fact, 5 per cent. is a common level of institutional shareholding in a bank, and it carries with it no implication of involvement in the management of the bank.

However, the combination of the 5 per cent. and 15 per cent. triggers makes accountable to the Bank of England anyone who has acquired 5 per cent. If anybody takes his shareholding up to 15 per cent., he will have had to establish in the meanwhile that he has behaved satisfactorily and is able to pass the 15 per cent. test. If he had not behaved in such a way while he was a 5 per cent. or 10 per cent. shareholder, if he did not responsibly answer questions and inquiries put to him by the Bank of England and if, in other ways, he did not show that he was suitable to be a controlling shareholder, he would find it extremely difficult and probably impossible to surmount the 15 per cent. test. That is why the combination of the 15 per cent. and the 5 per cent. tests will be effective.

After I had announced in Committee the two new provisions, there was a case in the market. A substantial shareholding had been built up in a British bank and the reaction of the market was to make a very significant adjustment in the price of the shares in that bank, which suggested that the market regarded these proposals as of significance.

My hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) asked what would happen if a particularly unsavoury character came along, and I think that he quoted the name of a person whom he might put into that category. He asked whether the provisions of the Bill, including the Government's new clauses, would enable his control to be

[Mr. Ian Stewart]

frustrated. The answer is yes. If he were a wide boy, on a grand scale, he would never pass the fit and proper test. Only narrow boys would be able to pass the fit and proper test. Even if they appear to be narrow boys at the time they acquire their 15 per cent. but subsequently are shown to be wide boys, under the new provisions that I am introducing they would be subject to the blocking provisions. On all those counts, my hon. Friend can be satisfied that his concern will be met.

During the last hour or two the House has been considerably occupied with the question of reciprocity. I agree with the sentiments of a number of my hon. Friends that the reputation and success of the London financial markets have been based on open trading and that we do not want to introduce protectionist sentiments into our legislation, if they are unnecessary.

In a brief but, I thought, telling intervention my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich (Sir J. Ridsdale) said that he felt that in the case of Japan there is insufficient reciprocity and that it is very difficult for British or other foreign companies to gain adequate access to Japanese markets. Should the reciprocity provisions of the Bill or of the Financial Services Act 1986 be called into play if there were an approach by a Japanese company, it would be very difficult for me to disagree with his analysis. I shall resist the temptation to make a world tour and say, country by country, where I think that such problems might arise, but there has been anxiety about Japan and the point is very well taken.

The fundamental point about reciprocity that I should like to emphasise is that the provisions of the Financial Services Act and of this Bill are designed to open up markets overseas, not to put up the shutters around London. It is not only in the circumstances where a United Kingdom bank could not buy a Japanese bank that the provisions might be triggered; it is a much more general question of access to the provision of financial services. That applies to banking, insurance, investment and other matters. If hon. Members study the way in which new clause 2 is phrased they will see that it states:

"overseas countries which do not afford reciprocal facilities for financial business".

Therefore, we have gone far beyond the question of takeovers.

I felt it necessary to strengthen, or rather adapt, the reciprocity provisions contained in the Financial Services Act 1986 because, whereas the threat of withdrawal of authorisation may be an appropriate sanction in the case of an investment or insurance business, in the case of banks that rely on taking deposits in the market from day to day, the withdrawal of authorisation may cause great difficulties for depositors. Therefore, the threat of that withdrawal of authorisation would not be a credible deterrent.

The reciprocity powers, should they ever be put into practice, must be workable. I hope that they will not be brought into play. I hope that other countries, encouraged by our example, will open up their markets to our banks and other foreign banks and financial companies. Other countries may discover, in the same way as we have discovered, that that action will create a thriving market, which is of great advantage, as indeed it has been for the City of London.

I do not believe that others should be entitled to become predators of our banking system and at the same time fail to offer us equivalent access to their markets. That is the essence of the case on reciprocity.

Amendment No. 13, moved by the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) raised an important question about national interest. The Bill does not contain general powers to object to bank shareholdings on the grounds of national interest. That matter is the responsibility of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. The Government's policy in applying the powers contained in the Fair Trading Act 1973 takes full account of the public interest. Any projected foreign takeover of a British bank will continue to be subject to that policy.

I was asked what would happen as a result of the review of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, carried out in the general review of competition policy, which is being conducted by the Department of Trade and Industry. I expressed the Committee's concern to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and he has confirmed that there is no reason why that review will result in any weakening of the broad public interest criterion contained in the Fair Trading Act.

I believe that we have an effective system contained in the Monopolies and Mergers Commission and that that system is the best way to deal with the question of public interest or national interest in the case of banks or any other sector. One of my hon. Friends said that if banking is a crucial sector—as Opposition Members and others have said—by definition, if an approach was made to one of our major banks, it would be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. I believe that it is inevitable that, if an approach was made to one of the high street banks, it would be referred to the Commission. I have no doubt that similar factors would be adduced in such a review as in the case of the Royal Bank of Scotland.

I believe that the anxieties that have been expressed on that score are not well-founded. Therefore, I hope that the House will accept the Government new clauses and the related amendments, but will object to amendment No. 13.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 3

OBJECTION TO EXISTING SHAREHOLDER CONTROLLER

'(1) Where it appears to the Bank that a person who is a shareholder controller of any description of an authorised institution incorporated in the United Kingdom is not or is no longer a fit and proper person to be such a controller of the institution it may serve him with a written notice of objection to his being such a controller of the institution.

(2) Before serving a notice of objection under this section the Bank shall serve the person concerned with a preliminary written notice stating that the Bank is considering the service on that person of a notice of objection; and that notice shall—

(a) subject to subsection (5) below, specify the reasons for which it appears to the Bank that the person in question is not or is no longer a fit and proper person as mentioned in subsection (1); and

(b) give particulars of the rights conferred by subsection (3) below.

(3) A person served with a notice under subsection (2) above may, within the period of one month beginning with the day on which the notice is served, make written representations to the Bank; and where such representations are made the Bank shall take them into account in deciding whether to serve a notice of objection.

(4) A notice of objection under this section shall—

(a) subject to subsection (5) below, specify the reasons for which it appears to the Bank that the person in question is not or is no longer a fit and proper person as mentioned in subsection (1) above; and

(b) give particulars of the rights conferred by section 25 below.

(5) Subsection (2)*(a)* and (4)*(a)* above shall not require the Bank to specify any reason which would in its opinion involve the disclosure of confidential information the disclosure of which would be prejudicial to a third party.'. —*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 4

NOTIFICATION OF ACQUISITION OF SIGNIFICANT SHAREHOLDING

'(1) A person who becomes a significant shareholder in relation to an authorised institution shall within seven days give written notice of that fact to the Bank.

(2) For the purposes of this section "a significant shareholder", in relation to an institution, means a person who, either alone or with any associate or associates, is entitled to exercise, or control the excise of, 5 per cent. or more but less than 15 per cent. of the voting power at any general meeting of the institution or of another institution of which it is a subsidiary.

(3) Subject to subsection (4) below, any person who contravenes subsection (1) above shall be guilty of an offence.

(4) A person shall not be guilty of an offence under subsection (3) above if he shows that he did not know of the acts or circumstances by virtue of which he became a significant shareholder in relation to the institution; but where any person becomes such a shareholder without such knowledge and subsequently becomes aware of the fact that he has become such a shareholder he shall be guilty of an offence unless he gives the Bank written notice of the fact that he has become such a shareholder within fourteen days of becoming aware of that fact.

(5) A person guilty of an offence under this section shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding the fifth level on the standard scale.'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

6.45 pm

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I appreciate that the hon. Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) may wish to get on to Government amendment No. 4, but the Opposition had the clear understanding that we had an agreement that amendment No. 13 would be taken at this point in the proceedings. We understood that we would not proceed to Government amendments Nos. 4, 5 and so on until such time as the Division had taken place and the Question on amendent No. 13 determined.

Apparently, something has gone wrong and I do not understand. *[Interruption.]* I am sorry that Conservative Members find it amusing that, when we reach agreement on how to get on with business somehow or other, it does not matter and that the Opposition's rights in such a case are a laughing matter. If that is the case, Conservative Members can laugh all night because that is how long it will take to get through the rest of the Bill.

I hope that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, can facilitate us in achieving a vote now so that a Division on amendment No. 13 may take place and we can therefore proceed to complete consideration of the Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am sorry that I cannot help the hon. Gentleman. It is possible to take things in a different order only if an Order of the House to that effect is taken at the beginning of proceedings. There is no such Order of the House so I am afraid that I am bound by the rules.

I understand that the Opposition wish to vote on amendment No. 13. They can certainly do so, but it must be taken in the order in which it appears on the Amendment Paper. In other words, we must now dispose of Government amendment No. 4 and Opposition amendment No. 5 and consequential amendments. We shall then come to amendment No. 13.

Clause 2

THE BOARD OF BANKING SUPERVISION

Amendment proposed: No. 4, in page 2, line 15, leave out from '(b)' to 'being' in line 17 and insert

'six independent members, that is to say, members appointed jointly by the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Governor,'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With Government amendment No. 4 it will be convenient to take Government amendment No. 6.

Mr. Nelson: This is the only opportunity that we shall have to discuss the amendments relating to the establishment of the Board of Banking Supervision under clause 2. I make no apology to the House for taking the opportunity to do so because it is at the absolute heart of the Bill.

One of the major reasons for introducing the Bill were the problems that resulted from the Johnson Matthey Bank collapse. At the time it was suggested that some of the shortcomings of the Bank of England could have been avoided if there had been some impartial, objective advice and a proper supervisory board — or, as Opposition Members would have it, a commission—established that would be more incisive about some of those problems.

The amendments are the result of discussion during Committee and deserve to be discussed on Report. As regards amendment No. 4 I welcome the fact that my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary has decided to bring forward proposals to increase the number of independent members. That will further enhance the weight and power of the independent element of the Board of Banking Supervision as against the ex officio membership of the Governor, the Deputy Governor and the director responsible for banking supervision.

It is important that we take this opportunity to seek assurances from my hon. Friend that when the Bill is enacted, the banking sector will not return to the initial system and business as usual. The Board of Banking Supervision is a grand title but it is little more than an advisory body because it has few teeth. Will my hon. Friend assure us that it will be, not a cosy luncheon club, but an effective watchdog body over executive decisions and policy judgments of the Governor and the Bank of England?

I should also welcome a brief comment on the sort of relationships that the board will have with the Governor and the division within the bank responsible for banking supervision.

Amendment No. 6 gives the independent members certain powers to place before the Chancellor of the Exchequer their views, presumably, about the broad range of matters that they may consider. Will my hon. Friend

[Mr. Nelson]

give some idea of the circumstances in which he envisages such a report being made to the Chancellor of the Exchequer? That is clearly a welcome departure because it introduces some political influence. Would it, for example, enable the independent element of banking supervision to report to the Chancellor of the Exchequer if it felt that a matter of political significance in banking supervision should be drawn to his attention? Or would matters of reference of a more technical nature be exclusively for the Governor of the Bank? If it were felt, for example, that the amount of credit extended through credit card transactions was becoming excessive and that certain action needed to be taken, which if not taken would threaten the banking sector, could the independent element of the Board of Banking Supervision draw that to the attention of the Chancellor and, thereby, raise the political profile?

Does this measure mark a shift of power from the Bank to the Chancellor? I suspect that it in no way undermines what the Economic Secretary wishes to see as the firm control and executive power of the Governor. However, clearly circumstances are envisaged in which such a reference will be made. As the powers of the board, particularly of the independent element, are matters on which the House sought reassurance on Second Reading and in Committee, I would be grateful for my hon. Friend's comments.

Mr. Stewart: The amendments to clause 2, which are embodied in amendments Nos. 4 and 6, have three purposes. First, the number of independent members is increased to six, so that in future there will be a total membership of nine and twice as many independent members as ex officio members. Secondly, the independent members are to be appointed, not by the Governor with the approval of the Chancellor, but by the Chancellor and the Governor jointly. Thirdly, there will be a specific statutory entitlement of the independent members to place before the Chancellor their reasons for holding a different view from the ex officio members, if such comes about.

I have no reason to think that this will be a cosy system. It seems that the advisory functions of the independent members will greatly strengthen the system and will be of great value to the Bank of England. I am sure that the Bank will not lightly disregard the comments of the independent members either about specific matters of supervision or more general questions, such as those which my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) mentioned. The independent members would need to pass on their opinion to the Chancellor only if there were a difference of view. Otherwise, if there was general anxiety in supervisory terms about, for example, the extension of credit, it would be dealt with in supervisory policy, about which the Governor would be in communicaton with my right hon. Friend the Chancellor.

The amendments respond to points made in Committee and they strengthen the role of the independent members. I hope that the House will welcome them on that basis.

Amendment agreed to.

Dr. McDonald: I beg to move amendment No. 5, in page 2, line 25, at end insert

'and to resign from the Board immediately on the commencement of an investigation by the Bank of England into a bank in which the independent member has a position of responsibility'.

In his reply to the hon. Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) the Minister said that he did not regard the Board of Banking Supervision as a club. In his reply to me I hope that he will accept the amendment because it will ensure that the Board of Banking Supervision is not a club.

The Minister will know that on 4 February the Standard Chartered bank asked the Bank of England to appoint inspectors into its affairs, one assumes as a result of the continued press rumours about what happened when the Lloyds bid was first made in April 1986,. Between April 1986 and July 1986 the Lloyds bid failed. Hon. Members will know that during that period several so-called white squires, including Mr. Khoo, assisted the Standard Chartered bank to fight the bid from Lloyds. The Minister will also know that the press recorded many allegations about loans that were offered to the National Bank of Brunei and to Mr. Khoo, who at that time owned 70 per cent. of that bank, before and shortly after the Lloyds bid failed. Obviously, we shall not know whether those allegations are true until the investigation is completed.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): I hope that the hon. Lady will tell the House that Standard Chartered invited the Bank of England to appoint inspectors from a position of strength and because it repudiates scurrilous reports in the press, some of which are now the subject of libel proceedings.

Dr. McDonald: I entirely understand the hon. Gentleman's anxieties because, as he states in the Register of Members' Interests, he is an employee of Standard Chartered. If he were listening carefully to what I said, he would have noted that I said that on 4 February Standard Chartered asked the Bank of England to appoint inspectors. I do not propose to assess the truth or falsity of those allegations; that is for the inspectors whom the Bank of England has now appointed. It would be useful to have the full report of that investigation made public, but we do not know whether that will be the case.

I tabled the amendment because I am disturbed to note that Mr. Peter Graham, deputy chairman of Standard Chartered bank, is also a member of the Board of Banking Supervision. I am in no way making personal allegations against him. I do not know what part he played during the Lloyds takeover bid, which is presumably another matter which, I hope, the inspectors will investigate. My point is simply that if the Board of Banking Supervision is not to be regarded as a cosy club the suggestion that is implied in my amendment should be followed. I understand that Mr. Graham has resigned, but that his resignation is due to take effect from May when he takes over from Lord Barber as chairman of Standard Chartered. It seems that he is still a member of the Board of Banking Supervision and was when Standard Chartered asked the Bank of England to appoint inspectors.

7 pm

In the interests of justice being seen to be done, in those circumstances it is important that a member of the Board of Banking Supervision should resign immediately. If that were the expected step for anyone in that position to take, it would not carry any implications that the allegations under investigation were either true or false. It would simply be an automatic step. It is an entirely proper step. The function of the Board of Banking Supervision is to advise the Bank of England on supervisory matters. It is

quite wrong that someone who has an interest in the outcome of a current investigation should remain on the board. I am not making any judgment about Mr. Graham; it is simply a procedural point in the interests of justice being seen to be done. If the Minister does not feel able to accept that amendment now, I hope that he will give an assurance that he will consider this matter and perhaps accpt it at a later stage.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): I need not cause alarm to anybody, not least the Minister or other collegues or Opposition Members. My intervention will be brief.

I am tempted by the argument of the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) on this point. None the less, I have reluctantly come to the conclusion that it would be wrong to write a specific provision of this kind into a legislative instrument. Perhaps I am saying that at some risk, because it may be that the Minister will be tempted to accept the amendment. If he does not, I shall be interested in, and supportive of, his reasons. It would be difficult and unwelcome, in terms of any specific incidents in the future—we are all in favour of proper supervision — were a requirement to resign immediately to be specifically written into the legislation. That may seem to be at variance with other requirements in other parts of the Bill for specific legislation.

The act of resignation is difficult to write into a text of this kind. I shall be, as others may be, interested in the Minister's views. It might be that this could be encapsulated more appropriately not merely in the written convention of the behaviour of such a body, but in the standing orders or rules of procedure of the board in its career and constitution.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The point which the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) has raised is a serious one. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) that to build compulsory resignation powers into statute is a dangerous course to follow. The circumstances under which the amendment might operate could vary considerably and might include cases where the resignation of such a person would be wholly inappropriate. I shall elaborate on that briefly. An investigation does not establish any wrongdoing. Only if the investigation uncovered any wrongdoing would that difficulty apply. Indeed, an investigation into institution A might be undertaken in relation to a suspicion of wrongdoing in a different institution, institution B. It might be that, purely to obtain information, such steps would have to be taken.

The more important point is that it is standard practice in any body of this kind — I understand that it is intended that the board will operate in this way—that if there is any possibility of a conflict of interest the member concerned declares that interest and stands aside from the decision in that case. The board is not yet operating, so those rules are not in place. If a person were improperly to remain part of the discussion and process, it would be likely that that would be highly unsatisfactory in the view of the bank — a reasonable stance to take — and that person would then be removed from the Board of Banking Supervision under paragraph 2 of schedule 1, under which an independent member may be removed if he is unfit to discharge his functions as a member of the board. That description would fit anybody in a case of a conflict interest where a member did not stand aside. On those grounds, it would not be right to accept the Opposition amendment.

Dr. McDonald: I was disappointed by the Minister's reply. He will have done nothing to allay the fears of the public, who will find it quite extraordinary that someone should remain as a member of the Board of Banking Supervision in an advisory capacity, and will obviously see the investigation papers. It is quite wrong that the powers that the Minister mentioned should not be used in those circumstances. The Minister knows full well that the Standard Chartered bank case is causing considerable anxiety with the public and the press. To allow the deputy chairman to remain in that position is quite wrong. It flies in the face of seeing justice being done.

I am surprised that the Minister did not give a more conciliatory reply and say that if automatic resignation were not the best way of dealing with the matter he would look into other ways of dealing with it.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 6, in page 2, line 32, at end insert 'and the independent members shall be entitled to place before the Chancellor the reasons for their advice.'. — *[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 11

REVOCATION OF AUTHORISATION

Amendment made: No. 7, in page 7, line 44, after '22', insert

', *(Objection by direction of the Treasury) or (Objection to existing shareholder controller).*'—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 21

NOTIFICATION

Amendments made: No. 8, in page 15, line 28, leave out 'shareholder controller or' and insert 'minority, majority or principal shareholder controller or an'.

No. 9, in page 15, line 30, leave out from 'Kingdom' to 'unless' in line 34.

No. 10, in page 15, line 41, leave out 'a written notice of objection under section 22 below' and insert 'under section 22 or section *(Objection by direction of the Treasury)* below a written notice of objection to his becoming such a controller of the institution'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 22

OBJECTION NOTICES

Amendment made: No. 11, in page 16, line 19, after 'objection', insert 'under this section'. — *[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Amendment proposed: No. 12, in page 16, line 23, leave out 'and' and insert 'or'.—*[Dr. McDonald.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 86, Noes 246.

Division No. 87] **[7.10 pm**

AYES

Ashdown, Paddy	Bidwell, Sydney
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*	Blair, Anthony
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Boyes, Roland
Beckett, Mrs Margaret	Bray, Dr Jeremy
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*	Buchan, Norman
Bermingham, Gerald	Campbell-Savours, Dale

Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Crowther, Stan
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Eadie, Alex
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foster, Derek
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Garrett, W. E.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ronald
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Marek, Dr John
Maxton, John
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Park, George
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Wrigglesworth, Ian

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buck, Sir Antony
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harvey, Robert
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Mariand, Paul
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Wiggin, Jerry

Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tony Durant.

Question accordingly negatived.

Amendments made: No. 14 in page 16, line 33, after 'objection', insert 'under this section'.

No. 16, in page 17 line 6, after 'objection', insert 'under this section'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 23

CONTRAVENTIONS: OFFENCES

Amendments made: No. 17A, in page 17, line 43, after 'objection', insert—

'to his becoming a controller of that description'.

No. 18, in page 17, line 45, after 'with', insert 'such'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 24

CONTRAVENTIONS: RESTRICTIONS ON AND SALE OF SHARES

Amendments made: No. 19 in page 18, line 17, after 'objection', insert—

'to his becoming a controller of that description'.

No. 20 in page 18, line 20, at end insert—

'; or (*c*) continues to be a shareholder controller of any description after being served under section *(Objection to existing shareholder controller)* above with a notice of objection to his being a controller of that description.'.

No. 21, in page 19, line 8, leave out 'has become' and insert 'is'.

No. 22, in page 19, line 10, after 'became', insert 'such'.

No. 23, in page 19, line 12, leave out 'has become' and insert 'became'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 25

RIGHTS OF APPEAL

Amendment made: No. 24, in page 19, line 43, after '22', insert—

'or *(Objection to existing shareholder controller)*.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 36

POWER TO OBTAIN INFORMATION AND REQUIRE PRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTS

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): I beg to move amendment No. 26, in page 29, line 44, at end insert 'or related company of either or both of these'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 27 in page 29, line 45, at end insert 'or its related company'.

No. 28, in line 46, at end insert 'or its related company'.

No. 29, in line 50, leave out '50' and insert '20'.

No. 30, in line 50, at end insert—

'*(e)* a related company of that institution'.

No. 33, in clause 38, page 31, line 24, at end insert 'or related company of other or both of these'.

No. 34, in line 25, at end insert 'or its related company'.

No. 35, in line 26, at end insert 'or its related company'.

No. 36, in line 30, leave out '50' and insert '20'.

No. 37, in line 30 at end insert—

'*(e)* a related company of that institution'.

No. 60, in clause 103, at end insert

'"related company" has the same meaning as in Schedule 4 to the Companies Act 1985;'.

Mr. Hanley: I am grateful for the fact that all the amendments in my name have been grouped together.

Clause 36 grants the Bank of England power to obtain information and to require the production of documents from authorised institutions. Subsection (6) extends that power to enable the Bank of England to investigate holding companies or subsidiaries of authorised institutions and subsidiaries of holding companies. Paragraph (d) refers to bodies corporate in which a shareholder controller can exercise more than 50 per cent. of the voting power at a general meeting.

I should like to declare an interest as the parliamentary adviser to the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales. The institute strongly believes that it would be a great help to the Bank of England to extend its right to obtain information so that it covers related companies as defined in schedule 4 to the Companies Act 1985. In clause 36 this would be of help to the Bank of England, and in clause 38 to the person whom the Bank of England appoints as being

"one or more competent persons to investigate and report to the Bank".

The matter was discussed in Committee by the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) and by my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson), and I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester for moving, on my behalf, other amendments that were helpful in Committee.

The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales feels that this clause would be of benefit because a related company, which is defined in the Companies Act 1985 as

"any body corporate . . . in which that company holds on a long-term basis a qualifying capital interest"—

that is, 20 per cent.—

"for the purpose of securing a contribution to that company's own activities by the exercise of any control or influence arising from that interest".

would then be brought into account. Therefore the bank or the investigators could take into account a body which has an element of control over the authorised institution itself.

It seems strange to me and to the Institute of Chartered Accountants that, in granting this power to the Bank of England to obtain information, and in clause 38 granting the power to a qualified person to investigate on their behalf, the power is limited effectively to subsidiaries for holding companies. If, for instance, the investigation that was taking place revealed many transactions with a related company that would warrant further investigation, that could not be undertaken. Furthermore, as the investigators have to report back to the bank on

"the nature, conduct or state of the institution's business or any particular aspect of it"

and on matters of control, those companies in which there is an element of control—and this has been defined in the Companies Act 1985 as 20 per cent.—should be investigated.

I ask my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to tell us why, in the Bill as drafted, the limit of 50 per cent. was put into clauses 36 and 38, and why a recognised organisation

[Mr. Hanley]

such as a related company has been excluded. As it has an element of control over the bank that is being investigated, surely it should be available to the investigators for their detailed attention.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I understand the thinking behind the amendment of my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley). The powers in clauses 36 and 38 already cast a fairly wide net. It is inevitable that powers of that sort will have some limit. At present the provisions follow the basic relationship of parent company and subsidiary. On occasion, it might be necessary for the supervisor to obtain information concerning other related companies. That is usually achieved through the authorised institution itself. In principle, I am reluctant to over-extend the statutory powers in these provisions. However, without commitment, I will reflect further on this question in the light of what my hon. Friend has said, because it is a complicated and rather technical area.

Mr. Hanley: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's statement that he will continue to look at the matter. I repeat that in clause 38(1)*(b)* the competent person called upon to investigate and report to the bank must report on "the ownership or control of the institution".

As I have already said, a related company is defined as one that has a control or influence arising from the size of the shareholding and the activities of members of the board. Therefore, although I read with interest in the report of the Standing Committee that my hon. Friend the Minister said:

"The amendment takes into account other bodies connected with him and extends the information-gathering power a bit too wide." — [*Official Report, Standing Committee E*, 22 January 1987; c. 221.]

I should have thought that "a bit too wide" would have been less than 20 per cent. However, between 20 and 50 per cent., as the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) mentioned, would not perhaps be taking it too wide, but would be taking it down to the minimum level of effective control. Therefore, having heard what my hon. Friend has said, I hope that he will consider the matter again before the Bill proceeds to another place. In the meantime, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendments made: No. 32, in page 30, line 27, at end insert—

'(9A) The Bank may exercise the powers conferred by subsections (1) and (3) above in relation to any person who is a significant shareholder of an authorised institution within the meaning of section *(Notification of acquisition of significant shareholding)* above if the Bank considers that the exercise of those powers is desirable in the interests of the depositors or potential depositors of that institution.'.— *[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 38

INVESTIGATIONS ON BEHALF OF THE BANK

Amendment made: No. 38, in page 32, line 6, at end insert

'and anyone who is a significant shareholder in relation to that body within the meaning of section *(Notification of acquisition of significant shareholding)* above'.— *[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 41

OBSTRUCTION OF INVESTIGATIONS

Mr. Ian Stewart: I beg to move amendment No. 39, in page 34, line 46, leave out subsection (2).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take Government amendment No. 40.

Mr. Stewart: These amendments make an alteration to the maximum penalties under clause 41 to bring them into line with comparable penalties involving inherent dishonesty in other legislation.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 40, in page 34, line 50, leave out from 'section' to 'shall' in line 51.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 43

NOTIFICATION IN RESPECT OF AUDITORS

Mr. Ian Stewart: I beg to move amendment No. 41, in page 35, leave out lines 21 and 22 and insert—

'*(b)* gives notice to its shareholders of an ordinary resolution replacing an auditor at the expiration of his term of office with a different auditor;

or if a person ceases to be an auditor of the institution otherwise than in consequence of such a resolution.'.

This is a technical drafting improvement of an amendment moved by the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) in Committee on 22 January, which I accepted on advice from parliamentary counsel. On advice from parliamentary counsel, it is felt better that paragraph *(b)* should be replaced by this amendment as it is not necessary for a company to give notice that an auditor will not be reappointed; rather, the company simply gives notice of the appointment of a different auditor.

The amendment clarifies the drafting and ensures that the intention of the hon. Lady's amendment is fully met.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 44

COMMUNICATION BY AUDITOR ETC. WITH THE BANK

Dr. McDonald: I beg to move amendment No. 42, in page 36, line 29, leave out

'annulment in pursuance of a resolution of'

and insert 'affirmative resolution in'.

The clause deals with communications by the auditor with the bank and in subsection (6) makes it clear that the Government will lay down regulations to make various provisions for the kind of information that auditors may be expected to give to the Bank of England. My purpose in tabling the amendment is to provide for these regulations to be scrutinised by both Houses and to allow for them to be voted down by either House of Parliament. The reason for this is that this issue needs examination. As the Minister knows, I have expressed doubts about the change in the role of auditors and the possible conflict of interest that they may have in reporting on the institution for which they act as auditors and in also being auditors and possibly fulfilling other functions in relation to that institution. Any regulations should be examined in that way by both Houses.

Mr. Cash: The amendment is very interesting, because it would change the procedure that is operated with regard

to the class of accountant referred to in subsection (5). The auditors are persons who would be qualified and referred to under section 389 of the Companies Act 1985, and who used to be recognised by the Department of Trade and Industry under sections 161(1)*(a)* and 161(1)*(b)* of the Companies Act 1948. Therein lies a tale. The classification of auditors under the 1948 Act raises the whole issue of the regulation of accountants in respect of which the eighth directive has been generated by the Commission and is open now for further consideration and consultation.

I am bound to say that the definition of an auditor is really left to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and there is no way in which — I argued this on the Financial Services Act 1986 and in relation to other matters—one can say with any degree of assurance that merely because a person is an auditor who has prescribed functions with regard to the audit of companies, it necessarily follows that he would be competent to have anything to say with any certainty about, for example, financial services. Those who are interested in following what I am saying — I am attempting to truncate the argument to some extent — may wish to refer to the proceedings in Committee on the Financial Services Bill. An important issue lies at the root of this matter.

7.30 pm

I hesitate to mention this, but my great-grandfather, William Cash, was a founding member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants and his son was president. Therefore, what I am about to say is with no disrespect to the institute, but I say it with feeling. I should declare an interest, because for many years I have been the legal adviser to the Society of Company and Commercial Accountants. The members of this society are accountants who would fall within the class of clause 44 (5). They have "satisfactory rules made or guidance issued by a professional body".

Therefore, I would be deeply concerned if there was any circumstance in which the members of a body which was not chartered—in other words not regarded as being on the inside track — would in any way be discriminated against simply because they were accountants from what some might incorrectly regard as the wrong stable.

The whole question of audit and auditors, of who is competent to be an accountant and who should give advice on tax questions, is very important to those who are giving the advice and to their clients. The Society of Company and Commercial Accountants has, I understand, through its membership, about 100,000 clients. The members of the society are small businesses and they advise small business men. There is nothing of which I am aware that has ever been raised to demonstrate to me that the society has anything but the highest standing, although it is not, at this juncture, a chartered body. Therefore, it is important that this provision is in the Bill and I congratulate the Government on the fact that it does appear in it; in other words, that it is not a provision confined to auditors, but applies to accountants. However, I have to issue the caveat that if any attempt were made to discriminate against the members of the Society of Company and Commercial Accountants in favour of chartered bodies in the way in which it has been done in the past with regard to the Companies Act legislation, it would be necessary to take appropriate action in relation to the regulations.

The question whether the regulations may be hybrid could arise out of whether they were subject to the affirmative procedure or annulment. It so happens that this provision is currently cast on the basis of its being subject to the annulment procedure. I believe that there is a strong case—I would be interested to hear what my hon. Friend has to say about this—for saying that they should be subject to the affirmative procedure so that, if the issue of discrimination went to the House of Lords, which is where such questions are sorted out, there would be no doubt that the society would be in a position to petition on the ground that it was being discriminated against. Having been involved in the defence of the ship repairers in the Aircraft and Shipbuilding Industries Act 1977—I was the adviser on that case and appeared in the House of Lords in a professional capacity before I was elected to the House—I am well aware that there can be circumstances in which people may need to have a defence made available to them and the procedure that follows as a result of this being made subject to the affirmative procedure.

I ask my hon. Friend to consider, not only because justice should be seen to be done, but in anticipation of the Society of Company and Commercial Accountants being in a position to have available to it the procedures I have described, that this matter should be made subject to the affirmative procedure. I would be surprised if he were to say that he was not prepared to do that.

The credentials of the society are well known, and I have explained them. Discussions are taking place with Sir Kenneth Berrill over the position under the Securities and Investments Board and the documentation that he has just submitted to the Department of Trade and Industry. Indeed, I can inform my hon. Friend that the matter is also being raised with the Office of Fair Trading. It would be wrong for a society, which is perhaps small in number but none the less important in relation to its clients and its standing, to be given rough justice and unfair treatment simply because it does not fit neatly and conveniently into the packages provided through the auspices of the chartered bodies.

I know a little about this subject because I have been involved in advising on matters relating to audit and accountancy for nearly 15 years. I hope that my hon. Friend will listen carefully to what I have said and be good enough, in all justice, to enable the Society of Company and Commercial Accountants to have an assurance that there will be no discrimination against it or, alternatively, to have available to it the affirmative procedure so that it can petition in the House of Lords if it were to be a hybrid instrument.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) has suggested that regulations under clause 44(6) should be subject to affirmative resolution instead of the negative resolution procedure. My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) has given rather different grounds for suggesting the same thing. The regulations under clause 44(6) are reserve powers, only to be introduced if the conditions specified in clause 44(5) are not fulfilled; that is if satisfactory rules or guidance are not issued by the professional bodies concerned. However, the more I think about it, the more I am persuaded that there is merit in making such a change. Therefore, I am inclined to accept what the hon. Lady proposed in principle. Unfortunately, when the wording of the amendment was checked it was found to be technically deficient. Therefore, I am not able to accept it in substance as opposed to in

[Mr. Ian Stewart]

principle. However, in a fit of energy, I asked if it would be possible for parliamentary counsel to produce an amendment which would be satisfactory. I do not know whether the Chair would be willing to accept a manuscript amendment in substitution for amendment No. 42, which achieves precisely the effect wished for by hon. Members. If you were willing to accept that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have a copy in my hand and it might be for the convenience of the House if we were able to consider it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I cannot accept the amendment because Mr. Speaker accepts amendments. It has been submitted too late. I am sorry about that.

Mr. Stewart: I regret that my efforts to assist the House have not been successful, even on those practical grounds which I understand. I had decided that this change should be made and therefore the drafting of the amendment would have to occur at some stage. I will ensure that it is tabled in another place.

Dr. McDonald: In view of what the Minister said—and I thank him for his acceptance of the principle of this amendment — I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 57

PROTECTED DEPOSITS

Mr. Ian Stewart: I beg to move Government amendment No. 43, in page 44, line 17, leave out '£10,000' and insert '£20,000'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following:

Amendment No. 44, in page 44, line 17, leave out '£10,000' and insert

'in full of £30,000, and then 90 per cent. of the balance between £30,000 and £50,000'.

Government amendment No. 45.

Mr. Stewart: These amendments increase the amounts of a protected deposit under banking legislation from £10,000 to £20,000. The figure for deposit protection under the Banking Act should be reviewed from time to time. Although such a change can be made at any time by statutory instrument, I am persuaded by the debate in Committee and by consideration of the case that the passage of a new Banking Bill offers a convenient occasion to do it. The change will give increased protection to depositors with banks. I hope that in that sense it will be welcomed by the House. I am also proposing to increase the limits on protective deposits with building societies to £20,000 at the same time.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 45, in page 44, line 29, leave out '£10,000' and insert '£20,000'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 64

RESTRICTION ON USE OF BANKING NAMES

7.45 pm

Mr. Ian Stewart: I beg to move amendment No. 46, in page 51, line 13, after 'denominated', insert 'wholly or partly'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 47 and 65.

Mr. Stewart: Clause 64(2) refers to issued share capital which is denominated otherwise than in sterling. Clause 64(5) and paragraph 5 of schedule 3 contain similar references to capital being denominated otherwise than in sterling. As drafted, the Bill does not take account of the possibility that capital might be denominated partly or wholly in a foreign currency. These amendments are designed to remedy that.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 47, in page 51, line 43, after 'denominated', insert 'wholly or partly'. — *[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 65

EXEMPTIONS FROM S. 64

Mr. Ian Stewart: I beg to move Government amendment No. 48, in page 52, line 4, leave out subsection (1).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendment No. 49.

Mr. Stewart: These two amendments deal with a point which my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) raised in Committee. I then undertook, in consideration of his not pressing his amendments at that stage, to bring forward amendments to the same end, and that is what I am now doing. They are technical amendments which extend to subsidiaries and parents or authorised institutions incorporated overseas the right to use the name of their parent or subsidiary for the purpose of indicating the connection between the two companies. It is a minor but important improvement, and I am grateful to my hon. Friend for having brought it to light.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 49, in page 52, line 27, at end insert—

'(4A) Section 64 does not prohibit the use by—

(a) an authorised institution which is a wholly-owned subsidiary of an authorised institution to which that section or subsection (4) above applies; or

(b) a company which has a wholly-owned subsidiary which is an authorised institution to which that section or subsection applies,

of a name which includes the name of the authorised institution to which that section or subsection applies for the purpose of indicating the connection between the two companies.'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 66

RESTRICTION ON USE OF BANKING DESCRIPTIONS

Mr. Ian Stewart: I beg to move Government amendment No. 50, in page 54, line 9, at end insert—

'*(dd)* the International Finance Corporation'.

Subsection (6) already exempts various international organisations of which the United Kingdom is a member, including the World Bank, from the prohibition on the use of banking descriptions. The International Finance Corporation is an affiliate of the World Bank, and the United Kingdom is a member of it, so it should be included in the exemption.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 76

DUTY TO PROVIDE INFORMATION AND DOCUMENTS

Mr. Ian Stewart: I beg to move Government amendment No. 51, in page 59, line 32, at end insert—

'(2A) An overseas institution to which a notice is given under subsection (1) or (2) above shall comply with the notice—

(a) in the case of an institution which has established a representative office in the United Kingdom, before the end of such period as is specified in the notice: and

(b) in the case of an institution which has been given notice under section 72(1) above of its intention to establish such an office, before it establishes the office.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 52 to 54.

Mr. Stewart: These amendments remedy a technical defect in Clause 76 which at present does not make it clear when information requested from institutions with representative offices must be provided.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 52, in page 59, line 37, leave out 'also' and insert

'no later than the time by which it must have complied with that requirement'.

No. 53, in page 59, line 43, after 'shall' insert

'no later than the time by which it must have complied with that requirement'.

No. 54, in page 59, line 46, at end insert

'no later than one month after the amendment or withdrawal'. *—[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 89

FALSE AND MISLEADING INFORMATION

Mr. Ian Stewart: I beg to move Government amendment No. 55, in page 66, line 49, at end insert 'or any other person'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendment No. 56.

Mr. Stewart: As it stands, subsection (1) is defective because it does not include, within the offence of providing materially false or misleading information to the Bank of England, cases where that information is provided indirectly, but when the provider knows the information would be used by the bank for supervisory purposes. An example would be a subsidiary providing false information to a parent bank for the purposes of the parent's consolidated reporting to the bank.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 56, in page 67, line 4, leave out 'that person' and insert 'the person providing the information'.*—[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 91

NON-EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

Mr. Nelson: I beg to move amendment No. 57, in page 68, line 36, leave out clause 91.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 58, in page 69, line 5, leave out clause 92.

No. 61, in schedule 3, page 80, line 31, at end insert—

'*Composition of board of directors*

2A. In the case of an institution incorporated in the United Kingdom the directors include such number (if any) of directors without executive responsibility for the management of its business as the Bank considers appropriate having regard to the circumstances of the institution and the nature and scale of its operations'.

No. 62, in page 81, line 19, leave out second 'and' insert '(7A)'.

No. 62A, in page 81, line 22, at end insert

'and in determining whether those systems are adequate the Bank shall have regard to the functions and responsibilities in respect of them of any such directors of the institution as are mentioned in paragraph 2A above.'.

No. 63, in page 81, line 22, at end insert

'and in determining whether those systems are adequate the Bank shall have regard to the functions and responsibilities in respect of them of any such directors of the institution as are mentioned in paragraph 2A above and the formal working relationships established between such directors and the auditor or auditors'.

Mr. Nelson: Amendments Nos. 57 and 58 seek to take out of the Bill those amendments which were passed during the Committee stage which provided for the statutory requirement that there should be a minimum number of non-executive directors on the board of the United Kingdom registered banks and that they should form themselves into a majority composition of audit committees with specific remits of considering the financial control structures, the scope of remuneration of auditors, and the compliance of the bank concerned with the probative provisions of this legislation.

In Committee the Economic Secretary expressed some support for the sentiments behind the representations that were made at that time and, indeed, for much of the intention of those amendments. At the same time the Bank of England itself issued a circular to banks, seeking their comments on its proposals for audit committees, involving inevitably a substantial representation of non-executive directors. Ernst and Whinney, in its interesting guide to directors entitled "Bank Audit Committees—A Guide for Directors", said:

"A recent study of quoted companies by the Bank of England has shown that on average one in three directors is now non-executive and of 60 per cent. of the companies examined, the board included three or more non-executive directors."

It was always recognised that the best practices of many joint stock banks would not be affected by the amendments. We were seeking to ensure that, in the medium-sized and smaller banks, and in some more questionable banking concerns, there was a genuine independent and non-executive element which would act as a check not just on the credit analysis and policies and on the audit and accounting requirements but also on the extent to which the bank complied with the probing provisions of the legislation.

With the background of the Johnson Matthey bank collapse, it is fair to point out that if that representation had been there, and if the right questions had been asked at the time, we might not have had the problems which subsequently arose. As we are in the business of depositor protection with this legislation, I believe — I am delighted that the Committee concurred at the time— that there was and remains a strong case to be made for non-executive directors in the banking sector, apart from the arguments that could be strongly adduced for their election elsewhere in the commercial sector.

[Mr. Nelson]

I should like to pay tribute to my hon. Friends the Members for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) and for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) for their support in drafting the amendments and also for their resolute support in Committees. Standing Committee can play a useful role on non-party matters, admittedly at the margins, in tightening up the provisions of the legislation and enhancing them as we have done.

My hon. Friend the Economic Secretary was good enough to point out in Committee that, while he was unable to accept the amendments as tabled, he would try to import the concept of non-executive directors and seek on Report to go beyond that in regard to their responsibilities. He pointed out—and I accepted then and subsequently—that clauses 91 and 92 would be an improper and impracticable burden to place on the banking sector, and particularly on small banks where it might not be appropriate to have such a large minimum number of non-executive directors. He referred to subsidiary banks where the holding banks might already have non-executive director representation.

For some small, authorised institutions, which, although banks, are largely inactive, and are not trading substantially, it would be a costly and not very effective means of securing a check on the audit activities and the directorial responsibilities of the boards. For that reason I discussed with my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary ways in which his supportive sentiments and the intention of the Committee might be satisfied. The result of those discussions is the amendments which have been tabled.

The amendments seek to provide a presumption that there shall be non-executive directors on the boards of banks but that the Governor of the Bank of England shall retain the discretion to waive that requirement, or vary it, according to the circumstances of individual banks. Amendment No. 61 will meet that need and add to schedule 3 a specific provision on the composition of boards of directors which can mean nothing other than that they shall have non-executive directors. I think I am right in saying that it will for the first time import into company law the concept of non-executive directors. While it is not a departure from the unitary board system and the individual and collective responsibility of all directors for the operations of the company, it will for the first time recognise and identify in law non-executive directors in the banking system. To that extent, it will be a useful paving amendment which may be built on in other parts of company law.

Many people may reasonably say that it is not sufficient to have non-executive directors and to let them organically determine in each bank or collectively what function they will have. Hon. Members will be aware that the character and the role of non-executive directors can vary enormously between companies or between banks. There is little one can do about non-executive directorships being appointments of patronage of the chairman, the chief executive or a controlling shareholder. Inevitably there will be an element of jobs for the boys in the appointment of non-executive directors of banks, or former employees may stay on in a sinecure capacity. However, they will have a non-executive function in that they will not be involved in the day-to-day business of the company.

An inevitable problem is that non-executive directors will go along to a large extent with the views, policies and practices of the rest of the executive board. On the other hand, hon. Members will be aware of many companies, particularly public companies, where the non-executive directors guard their independence and their objectivity zealously and where the executive members of the board and members of the company have a keen interest in maintaining the objectivity, independence and impartiality of the non-executive directors. Executive directors benefit from the non-executive directors asking the right questions at the right time, and indeed asking difficult questions at a difficult time. In that way one can perhaps stave off problems that might otherwise arise. Most companies which use the practice have done so to their advantage.

To try to answer the question as to how the role of non-executive directors of banks should evolve, amendment No. 62A was tabled. It attaches to a later part of schedule 3 additional words which will ensure that non-executive directors have specific responsibility for the accounting activities of boards of directors. While they may involve different means of fulfilling that responsibility in each bank, the significant point about amendment No. 62A is that it refers back to paragraph 2A in amendment No. 61, which directly links the responsibilities of the non-executive directors for audit and accounting to their identity and to the presumption that they must be on the boards referred to in paragraph 2A of schedule 3.

That linkage is a very important adjunct to the initial amendment. The result is that amendment No. 62A can mean nothing other than that the non-executive directors are expected to form themselves into an audit committee. I understand that it is difficult and impractical to import audit committees into law at the moment. My hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams), who has been such a champion of this cause over many years, and I have sought to do this—he through his Bills and I in the amendments moved in Committee. To the extent that it is practical in law, I think it is provided in amendment 62A.

8 pm

However, there is a problem with this. Much will depend on how the banks, and the Bank of England in particular, respond to the rather wide phraseology of the two amendments, particularly No. 62A. The amendments would have the effect of taking out the advances already made in Committee and substituting these changes, but first I want to be satisfied—and I sincerely hope that my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary may be able to satisfy me—that the Bank of England itself accepts an obligation, apart from the circular which it has already issued, to follow through on the content of these amendments and to insist that where there are non-executive directors, and in many boards where there are not, there will be audit committees and they will have defined minimum remits to fulfil and a certain degree of accountability, as well as some penalty that they can impose if what they recommend is not followed. Some discussions may already have taken place, and I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to give us as full an assurance as possible concerning the intentions of the Bank of England in this respect.

If that can be done, and if I and other hon. Members can be satisfied that the Bank of England really intends to use the provisions to ensure a much wider representation of non-executive directors and that they do a job of work

within the banks, the House and our Committee will have achieved something and it will be an important landmark and an important marker for the future.

Mr. Dykes: I wish to be as brief as possible in following my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) with a few remarks about this cluster of amendments in his name and the names of my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) and myself. I fully endorse what my hon. Friend said. He was remarkably skilful in keeping his speech slightly shorter than it might have been, bearing in mind that he is the principal sponsor, and quite a number of other points could have been made. I understand the reason for that and, perhaps rather agreeably for Thursday night, we have reached these important amendments somewhat earlier than might have been expected when the Committee stage began.

What has resulted from the discussions in Committee, from subsequent discussions that may have taken place informally and from the amendments on the Amendment Paper, represents what we as sponsors would suggest is the best balance of all the complex considerations in a very important piece of reform. Without getting too carried away, and with no disrespect to the Government's other changes in the Bill, which have commanded widespread support, we suggest that this is perhaps the most important part of the Bill in terms of additions to it.

The history of the Bill, as was explained on Second Reading and in Committee, stemmed from a series of unfortunate accidents in respect of one institution. It was therefore very much a repitition of the 1979 Act, but with the abolition of the two entities, which were banks or quasi-banks, making them into one in terms of any supervision or surveillance that was being constructed or repeated from the previous statute. This and the other three or four significant changes made by the Government, are the important changes to the Bill.

In putting forward these amendments tonight, we very much hope that the Government and my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to accept what has been suggested by way of a compromise. As my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester said, we do this without in any way yielding or ceding the basic elements of the strategy that was being constructed all the way through my hon. Friend's speech in Committee when the then new clauses 10 and 11 were being promoted by him and others, including myself, because of the current circumstances and difficulties and the need to increase the supervision of institutions where the public's wealth, welfare, financial interest and, indeed, moral interest to some extent, are involved.

This is also carrying out an essential reform, whatever way it may work out in detail, depending on the decision of the House tonight and the Government's reaction to these amendments, which represent something of a compromise on our part. It is a significant reform, going back to what my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams) has been trying to do over many years, earning the plaudits and the tributes of Members of the House and people outside in so doing, in respect of companies in general. For the moment I think that we can with justification concede that there is a significant difference with financial institutions and banks and other corporate entities may be left for another day, depending on the experience of this legislation if these amendments are accepted by the House.

During the debates on these issues in Committee I was struck by the fact that my hon. Friend the Minister was in difficulties. We recognised that and could understand and sympathise with him, but unless I misrepresent him —it is always easy to do this when one is guessing—he was nevertheless anxious to try to help if possible. However, we have to admit to ourselves as well as to the House that the dropping of what are now clauses 91 and 92, as amended in Committee in favour of what we now deem to be something that might have a better chance of getting through the House, is a major step for us as sponsors of the amendments.

We hope that this will be an inducement to the House to look favourably upon our compromise suggestions and also that it will generate the support of the Government. We are attempting to meet my hon. Friend the Minister's objections and worries in Committee that we were perhaps in phraseological terms trying to overdo things and construct too tight a legislative provision, but none the less to achieve our objectives in this legislative attempt to get non-executive directors inserted for the first time into bank boards.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chichester referred to the lapsing of the specific reference to audit committees. I agree strongly with him that our substitute suggestion, amendment No. 62A, is a helpful way of our putting this forward to the House and trying to meet the Minister's worry that, textually, we were overdoing it, exaggerating and perhaps creating difficulties. Perhaps we can all agree —I say this tentatively—that the essential requirements and objectives of the original amendments in Committee can be met without too tight a legislative and textual end result in the actual words.

This would fit in very well with what was said in the Bank of England's consultative paper, which appeared perhaps somewhat miraculously, and certainly very interestingly in terms of its timing, when the Committee stage was drawing to an end. In its document the Bank of England endorsed in strong terms the idea, referred to indirectly and perhaps somewhat vaguely, for obvious reasons, in amendment No. 62A, but none the less with great emphasis, that the audit committee should have specific and clear duties, and that even if these duties were not put into legislation at this stage — although by implication the Bank of England's presenting letter had legislation in mind as a background possibility — depending on how these were to function first in a non-legislative form, perhaps later they would come into the legislation. I see that as the implication of this whole exercise even if, for obvious reasons, certain people, including the Bank of England, will wish to deny that now.

I refer very quickly to page 10 of the consultative paper and the references to what the members of audit committees should do. I hope that, under our suggested compromise amendments, my hon. Friend the Minister can react to these ideas yet again to reassure us that that is the whole direction of the Government's thinking and policy in line with the Bank of England's ideas and suggestions, even if there is no specific legislative reference now, and I say that with great emphasis.

Page 10, paragraph 5.5, of the document relates to the functions of committee members. With heavy emphasis, the Bank of England document states:

"The directors appointed to the audit committee should be able and willing to accept the related responsibilitis and should have relevant experience and skills. All members of the

[Mr. Dykes]

committee, including its chairman, should be independent of financial management and of any responsibility for the accounting, internal control and auditing functions in the bank and be free from any relationship that could interfere, or be seen to interfere, with their objectivity and the exercise of their individual independent judgment."

I shall not continue to quote from paragraphs 5.6 and 5.7 because I do not want to weary the House. However, if hon. Members read those paragraphs they will acquaint themselves with the Bank of England's suggestions. The Bank of England's suggestions felicitously fit in with our "compromise" amendments and the suggestions to which my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester referred, which are revealed in the booklet circulated by Ernst and Whinney. Unless I have overlooked something in my mail recently, I believe that that booklet is the only publication that hon. Members have received from any firm of accountants. I hope that I shall not be regarded as vulgarly promoting one particular firm. I do not know that firm personally, although I believe that it is famous.

My hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) is familiar with, and I believe is a distinguished member of, the accounting profession. I believe that he has declared his interest in this matter, although not of course meaning in Ernst and Whinney. My hon. Friend will agree that Ernst and Whinney's document "Bank Audit Committees — A Guide for Directors" implies that there is ground for legislation on these matters. Although the debate is still raging, Ernst and Whinney sets out in helpful, precise, elaborate detail those functions which the firm believes audit committees and their members should perform. I refer to the helpful suggestions made in the Ernst and Whinney document on pages 11, 12 and 13. On pages 14 and 15 Ernst and Whinney describe the comprehensive management functions that should be found in any corporate organisation, including banks. Within that list of functions, reference is made to audit committee functions.

Progress is thus being made. The suggestions made by the Bank of England and Ernst and Whinney are encapsulated in the amendments. However, as my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester said, giving up the purposes of clauses 91 and 92 is a big step. I do not know whether we will have the agreement of the House in this matter, and the amendments do not have the effect of the amendments that were originally proposed in Committee. It is incumbent upon the Government — I shall be interested to learn the reaction of the Opposition if they choose to intervene in the debate—to tell us their views on these matters and the way in which they can accommodate the amendments.

I want to make a point that relates to the atmospherics that were evident in Committee. I want also to echo what was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester and pay tribute to the way in which my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary has tried to be helpful. This has been appreciated. None the less, in Committee we were struck by the paradoxes that we have to face. On occasions when there is no party political implication and we are debating legislation that does not raise a party battle, but arises from a consensus in that an emergency has produced a need to update legislation, to tighten supervision and to abolish the distinction between licensed deposit takers and banks—without the conventional political dog fighting that sometimes prevails — there is none the less a reluctance by civil servants to accept changes in legislation. Civil servants, rather than Ministers, are reluctant to make changes that will reinforce and improve legislation. I believe that these changes would not cause any intrinsic difficulty for the Government, and that point transcends the political nature of the party in government.

8.15 pm

I do not believe that other European legislatures have the built-in automatic difficulties that face any Government here. I hope that I shall not annoy any of my colleagues by making that point. However, it is a pity that a macho stance must be adopted in Committee. I trust that I shall not annoy my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary when I say that there is an idea that if a concession is made, that will produce a tearful reaction. I do not mean that literally, but metaphorically. That reaction is often unnecessary. If a general feeling wells up in Committee or on Second Reading that an addition, a reinforcement, a piece of legislative material or an amendment can be brought in significantly to improve a measure, or a marginal part of a measure, there is an over-reaction.

Why is that so? We could have a great deal of philosophical discussion about that, but not tonight. However, it is a pity that that repetitive over-reaction element in legislative debate occurs in Committee. That is less important as a consideration and as a point of hesitation about the meaningfulness of our debates on the Floor of the House. It is much more obvious then that party political dog fights will occur. However, that is not necessary in Committee, particularly when we are discussing banking measures.

I hope that I have not been too long-winded. I have made that point deliberately at some length and have probably risked the wrath of hon. Members in so doing. I hold this institution very dear and believe that by and large it does a good job in promoting legislation, but all too often in debate there is a reluctance to change legislation. Perhaps, to make ourselves feel better, we can point the finger for that reluctance at the civil servants rather than at Ministers.

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) raised an interesting point at the end of his speech. If time permitted I would like to pursue that, but as it does not I will merely say that, broadly speaking, I concur with him.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) and to my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East. They tabled amendments on this matter in Committee and voted for them. That action distinguished them from other hon. Members. My hon. Friend the Member for Chichester has led with great skill and determination the campaign to make the changes in the Bill. I am glad that since the Committee stage was concluded he has been able to negotiate an acceptable compromise, although naturally I am disappointed that we do not have in the Bill the specific clauses that were agreed in Committee. Nevertheless, we have taken a considerable step forward.

It is especially appropriate at a time when self-regulation is under a certain amount of criticism that we should be strengthening and making specific reference to the role on non-executive directors. Only recently in the banking world self-regulation has shown that it can operate successfully and swiftly. In the aftermath of the Guinness affair, top management has been replaced in

what was considered to be one of the most powerful merchant banks. That occurred with a swiftness which could not have been achieved under a different system. Perhaps that will lead in due course to the consideration of non-executive directors in stockbroking firms. Again, recent events may suggest that that would be a desirable innovation.

It is very important, in consideration of the amendments, that we should not overstate the implications of the amendments or the Bill. Nothing that we can do through legislation will eliminate incompetence, imprudence and fraud. Those are facts of life. They are regrettable, but they exist. However, we can establish a good supervisory system and regulatory framework that will detect those abuses quickly.

The innovative nature of today's financial markets is such that new instruments will always be devised, the use of which will test the technical skill of the regulators by seeing that banking in particular is conducted in a proper fashion. We only have to note the enormous growth in the swaps market and the acknowledgment in the document produced jointly by the Bank of England and the federal authorities in America that they are so far unable to produce an acceptable definition of the weight to attach to certain instruments, including some of the new swaps, to see the truth of that. That is an example of a difficulty that will always exist about trying to regulate the banking business.

It comes back to the probity, integrity and independence of the board of directors. The provisions in this group of amendments greatly strengthen both the independence and, I hope, the probity of those directors. The role of good non-executive directors will be crucial in ensuring that banks will conduct their business properly. The establishment of audit committees would also make a substantial contribution.

When the matter of non-executive directors was raised in Standing Committee, the Minister said that there might be some problem about definition because we were introducing into law a concept that was not previously recognised. To illustrate that, I shall cite a conversation that I had with the chairman of one of the big four clearing banks. It was a private conversation, so I shall not identify him. I asked him how he saw his role and he said he regarded it as being that of a full-time non-executive. On initial reflection, that concept presents a paradox. He went on to explain that he believed his job was to represent the outside interests of the bank — the interests of the depositors and the shareholders as opposed, perhaps, to the interests of the management.

When someone in a prominent position in banking describes himself as a full-time non-executive, one is forcefully reminded of the problems of definition, because I rather suspect that those of us who have put our name to these amendments look upon a non-executive as someone who, by definition, is not full-time. Of course he may be paid for his non-executive duties and it is proper that he should be, but his full-time work or most of his work is done away from the institution in which he is a non-executive director. I should be interested to hear whether my hon. Friend the Minister has had any more thoughts about a definition in the period since the Committee concluded its debates.

I echo a good point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson). I hope that, since we have had to give up a specific reference to a minimum number of non-executive directors being appointed and a specific reference to audit committees—because neither of those will now appear in the Bill—the Minister and the Bank of England will make clear publicly that they regard the inclusion of such directors as a matter of the greatest importance for informing their judgment about the suitability of an authorised or potentially authorised institution to be a bank. A public statement of the bank's policy and of the Government's policy about those points would be of immense value. I hope that the statement will refer not only to the matter about the number of non-executive directors, but that it will also make specific reference to the role that they could play in relation to audit committees.

Mr. Cash: I congratulate my hon. Friends on their speeches. Those congratulations are more than justified, given the circumstances in which the amendments were moved in Committee and the way in which my hon. Friends have persevered to achieve as much as they have. As my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) said, they have not got everything that they wanted. However, that in no way diminishes the importance of the step that has been taken.

I have and will continue to have some reservations about creating what could turn out to be a rather top-heavy audit provision in relation to either banking legislation or companies legislation generally, of which banking is a part. The boards of directors of banks are governed by the Companies Acts every bit as much as directors in other companies. In the field of the non-executive director, our minds are drawn to the question of independence. That goes back to the matter that we discussed during the passage of the Financial Services Act 1986, the importance of which has become a feature of discussions in Parliament over the last few years.

Against the background of the scandals and the misfeasance that have occurred recently, some of which were serious and some of which must not be exaggerated, the notion of independence, of a watchdog, a non-executive director, is increasingly becoming a matter of policy. However, at the moment it has not been explained as such by or on behalf of the Government. The notion is becoming increasingly accepted and those of us who serve on committees and who have maintained an active interest in financial services, in banking and in the troubles that have occurred in the field of company law, are increasingly driven to the view that the independent watchdog, the non-executive director, has the function of maintaining a fiduciary relationship with the members of the company. That role is of paramount importance.

I think that section 235 of the Companies Act 1985 has provisions which require that employees should be fully informed and involved in the policy making of a company. In banks and in other companies there are also people who are called shareholders, and they have a vast interest in what is done in their name. The object of the audit committee proposal and the idea of a non-executive director are to enhance the role of fiduciary relationship which, I regret to say—I know that hon. Members will agree—has been under a considerable strain recently in certain quarters.

It seems to me that we need not merely a total and thorough investigation of the financial aspects of banking or of companies. That is well exemplified in this interesting paper produced by Ernst and Whinney and entitled "Bank

[Mr. Cash]

Audit Committees—A Guide for Directors". We also need an opportunity to look at the role of the board and the manner in which it exercises its fiduciary relationship. In addition to the provisions in the Bill, I should like to see provisions that are more explicitly defined and aimed at directing shareholders.

There should be a shareholders' committee to complement the role of the non-executive director. That would enable a balance to be struck between institutional investors and the small shareholder. It is a fact of present day life that in wider share ownership, the explosion in the ownership of shares throughout Britain—whether in banking or in other fields such as British Telecom or British Gas—a gap has emerged which needs to be filled. It could be filled by a shareholders' committee along the lines suggested in my Protection of Shareholders Bill and some redefinition of the role of auditor, accountant, solicitor and company secretary. That is a perfectly reasonable proposition and would provide a means whereby non-executive directors and the audit committee, which I hope will eventually come into being, will be supplemented so that they know that when things go wrong they will have an opportunity, either individually or jointly, to turn to that committee. After all, the committee would represent the members of a company, whether they be institutional investors or small shareholders, and they have an absolute right to know what is going on. If there are breaches of criminal law, fiduciary relationship, companies or banking legislation, they have the right to be informed about what is happening. I make no apology if that is regarded as a novel idea; it complements the arrangements that my hon. Friends have introduced, and on which I congratulate them. They have taken a great step forward.

Mr. Dykes: I am sorry to come back to a point that puzzled me earlier. I am not clear why my hon. Friend was so adamantly against the new clauses that we introduced in Committee and which, I am glad to see, he is now supporting. Perhaps he could explain that to the House.

8.30 pm

Mr. Cash: Yes, I can do so easily, although adamant is not the word that I would have used. I was not persuaded at that time of their value. However, having heard the brilliant speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes), who could fail to be converted by the logic and emotion with which he addressed the House for about 20 minutes? Therefore, in the light of what has been discussed, I hope that what has been put forward is accepted. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams) on his determined campaign since 1969, and thank him for all that he has done in this area.

Mr. Hanley: I, too, congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams) on his almost unique campaign. It is 17 years since he first introduced his Bill on audit committees. He has introduced such a Bill every year in this House, and when he was in the European Parliament he took every opportunity to try to introduce it there also. Few people have such determination for a cause that seems unattractive at first sight, at least on voting intentions, but which is nevertheless right. I have spoken to his Bills and been a supporter of them since I came to Parliament. Therefore, when my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) sought to table new clauses 10 and 11 for the Committee stage, I leapt up to support them. It was with great frustration that I found that I was not a member of the Committee. However, I added my name to those amendments because I believed that they were the right way forward.

I was surprised when, through the courage of those who stuck to their convictions, those clauses became part of the Bill on Report. I was not only surprised but, in a way, I was awed because, for the first time in a substantive statute, my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington had seen the birth of the child that he had gestated 17 long years ago. I believe that that is longer than whales, elephants, human beings or any known living creature.

However, there was no doubt that my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary had to take advice and to suggest, perhaps in a mood of compromise, clauses that would go some way towards meeting the national mood of greater control over corporate institutions, while seeking a successful and practical method of achieving that.

I have already declared my interest as the parliamentary adviser to the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales. On behalf of all accountants, I thank the many members of the Committee who have paid the most marvellous advertising service to the firm of Ernst and Whinney for its excellent booklet. If any firm has been rewarded for its skill and effort in producing such information, Ernst and Whinney has tonight.

I should mention my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash). I may be wrong in this detail, but I believe that his grandfather was a founding father of the Institute of Chartered Accountants, and must have known the founding father of Ernst and Whinney. One can imagine those two august gentleman, in Victorian days, meeting at the origins of the institute. Little would they have realised that the grandson of one——

Mr. Cash: The great grandson.

Mr. Hanley: Little would they have realised that the great grandson of one would advertise the eventual product of the other in this House.

The Institute of Chartered Accountants believes that, although those clauses were supportive of the underlying philosophy of the initiatives, they were not practical and would not achieve their objectives. The issues raised by both clauses were considered widely by member firms in the institute and also by the committees of the institute that deal with such matters. In the light of the recently issued Bank of England consultative paper on the role of audit committees, which has already been referred to, and in the light of the response of the Department of Trade and Industry's consultative documents on the implementation of the eighth directive, these matters were given a fair airing.

It was thought that the institute should submit its advice to the Treasury. It did so in October 1985 and in February of this year when it sent a letter to the Treasury stating that the mandatory requirement for three directors could be over-onerous on certain banks, for the simple reason that the size of the bank was in no way taken into consideration in the drafting of the original clause. One could possibly agree to a mandatory requirement for

banks above a certain size, but one should allow banks under a certain size to appoint just one non-executive director to the board. The requirements created by the original new clause 10, that all authorised institutions had to retain at least three non- executive directors who would be wholly independent, took no account not only of the size, but of other factors and of the special situations of groups in which there might be a number of authorised institutions.

The institute considered that the appointment of non-executive directors should take account of the size of the bank. It also considered that the Bank of England should establish with the prospective authorised institutions, when authorisation was sought, the development and size of that authorised institution at that time. For those reasons, the imposition of the statutory minimum of three non-executive directors appeared inappropriate. There has been some discussion in the City as to where one could find the appropriate individuals to fill the places that would be created by the statute.

In any event, the institute pointed out to the Treasury that it saw good reason for the retention of a least one non-executive director in all authorised institutions. Indeed, that is the essence of the amendments that have been moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson).

The institute felt that the function and the role of the non-executive director required careful definition. The criteria expressed in the clauses appeared to restrict it, and the Bill already gave the Bank of England the right to establish that the directors of the institutions were fit and proper persons before granting authorisation. Therefore, the institute felt that it would probably be appropriate to leave with the Bank of England the responsibility for determining the suitability, or otherwise, of the proposed non-executive directors. That is what the institute recommended earlier this month, and I am glad that the compromise amendments have been tailored accordingly. I am also glad that the institute's advice was properly taken into account.

Although the original amendments will not see the light of day in the Bill as it passes to another place, this is a momentous occasion. My hon. Friend the Member for Kensington should regard this as a red letter day, not only in his life but in the life of regulation over institutions—in this case over banks, but perhaps, in future, over companies. However, it is a shame—I am sure that my hon. Friend did not expect this—that the first gleam of light in the history of audit committees and statutes should be at the hands of the Treasury and not those of the Department of Trade and Industry.

It is remarkable that the Treasury should be so understanding of the need for this type of supervisory body. Perhaps the Department of Trade and Industry, which often prides itself as the Department of innovation, will look to the Treasury, which it often regards as a body of people who do not have the vision of technical innovation and advance which it sponsors, and learn from this Treasury legislation. I hope that the Treasury, in its rules and guidance, will set out the detailed provisions that my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington has mentioned on many occasions.

Audit committees are required by companies quoted on the New York stock exchange. Therefore, over many years, they have served not only the institutions that they have helped but, more important, the shareholders in them. The practicalities of audit committees are proven. In the United States, they have lasted for many years. The fact that these new clauses will lead to this type of audit committee is an important moment in the life of the House.

Mr. Nelson: My hon. Friend made an interesting and important point — it was referred to in Committee — about listing requirements on the New York stock exchange. I shall be interested in his views, not only as an hon. Member but in his advisory capacity to the institute —this matter goes slightly beyond the remit of the Bill —about whether he and the institute would favour such a requirement here. If, in the near future, this provision is not extended in company law more generally, many people will consider that there is an urgent and compelling case for the stock exchange to provide a similar listing requirement.

Mr. Hanley: My hon. Friend spoke forcefully in Committee about the advantages and, indeed, the disadvantages of audit committees. The point that he raised is relevant to these amendments. What will be the influence of the amendments upon other financial institutions? The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales has not this year stated an official view on the point, but in the past it has issued documentation setting out the role of audit committees, their advantages and disadvantages, and how major companies can set them up.

It is interesting that, in the thousandth edition of the official journal of the Institute of Chartered Accountants, named *Accountancy*, the editorial should be a cry for audit committees for major companies. Indeed, not long after, my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington introduced his annual Bill, to the general acclaim of those who are fully conversant with the need for accountability in the City, and it was welcomed by many chartered accountants. It will be difficult for some authorised institutions to find an audit committee of, let us say, three, four or five people.

8.45 pm

The amendments are practical. Because the Bank of England is obliged to satisfy itself that an institution's board has sufficient non-executive representation according to its size, with suitably defined roles, before it can be authorised, the right compromise has been reached. I am certain that the Institute of Chartered Accountants is happy with the final result and would offer its congratulations not only to the founding father of the audit committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington, but to my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary. With his usual wisdom, my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary has found a compromise that will be practical, helpful and, ultimately, of benefit to those who invest in banks, and surely that must be the vast majority of the nation.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams (Kensington): The clauses may prove to be an important aspect of the Bill. Therefore, the House is justified in giving the matter a few more minutes. I take the opportunity of thanking my hon. Friends, in particular my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley), for their kind references to my long-standing campaign to improve the ways in which the executives of companies can be supervised in the course of their work.

[Sir Brandon Rhys Williams]

I must correct one point that my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes mentioned. I do not think that I introduced the expression "audit committee" into my series of proposals until as recently as 1976. With my first Bill I tried to bring into statute the expression "management audit". The management audit was to be instituted by a shareholders' committee, as I envisaged it, very much along the lines of the Bill that my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) has just brought in, which certainly deserves consideration by the House.

Self-regulation is part of Government policy. We must look to the Government to come forward with specific measures to enhance the way in which self-regulation works in banks and in public companies generally. Obviously, self-regulation is a matter for shareholders' natural prudence; but there is a special reason why it goes a little wider than simply protecting the shareholders' interests, and that is the enormous privilege of limited liability. If shareholders are able to rely on that serious concession, they have a duty to see that companies, or banks, as in this case, are managed in a competent and efficient manner. It is a matter of public interest and shareholders' duty.

How do shareholders exercise supervision? Over the past century or more, businesses have become so complex and so large that it is not possible for shareholders to get an accurate concept of what is being done by the executives who are appointed to make use of their assets. Different solutions have been found in various countries over the course of time. The German solution of setting up a separate supervisory board to watch, on a permanent basis, what the executive board is doing, obviously has many advantages, but that is not the way in which this country has developed its company law. While the Germans were evolving a concept of the supervisory board, we were placing more reliance on auditors. In the 19th century, it first became obligatory for companies to have an independent audit.

We have retained the concept of the unitary board, but, for some reason, in British company practice, it does not seem to be operating as well as we should like. In the United States and Canada, the concept of the unitary board has been retained, but there has been a significant development there that we have not yet followed. Of course, American banks are closely controlled by all kinds of provisions that have not been introduced here—I do not for one moment suggest that they should be—but the practice in America has been to develop the audit committee. It is a pity that we have not moved much faster in that direction. I blame the DTI for its immobilism in respect of the concept of the audit committee. Year upon year, it comes to the House to amend our company law and to add enormously to the scope of it, to add to the power of inspectors, panels, boards, the police and whoever else can bring pressure to bear on companies from outside. That is not self-regulation—one may call it what one will—but outside pressures on companies are not proving to be effective. Thus, we find ourselves in a highly unsatisfactory situation. It is not possible to open the newspapers without reading about some new, unwelcome or unsavoury development in companies and banks.

This is the Department of Trade and Industry's silly triumph. It has resisted the concept of self-regulation, although that is the direction in which we ought to go. I am extremely glad that hon. Members on both sides of the House share my opinion about that. British practice in the supervision of the executives of major companies is too loose and, as one would expect, the executive elements become either too enthusiastic and go much too far or they become sluggish, inefficient and resistant to change and fail to take advantage of new opportunities.

In the case of the scandals that have upset us with regard to the banks—in particular Johnson Matthey, Morgan Grenfell and others, very fine and reputable institutions where things went rapidly wrong—one has to ask what the auditors and the directors were doing by allowing those situations to develop and become so disastrously out of hand. In those cases, I do not believe that the auditors or the directors were necessarily to blame. What is wrong is the system, and that is what we are dealing with in these clauses.

We must freshen up our ideas about the responsibilities of auditors and the way that we call upon them to work, and we must also freshen up our ideas about the responsibilities of directors.

I strongly recommend anybody who is interested in the subject to take the trouble to read the speeches that were made on the last morning in Standing Committee when my hon. Friends—in particular my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson)—forced the Committee to take note of their views on the way in which the Banking Bill should be amended. The debate contained many important comments that well deserve study, and I hope that they will indeed be widely studied. My hon. Friends deserve well of their House for the courage and persistence in insisting that the Committee should take note of their views.

Over the last 100 years there has been a change in the concept of the director in British company law. If one goes back to the 1856 Act—one of the first really important measures that this House introduced in regard to company law—it was then axiomatic that the directors were all independent. The idea of their taking executive responsibilities is virtually excluded by the terms of that Act, because that was not the practice in those days. It is only in the Board of Trade Order 1906 that one finds the concept of the managing director beginning to be accepted. The managing director is really a one-man committee of the supervisory board that is running the business.

From there we have moved on and have now reached the stage where hon. Members say that to introduce into company law the idea of the non-executive director, or the independent director, would be an innovation. But the independent director is not an innovation; he is a relic, who is gradually disappearing. When one examines what those who claim to be non-executive directors are doing, one finds that they may be full-time officers of the company, or that they are serving the executives or the business in various functions and are not acting in a supervisory capacity at all. Because they are so involved in the management of the business they are unable to exercise supervisory functions. Therefore, the supervisory role of the directors is going by default.

I do not accept the idea — which I am afraid emanates from the Department of Trade and industry— that if we refer to non-executive directors or independent directors this will be a catastrophic change and a great new

intrusion into company law. It is quite the reverse. It is simply holding from further decline the status of the supervisory director.

How are we, then, to proceed, and in particular how should we proceed with regard to banks? I pay a considerable and warm tribute to the Bank of England for producing its consultative paper last month on the role of audit committees in banks. It is an excellent document. It does not mention my 1985 Bill; it refers only to my 1983 Bill, which shows just how little effect Back Benchers can have, even on those who are most supposed to know the views of this House. But never mind. I pay tribute to this excellent paper. However, it is simply a matter of exhortation.

The bank is asking the various institutions in the City to do what they think is right and to appoint an audit committee. I am afraid that if we rely on exhortation, the consequence normally is that all right-minded people who are efficient and run decently managed companies will do what they have been asked to—if they are not doing it already, while those whom one most wishes to correct, because their conduct is open to question, will find ways to use the audit committee in a manner that is perfunctory — or they may even refuse to appoint an audit committee at all. Therefore, my hon. Friend the Members for Chichester, for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) and for Suffolk, South were right when they suggested that the appointment of an audit committee should be mandatory.

I recognise, however, that it is difficult to legislate when there is such a wide variety of institutions, some of which are outside the scope of British company law. Even if we want changes to the law that will catch companies as a whole on a very wide scale, the House has to recognise that banks are a special case and that it is advisable to let the Bank of England exert the pressure which, in another kind of institution, it would perhaps have been better for shareholders to exert on their own behalf.

I believe that independent directors are very important and necessary in banks and that audit committees are appropriate. We must hope that they will become a regular and established feature of the management of banks. Therefore, I accept the compromise amendments that have been worked out and that have been moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester and others. They barely meet the case, but they do meet it for the present, and I am willing to support them. However, I should like to make two comments.

First, the method of conducting the business of an audit committee ought to be spelt out somewhere. There is a wealth of literature on the subject that is based on American and Canadian examples. The way in which audit committees have matured in the last 10 or 15 years in the United States provides us with an example of how audit committees should be operated. If we do not give clear guidance about what the audit committees should be doing, there will be perfunctory or inadequate performance that amounts to nothing, and it will waste the time of the people involved. The Bank of England should issue a further code of practice on what constitutes model rules for the functioning of an audit committee.

Secondly, I am concerned that amendment No. 62A as it stands does not place sufficient, or indeed any, emphasis on the appointment of an audit committee as a desirable practice. We know what the Bank of England has in mind, but if the clause stands as it does at present it will not place emphasis on the appointment of an audit committee—hence my amendment No. 63, which I beg to move. If, therefore, an institution were aggrieved by a bank decision that it did not meet the minimum criteria — in which case it is permitted under clause 25 to appeal to a tribunal —there would be no reason for the tribunal to support the bank's opinion. Surely it would be best to allude to the relationship formally established with the auditors by the independent directors in the relevant schedule to the Bill.

I ask my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary whether he will at least agree to say specifically that the Bank of England will be acting properly if it follows up the consultation paper on the role of the audit committees in banks by insisting, where it sees fit, that the appointment of a properly constituted audit committee should be part of the minimum criteria.

I would be satisfied if the Economic Secretary agreed to that, because I believe that it would give sufficient guidance to people who might be appointed to an appeal tribunal some time in the future, to show that that was what the House intended, even though it did not appear in the actual text. Better still, I should like my hon. Friend to accept my amendment No. 63, which I believe is fully in line with the Government's policy.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I greatly respect the efforts of my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Sir. B. Rhys Williams) who, over the years, has advanced the virtues of non-executive directors and audit committees. I believe that he has undoubtedly played a significant part in encouraging the use of audit committees and in drawing attention to the importance of having non-executive directors in companies and, in this context, in banks.

Before I deal with the points of substance, I should like to reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) and other hon. Friends who have suggested that they have not got what they wanted, but that the Bill is not a bad compromise. It is not a compromise as it would not be practicable — I repeat what I said in Committee — to introduce the type of measures in the new clauses introduced in Committee, because they have wider implications for company law. In the absence of a clear definition of the responsibilities and functions of non-executive directors and audit committees, there are areas of doubt and dispute that could cause significant problems.

9 pm

I do not wish to labour the point, but if definitions of the specific responsibilities were attached to non-excecutive directors they would cut across the general legal position of companies and their boards. Therefore, that would have implications for other areas of company law. Directors could evade performance of their duties by claiming to be non-executive directors. A whole range of issues germane to company law make it impossible to introduce workable provisions of the type that my hon. Friend's clauses seek to provide.

There is no resistance on the part of officials or myself to such changes, but Ministers have a responsibility to ensure that legislation that is passed by this House is workable. It was on that basis alone that I differed with my hon. Friends in Committee when I said that, rather than introduce my hon. Friend's specific proposals, I thought it would be better to introduce provisions on Report that would have the same effect.

I say that by way of explanation because I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson)

[Mr. Ian Stewart]

said that he is willing, provided he is given a number of assurances, to withdraw the clauses and substitute the provisions that we have discussed and which I believe meet his needs.

I strongly support the general purpose of the original clauses and the purpose of the amendments now put forward. In Committee there was unanimity in the belief that it was desirable to move in that direction. The only difference between my hon. Friends and myself was a difference of method. In Committee I gave an undertaking to introduce measures, if they could be properly defined, along the lines which are now introduced in the Bill. Therefore, my suggestions in Committee about what should be done have not changed.

I wish to draw particular attention to the significance of the Bank of England paper on audit committees. That paper has been referred to by a number of my hon. Friends. I regard it as a positive statement and that view is shared by the Bank of England. I am aware that it was circulated to members of the Committee and I have placed a copy in the Library so that it is more widely available.

I asked the Bank of England to take account of the comments made in Committee when this subject was debated because I thought that it should be aware of the specific points made and I hoped that it would endorse the proposals. I have a response from the Deputy Governor of the Bank of England in which he states:

"The Governor and I have been following with interest the debate in Standing Committee on the role of non-executive directors and audit committees. While welcoming the principles which lie behind the new clauses which the Committee added to the Bill, we entirely share the reservations about their practical effect which you expressed; and I am pleased to learn that it is intended to introduce alternative provisions on Report which will emphasise the importance of non-executive directors, whilst giving the Bank discretion as to the requirement for them in individual cases."

As my hon. Friends will recall, that discretion was on several grounds: the matter of size is relevant, but there is also a question of company structure, such as subsidiaries and parent companies. The Bank of England must take those matters into account.

The Deputy Governor then referred to the consultative paper and continued:

"As you will have noticed, the tone of the paper is direct. The Bank is committed to seeing that all major banking groups establish an audit committee and that in all cases, unless there are sound reasons to the contrary, at least one non-executive director is appointed who can undertake some of the audit committee functions."

The Deputy Governor asked me to draw that to the attention of the House in this debate and I am glad to do so. It reinforces the provisions now being proposed to be introduced into the Bill. They will be the peg on which the bank can hang its requirements, as part of its prudential supervision, that non-executive directors should be the presumption and that wherever practicable they should be involved in audit committees.

On page 80, the third heading under schedule 3 reads:

"Business to be conducted in prudent manner."

Under that heading, the bank has power to apply to individual institutions the requirements which it deems to be necessary for the prudent management of business of a bank or institution of that kind. If we couple that with the clear firm statement of the Deputy Governor, I can assure my hon. Friends that that means that banks of a certain size will be required, as part of what they need to do to satisfy the supervisor, to have audit committees and non-executive directors.

The importance of that is considerable. It will greatly strengthen the stability of financial institutions. I noted what my hon. Friends said about the implications for going wider into the company sector at large. Obviously, that goes beyond my responsibilities. I can ensure only that the Bill for which I am responsible has the appropriate provisions. Therefore, I hope that the amendments of my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester will be accepted.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kensington said he thought that it would be helpful if model rules were produced by the Bank of England, and I shall draw that to the attention of the Bank of England. The consultative paper is designed to answer several specific questions—for example, questions of size. I would not expect such rules to be available now, but after that consultative process is completed, the Bank, in that area as in all other areas where it requires certain criteria to be met for prudential purposes, will undoubtedly make it clear generally to the institutions what it expects.

My hon. Friend went on to say that, because there was no specific reference to audit committees, the bank could be disregarded in trying to impose non-executive directors and audit committees. Given that it is the intention of the bank to have such provisions, it could not be overruled. It is the Bank of England, as the supervisory authority under this legislation, which will determine, after consultation, the basis of prudent management financial institutions which take deposits. Subject to reservations on the grounds of size or structure, it will require these provisions, and would not regard the requirement that business should be conducted in a prudent manner as being satisfied unless such conditions were met.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kensington asked whether that could be set aside, for example, by the tribunal. The Bank of England certainly would be acting reasonably in insisting on that. It is not the job of the tribunal to second-guess the bank in its judgment on general supervisory requirements. I can give my hon. Friend a full assurance on those points.

I welcome the introduction into statute for the first time of a reference to non-executive directors, as defined in the amendment. This is an important development. It is not necessarily the most important matter that has arisen during consideration of the Bill. Whether or not these provisions were inserted into the Bill, that would have been the requirement in practice as a result of the supervisor's actions. Nevertheless, I welcome the amendment, because it emphasises an important development which is particularly relevant to financial institutions. I shall not try to go wider than that and say what relevance it may have to companies more generally. I note in passing that there are many companies, even quoted companies. The difficulty of recruiting suitable non-executive directors of the right calibre in setting up equivalent provisions for non-deposit-taking companies throughout the economy is a pretty daunting task. Nevertheless, in the case of deposit-taking institutions, this development will be important. Therefore, I hope that the amendments of my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester will commend themselves to the House.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 92

AUDIT COMMITTEES

Amendment made: No. 58, in page 69, line 5, leave out clause 92.—*[Mr. Nelson.]*

Schedule 3

MINIMUM CRITERIA FOR AUTHORISATION

Amendments made: No. 61, in page 80, line 31, at end insert—

'Composition of board of directors

2A. In the case of an institution incorporated in the United Kingdom the directors include such number (if any) of directors without executive responsibility for the management of its business as the Bank considers appropriate having regard to the circumstances of the institution and the nature and scale of its operations.'.

No. 62, in page 81, line 19, leave out second 'and' and insert '(7A)'.

No. 62A, in page 81, line 22, at end insert

'and in determining whether those systems are adequate the Bank shall have regard to the functions and responsibilities in respect of them of any such directors of the institution as are mentioned in paragraph 2A above.'.—*[Mr. Nelson.]*

No. 65, in page 81, line 34, after 'denominated', insert 'wholly or partly'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Mr. Ian Stewart: I beg to move amendment No. 66, in page 85, line 30, at end insert—

'Use of banking names

12A.—(1) Subject to sub-paragraph (2) below, section 64 of this Act does not prohibit the use by an institution which is incorporated in or is a partnership formed under the law of any part of the United Kingdom and is deemed to be an authorised institution by virtue of paragraph 2 above of a name which was its registered business or company name immediately before the coming into force of Part III of this Act or of section 36 of the former Act.

(2) Sub-paragraph (1) above shall cease to apply—

(a) in the case of an incorporated institution, if the total value in sterling of its issued share capital and undistributable reserves falls below their total value at the coming into force of Part III of this Act; or

(b) in the case of a partnership in respect of which one or more designated fixed capital accounts are maintained, if the total value in sterling of those accounts falls below their value at that time.

(3) Section 64 of this Act does not prohibit the use by—

(a) an authorised institution which is a wholly-owned subsidiary of an institution to which sub-paragraph (1) applies; or

(b) a company which has a wholly-owned subsidiary which is an institution to which that sub-paragraph applies,

of a name which includes the name of the institution to which that sub-paragraph applies for the purpose of indicating the connection between the two companies.

(4) In sub-paragraph (2) above "share capital" and "designated fixed capital account" have the same meaning as in subsection (2) of section 64 of this Act and "undistributable reserves" means such reserves as mentioned in paragraph *(a)* (ii) of that subsection.'.

This is an important addition to the Bill. In Committee, I undertook to introduce amendments to this effect so that the use by authorised institutions of banking names just prior to the Act coming into force would be grandfathered—they would be carried forward—after the enactment of the legislation. I said that we would do what I described as great-grandfathering with the banking names which were in use by authorised institutions prior to the Banking Act 1979.

I have great pleasure in moving this amendment because it was one of those aspects of the 1979 legislation which I remember opposing. Therefore, it is a privilege, eight years later, to be able to remedy what I considered to be an injustice at that time.

9.15 pm

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): As my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary has said, the essence of the amendment is that the damage done by the 1979 Act to a number of small but highly reputable banks—among them the Manchester Exchange Trust and Reliance Trust, the Salvation Army bank—is to be undone. The 1979 Act took away from these highly reputable institutions the right which they have exercised for a century or more to describe themselves, quite accurately, as banks. When the Bill was introduced, it would effectively have continued that prohibition by adding another criterion which needed to be met before the name "bank" could be used—an equity capital of not less than £5 million.

On behalf of the Reliance Trust and Manex—I have no interest in either—I made some detailed submissions to my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary. He received them courteously. He listened to those representations, but quite properly he gave no commitments. Subsequently, as I understand it, he had wide consultations. In Standing Committee, in response to amendments moved elegantly by my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson), my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary gave us the good news—he would move amendments to allow those small institutions to return to the pre-1979 situation of being able to call themselves banks.

This new grandfathering, and indeed great-grandfathering, amendment gives full effect to my hon. Friend's undertaking to the Committee. On behalf of the Salvation Army and of the directors and shareholders of the Manchester Exchange Trust, I express my thanks—first, to my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester who moved those amendments in Committee, secondly, to all members of the Committee for the support which they gave at once to those amendments and, most of all, to my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary who moved this amendment.

There is just one rather curious consequence of the amendment for the Manchester Exchange Trust. In recent years, it has become widely known in the City and among its customers and shareholders by the shorthand title of Manex. As a result of the amendment, it will have to revert to its pre-1979 title, the whole works — Manchester Exchange Trust, which is not quite so punchy a name. I very much hope that, when the Bank of England considers any request by this institution to call itself the Manex bank, it will not be given too difficult a passage. But, of course, that is a matter for the Bank of England, not for the House.

I should like to conclude by quoting some words that I used on Second Reading when I said of my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary that he was an "astute" and "civilised" Minister. I should like to repeat those adjectives but add another word which has found common currency in banking circles in recent years—my hon. Friend is a "listening" Minister. Ministers who listen learn, and they serve the Government and the House well. I am very grateful to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Nelson: I should like to add briefly to the elegant words of my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) and express my thanks and

[Mr. Nelson]

tribute to my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary for keeping faith with the Committee and bringing forward the amendment. It was a great joy to my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds, to other members of the Standing Committee and to me to meet, subsequent to the passage of the amendments in Committee, the representatives of the Manchester Exchange Trust and of the Salvation Army. That was a small step but one that gave them great pleasure. It certainly enhanced their views as to how representation to Members of Parliament can translate itself into changes in the law. I should like to add to the tributes that have been made and say how grateful I am to my hon. Friend for making the changes that he has proposed tonight.

Amendment agreed to.

Schedule 6

MINOR AND CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS

Amendment made: No. 67, in page 87, line 4, at end insert

'and paragraph (f) shall be omitted'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Schedule 7

REPEALS AND REVOCATIONS

Amendment made: No. 68, in page 92, line 20, at end insert—

'1980 c. 46.	The Solicitors (Scotland) Act 1980.	In section 35 (2), paragraph (f) and the word "and" immediately preceding it.'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Order for Third Reading read.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

9.22 pm

Mr. Hanley: There has been no opportunity for me to raise one small point. I shall hold the House back for about one minute. I welcome the Bill wholeheartedly. However, may I ask my hon. Friend the Minister whether, under clause 79—which deals with information that is passed by the Bank of England on to other people and the restrictions that are imposed on the disclosure of that information—information that is passed by the Bank to an auditor will stop the auditor from qualifying his audit report as a result of that information, unless he has previously obtained permission from the Bank of England? I understand that this is not the most sensible time to raise this matter, but it is the only time. I should be happy if my hon. Friend would write to me on that matter.

9.23 pm

Mr. Cash: I take this opportunity to thank my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury for the patient and skilful way in which he has helped us to conduct our way through the Bill. The Bill may not have attracted all the attention in the world, but it is a vital measure, in that confidence in the City of London will depend on the stability of the banking system. The skill with which my hon. Friend has steered the Bill through, and the way in which he has reacted to proposals that we have put forward, such as reciprocity, audit committees, non-executive directors and the like, is indeed very welcome and we are most grateful to him.

9.24 pm

Mr. Ian Stewart: I do not wish to detain the House for long at this stage. I shall write to my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) about the point that he made.

I should like to take this opportunity to thank those officials who have assisted me with the preparation of this legislation and who have looked after my requirements and the requirements of the Committee and the House during the Bill's passage through those stages. I include in those thanks representatives of the Bank of England, who made themselves available to help on a number of matters that were of interest to hon. Members in the Committee and in the House.

I should also like to thank my hon. Friends, the other Conservative Members, the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) and other Labour Members who participated in the Committee proceedings and who have contributed this evening for the generally constructive way in which the Bill has been handled. I appreciate the way in which the hon. Member for Thurrock has looked after the Bill on behalf of the Opposition.

The Bill completes a trilogy of substantial Bills that we have dealt with over the past three years. Although this Bill is not one of the most dramatic or politically contentious of this Session or of this Parliament, it is nevertheless important. It represents a significant improvement and strengthening of the system of banking supervision. The City of London and its banking systems are very important to the United Kingdom's economy and it is important, with the widening of markets and the internationalisation of business, that the City of London should be properly supervised and regulated. The Bill will take its place alongside the Financial Services Act 1986 and the Building Societies Act 1986 as part of a trio of legislation that will give a better regulatory and supervisory system in this country then in any other financial centre in the world.

The Bill's passage through the House has led to a number of changes on the Board of Banking Supervision, on the question of significant and controlling shareholders, on reciprocity, on deposit protection, on banking names, on non-executive directors and on a number of other matters. During its passage the Bill has been considerably improved, but it leaves the House in good order. I hope that it will not be too long before it is on the statute book.

9.25 pm

Dr. McDonald: I do not intend to detain the House but I should like to express our gratitude to those officials and draftsmen who have been responsible for the Bill. It was a great pleasure not to have to consider a large number of drafting amendments during the passage of the Bill through Committee. I should like to thank the Economic Secretary for having responded to several of the points raised in Committee, sometimes by the Opposition and sometimes raised, shall we say, by one and a half sides of the Committee acting in concert. It has improved the Bill.

It is important that the banking sector functions well. Therefore, having been given new powers of supervision in the Bill, I hope that the Bank of England will use to the

full to supervise the banks and to ensure that we do everything possible to avoid the sort of scandals that have emerged over the past year.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

PETITION

Mr. Alexander Ogorodnikov

9.26 pm

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): I beg to ask leave to present a petition on behalf of 335 constituents and their neighbours. It is a short petition, which states:

"To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, in Parliament assembled.

The Humble Petition of residents of Bromley, Kent area, showeth that the Soviet Christian, Alexander Ogorodnikov, is in abject conditions in a Soviet labour camp on a charge arising from his leadership of a Christian discussion group.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House encourage the Foreign Secretary in his representations to the Soviet Government with the purpose of obtaining Mr. Ogorodnikov's release and reunion with his wife and son.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound will ever pray, etc."

I had hoped that it would not be necessary to introduce this petition, but I spoke to a Foreign Office Minister late this afternoon and he told me that Mr. Ogorodnikov, like so many thousands of his fellow citizens, still seems to be imprisoned because of his religious beliefs.

To lie upon the Table.

St. Christopher's Hospice

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

9.27 pm

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): I am privileged to have St. Christopher's hospice in my constituency. For the last 20 years St. Christopher's has given comfort and care to many thousands of patients who have been terminally ill with cancer. It has also provided support for the families of those terminally ill patients. Last year the hospice staff and the home care team, which is an important part of St. Christopher's, provided help for about 1,400 terminally ill patients. That is about 1 per cent. of those who die from cancer in the whole country.

St. Christopher's has been a blessing to many of my constituents and to many who live in the neighbourhood, but it has also been an inspiration and example to the rest of the hospice movement in this country and the rest of the world.

When I went to St. Christopher's last week it was holding a three-day conference for 70 people, doctors, nurses, priests and pharmacists, from Scandinavia, on the care of the terminally ill. Last year there were 24 study conferences at St. Christopher's, mainly, of course, for doctors and nurses from this country.

The inspiration for all this is Dame Cicely Saunders, the chairman and principal founder of St. Chistopher's. She has been described by one of my constituents as a jolly saint. Certainly this remarkable woman has a warm and vigorous personality, and many people can testify to the power of her faith. If she is a saint, she is probably the first old girl of Roedean and the first holder of the DBE to qualify for this unusual distinction. On a slightly less high-flown level, it would be fair to say that she provides the same charismatic inspiration for the hospice movement as Florence Nightingale did for the whole nursing profession 100 years ago.

St. Christopher's is not just a one-woman movement. It has a caring staff of 127, of whom 105 are nurses. They are supported by an administrative and domestic staff of 100. They, in their turn, rely upon the assistance of 200 volunteers, many of whom come from my constituency.

The nurses tend to serve 18 months to two years and then take their experience back into the National Health Service. All this costs money. In 1986 St. Christopher's spent about £2·5 million and received just under £1 million from the NHS. The NHS has done rather well out of St. Christopher's. The estimated current cost of an in-patient at a London teaching hospital is £150 per night. The comparable cost at St. Christopher's is £110 per night, of which the cost to public funds is £46 per in-patient night.

The way in which the NHS contribution to St. Christopher's is calculated has grown in a haphazard way. Support levels for the hospice, for training and home care were set at different times by different people and authorities, being kept more or less in line with inflation. I suggest that the level of governmental support for St. Christopher's, which now stands at rather more than 35 per cent., should be recalculated and that the NHS should aim to meet 50 per cent. of St. Christopher's costs.

It would be reasonable if the National Health Service were to meet the ascertained cost of 30 of the 60 hospice beds, or £950,000 at current costs. It would be reasonable if the Government had met half of the home care team

[Sir Philip Goodhart]

costs, amounting to a further £100,000. Finally, I believe that the National Health Service should meet the whole cost of the study centre, which would be a contribution of £200,000 a year.

In other words, I am asking that the NHS contribution, which now stands at almost £1 million, should be raised to £1·25 million. I think that this is reasonable, and I am astonished by my own moderation. Many people in the hospice movement would accept that a 50:50 partnership between the National Health Service and the voluntary sector in this extremely difficult field was appropriate.

It is right that St. Christopher's should be supported by the local community, but it should not have to devote excessive energies and thought to fund raising. It should not have to worry about cutting the work of the home care team because there is a shortage of vehicles. That seemed likely only a few weeks ago. I am glad to say that the generosity of a local firm, Ancaster Garages, has recently solved this mini-problem, but such a problem should not be allowed to arise in future.

The role of the hospice movement in the care of the dying has been brought to the attention of the public forcefully in recent months because of the AIDS problem in general and because of the recent trip of the Secretary of State for Social Services, to the United States, where he looked at the care of AIDS patients. After my right hon. Friend returned from America, Dame Cicely Saunders wrote to him:

"At St. Christopher's, we have for some time been debating the ways in which we could properly contribute towards the care of patients suffering from AIDS . . . We believe that our home care services could be developed to provide symptom control, counselling and support, possibly throughout our catchment area of south east London, providing close liaison could be arranged with local hospitals or specialist units. Such a service would lend itself particularly well to evaluation of the medical and social needs of patients and their families in the community, study of the appropriateness of community care, and definition of the type of in-patient support that is required. I should explain that we have strong reservations about the use of our existing in-patient facilities for AIDS patients. We have difficulty in meeting the present demand of those suffering from terminal malignant disease and motor neurone disease in our wards".

In a separate memorandum to the Select Committee on Social Services, Dame Cicely said:

"Another concern is the fact that we have little expertise in handling young demented patients who are still active and likely to wander. Moreover, a hospice ward is a very personal place, welcoming families, with their children, to be with the dying family member. Among them, I believe, there would be many who would be extremely fearful of doing this if they knew AIDS patients were being admitted. However irrational, this fear is a very real matter, and would be an added burden on those facing the loss of loved ones."

I agree with Dame Cicely's views and I am sure that the Government will provide the people and the money to take up Dame Cicely's offer of help with the training of home care teams who would in their turn look after AIDS patients and those who were terminally ill with cancer.

So far, I believe that the National Health Service decision to set up special AIDS wards in certain hospitals is correct. Clearly a few special wards will not be adequate if pessimistic projections of the spread of AIDS are proved right. No one, whatever his medical expertise, can say for certain what will happen. Some predict that 600,000 people will die of AIDS in this country before the end of the century. We must all hope that this turns out to be a huge over-estimate, but it could be an under-estimate. After all, the words "mutating virus", the description of the AIDS virus, can provoke a flicker of apprehension within the most celibate bosom.

As there is so much uncertainty, it would clearly be sensible for the Government to start making contingency plans for the establishment of AIDS hospices in the Greater London area, where the incidence of AIDS is likely to continue to be higher than elsewhere in the country. Here I note that the Bromley health authority, for example, has just handed over to the South-East Thames region the Lennard hospital site, which was a centre for geriatric care, and it is proposed that the South East Thames region should dispose of this site in the near future. But it has been estimated that if £1 million were spent on refurbishing the existing buildings the site could support 80 hospice beds. The Lennard site is accessible, but it was once an isolation hospital. I note that it is also reasonably close to the Wellcome research laboratory, which is also in my constituency. Wellcome has, of course, played a leading role in the development of drugs that have some impact on the control of AIDS symptoms.

Meanwhile, I note that AIDS is a disease that has come to this country from abroad, and we should clearly be wise to try to limit any increase in the pool of infection in this country. My hon. Friend who will be replying to this debate has recently reminded us in characteristically colourful terms that Britons travelling overseas can become infected and bring the virus back to to this country, and she has suggested a pleasantly acceptable way of limiting that risk.

Following recent reports in the newspapers, I am uncertain about the Government's attitude to potential foreign carriers who want to enter the country. Clearly, it would be wholly impractical to try to screen every visitor from overseas, as many foreign visitors pay only fleeting visits to this country. I note, however, that foreign students are necessarily going to stay in this country for some time and that many of them come from Africa, America and the middle east, where there is a high level of AIDS infection.

I know that there is a powerful body of opinion within and outside the Government which believes that all foreign students, except perhaps those coming from EC countries, should be screened before they come or as soon as they arrive in this country. It ought not to be too difficult to ensure that foreign students do not start their courses here until they produce a valid AIDS clearance certificate. The British Council — hardly an illiberal body — has supported the idea of an AIDS test for foreign students and I hope that the Government will make up their mind well before the next academic year begins.

Finally, having made a number of suggestions that would inevitably lead to increased expenditure on behalf of the taxpayer, I suggest that the Government should make some economies in the AIDS publicity programme.

Of course, any information campaign on the subject faces the twin dangers that it will be meaninglessly bland or offensively explicit. I have seen lots of posters and I have seen the AIDS cinema advertisement, all of which seem to me to be wastefully bland. On the other hand, some of my constituents think it offensive and ridiculous that taxpayers' money should be used to warn their 89-year-old grandmothers of the dangers of anal sex.

The Health Education Council, in a new form, is to take over responsibility for the AIDS information campaign. I do not know what budget has been earmarked for general

propaganda about AIDS. However, if money is tight, and if future campaigns are not better based, I suggest that that budget is squeezed and the money diverted to fund the sensible projects to which I have referred.

9.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): I am very pleased that my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart) has taken up the question of the way in which we are to care for AIDS victims, especially in the context of the excellent work carried out by the hospice movement in his constituency and by his constituents.

I want to place on record how much I value this opportunity to pay tribute to all those who give selflessly to the care of others throughout our services in the Health Service and elsewhere. However, the hospices are rather special. They bring not only a skill in controlling pain and other symptoms and a deep understanding of the sense of impending loss among patients and their relatives, but a compassion and friendship. They enable people to feel in control of their lives once again and to die with dignity. I am certain that we all hope that when our end comes, we have that opportunity.

The hospice movement has been developing that approach to terminal care since the 1960s. There are now about 100 hospices, 38 of which are run by the Health Service. I am patron of the Nightingale hospice run by the Macmillan Continuing Care appeal in Derby on behalf of the health authority. I also had a small part to play when St. Mary's hospice was established in Selly Oak in Birmingham. Many of the other hospices, like St. Christopher's, are entirely run by voluntary bodies. Altogether, they provide about 2,000 beds, 90 per cent. of which are currently used by cancer patients.

St. Christopher's hospice was opened in 1967 on a capital cost of £500,000 which, 20 years ago, was a far larger sum than it is now. That money was raised entirely by voluntary subscription. During the past 14 years, St. Christopher's hospice has achieved a worldwide reputation as a centre of excellence in the care of the dying. I am not entirely sure why my brief states 14 years. I suspect that the hospice has been a centre of excellence since it was opened.

Under the medical directorship of Dame Cicely Saunders, who is now recognised as an international authority on the subject, the hospice has pioneered methods of care based on a comprehensive approach to the needs of each patient as a total individual and, where appropriate, as a member of a family. Treatment has been directed towards the effective relief of pain without the destruction of personality in the terminally ill.

St. Christopher's is an independent hospital and a Christian foundation. Its catchment area is restricted to a 10-mile radius from Sydenham for in-patients, to facilitate visiting by friends and relatives, and a six-mile radius for home care. Most of the catchment area therefore falls within the boundaries of the South East Thames regional health authority and the remainder within the South West Thames regional health authority.

My hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham referred to the cost per patient day. I agree that the service at St. Christopher's, in that respect as well as in many others, is worthy of considerable attention. I understand that there are about 200 full-time and a number of part-time staff at St. Christopher's. The full-time staff include two consultants, a senior registrar and two junior registrars, nursing staff, social workers, ward orderlies, domestics, clerks, catering assistants and a full-time chaplain. The running of the hospice is assisted by 200 volunteers who offer their services in a variety of capacities under the supervision of a voluntary health organiser. They all do excellent work. However, I suspect that in the Health Service, where our costs are somewhat higher per patient day, we could not expect to run such a service on the basis of half paid staff and half volunteers as occurs at St. Christopher's. I am not saying whether or not I wish it were so: I merely point out that the Health Service substantially relies on our excellent paid staff.

St. Christopher's hospice is independent of the Health Service and is administered by a council of management chaired by Dame Albertine Winner. The council members include Dame Cicely Saunders, Dr. West and Dr. Gillian Ford. All the capital costs of the hospice come from private sources. I mentioned earlier the £500,000 raised by voluntary subscription. Revenue costs are borne mainly by contractual arrangements, chiefly with the regional health authorities that I mentioned. Some patients contribute to the cost of their own care, either from their own money or through one of the provident associations.

It is the firm policy of the hospice not to exclude patients on financial grounds. Apart from the National Health Service, which my hon. Friend mentioned as a source of direct funding, there are several other public sources of funding, which assist or might assist the hospice and the hospice movement. For example, Drapers wing is funded by the local authority social services department, from which the residents are drawn, in combination with personal payments by some of those patients.

The out-patients' department is funded by grants from the DHSS through the South East Thames regional health authority. Supplementary benefit of up to £230 a week is available for terminal care patients who qualify and is paid for many such patients in nursing homes which make a charge. That benefit is payable only if a charge is regularly made.

Sir Philip Goodhart: Many people in the hospice movement think that this form of financing is not entirely appropriate. There are problems in trying to get hold of that money. The nearly £1 million about which I spoke covered the generality of Government support.

Mrs. Currie: I understand the point that my hon. Friend makes. I merely make the point that the additional needs of terminally ill patients in such establishments as nursing homes are already being recognised by the payment of £230—should the nursing home be set up in such a way that a claim can be made. I also take my hon. Friend's point about how the system functions.

I understand that the hospice needs to find about £55,000 each month in order to pay its running costs. This amount comes chiefly from bequests, open days and appeals. The hospice is supported to an extraordinary extent by local people. I am sure that they derive great satisfaction from the opportunity to show their gratitude for the work of this marvellous place. Despite the tightness of the running costs, I understand that the hospice is planning a modest expansion, which will include a patient day centre. I am sure that that will be most welcome in the area.

In general we do not make central finance available to voluntary hospices as such, but the local health authorities

[Mrs. Currie]

can assist them and the level of support around the country varies from nought to 80 per cent. of revenue costs. We estimate that the average is about 35 per cent. and that is about the level of funding which St. Christopher's attracts at the moment from that source.

Where a hospice plays an essential part in a health authority's overall plan, we expect that authority to make an appropriate financial contribution. We take rather a firm view on that. As well as making a grant, a health authority can contract for beds and can donate or let surplus land or buildings. I understand that in Birmingham in the very early days we were also able to assist in one or two quiet ways with secretarial assistance, office accommodation and the like. There are various ways in which such help can be given.

The precise level of spending on specific services and support for individual local hospices should be left for health authorities to determine. Health authorities will have a lot more money to spend in the coming year. Our plans for the year starting in April provide for an increase in overall allocation to health authorities in England alone of £626 million. That is 2·2 per cent. above forecast inflation. We shall, in addition, allow them to retain benefits of cash released through cost improvement programmes that are planned to achieve £150 million in the current year. We have made an allocation of £4·4 million for 1987-88 to the three Thames regions that together care for 75 per cent. of the AIDS cases that my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham has mentioned.

My hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham has rightly drawn attention to the tragic and growing need for terminal care for this new group of patients suffering from AIDS, many of whom are young people who would otherwise have had the greatest part of their lives to which to look forward. By 31 January 1987 AIDS had already claimed the lives of 355 people in the United Kingdom. This year we expect 1,300 cases and next year 3,000 new cases. We expect that the cumulative total of deaths by the end of next year will be nearly 10 times the present number.

Most of us prefer to be treated in our own homes among family and friends and in familiar surroundings, whatever our illness. A hospice may be the choice for some and it may be the solution in their circumstances. In-patient care may be appropriate for active treatment of certain phases of illness, but towards the end a different approach may be needed. I hope that my hon. Friend will agree that we need a full and varied spectrum of care facilities.

We are about to ask all health authorities to examine their current services for the terminally ill, including AIDS patients, and to plan to fill any gaps, if possible by collaboration with the voluntary sector. On 3 March a circular on terminal illness will be sent to all regional general managers, district general managers, special health authorities, family practitioner committees and community health services — in other words, to all the appropriate bodies. I shall arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library of the House of Commons and for another to be sent to my hon. Friend, who has shown such a caring interest in this subject.

In addition, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services intends to hold a conference before Easter on the provision of care for AIDS sufferers outside hospital. It will bring together the experience of those in the relevant professions, the statutory and voluntary services and the churches. The intention is to indentify more clearly the priorities and responses for the years ahead. As my hon. Friend knows, the Secretary of State recently visited the United States of America and was impressed by the innovative approach to community care there, especially in San Francisco, where the average length of in-patient stay during the progress of the disease is 12 days, compared with 31 in the United States of America as a whole, and at least 50 in England. My right hon. Friend will report to the conference on what he learned on his American visit.

There is clearly scope in this country for the community-based patient care of AIDS sufferers. In the United States, care is provided at the patient's home to supplement or replace hospital care, according to individual circumstances. That can include the administration of medicines with nursing supervision and the use of infusion fluids and antibiotics. In other words, there are possibly no limits to what can be done outside hospital.

My right hon. Friend told me that in San Francisco the volunteer community agency, SHANTI, works with the city to provide small-group housing for patients with AIDS who would otherwise be unable to be independent. Patients may share an apartment and be regularly monitored by volunteers, who alter the services as the condition of the residents changes. Residents also help to care for each other. Obviously, there is a great deal to learn from all those developments. I have no doubt that those who are experienced at caring for the terminally ill, for example those working at St. Christopher's, will have much to offer us in their contributions on this subject.

The hospice movement in the United Kingdom has traditionally offered care to cancer patients. There has been some concern about whether it can offer an appropriate service to people who suffer from AIDS. I know that in the past the council of management at St. Christopher's has found that the hospice was not the right place to care for those patients. There are 130,000 deaths from cancer each year, 20,000 of whom are patients who will spend some time in a hospital bed, and the hospices have therefore felt unable to admit patients from other specialties. However, I am glad to know that Dame Cicely Saunders and others from St. Christopher's will shortly visit the chief medical officer, Professor Sir Donald Acheson, to discuss how the hospice might become involved in the care of AIDS patients. I understand that some other hospices will admit AIDS patients by agreement with the local health authority. One hospice specifically for AIDS patients, known as the London Lighthouse, is being planned. We are presently considering what financial assistance we can offer.

As well as 100 United Kingdom hospices ranging from two beds upwards, there are about 125 home care teams involving over 300 nurses. Much of this is funded through the Health Service direct. We also have about 25 hospital support teams in NHS hospitals, providing help and advice to dying patients in the hospital——

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Mrs. Currie: Many hospices are developing day care units which patients living at home can attend. There is

clearly scope for a hospice-in-the-home approach, rather similar to the San Fransico movement, involving widespread support from volunteers in the community. Perhaps as much as anything, the experience of St. Christopher's in motivating and organising volunteers to help and work with people in the direst straits at the end of their lives might be one on which we can draw. To put the matter in context, about 35 per cent. of cancer patients die at home, 60 per cent. die in hospital and 5 per cent. die in hospices.

If the existing hospices choose to take AIDS patients —the choice is theirs—they will need help and support on education and training for staff. In the coming financial year, we have allocated £200,000 to our two AIDS counselling training units at Paddington and Bolton so that they can double the present training capacity and offer courses to community health staff, personal social services staff, hospice staff, and anybody else who requires it. As well as counselling training, the units offer valuable advice and support to care staff on the many issues that arise in the care of AIDS patients. We hope, too, that the educational resources of hospices will be available to staff who undertake the care of AIDS patients. In other words, we see that as a two-way process. We look forward to close co-operation on education and training.

I heard what my hon. Friend said about the advertisements. We have come a long way in six months. Last year, most people did not even know what AIDS was. This year, in our recent independent survey of people's reactions to the current campaign, we have established that about 95 per cent. of people have seen one of the advertisements. That is a remarkable achievement already. Around the same number of people—95 per cent.—think that we are right to have this campaign. Around 80 per cent. now feel confident that they know enough to avoid catching AIDS. I remind my hon. Friend that that was one of the objectives of the campaign. There is clearly still some hestitation about what does not cause AIDS and what processes in normal life are perfectly acceptable and will not cause the passing of AIDS, but at the moment public education is our only vaccine.

I take my hon. Friend's point about the good lady aged 89. I merely suggest that, to have read about any kind of sex, she must have picked up a sealed envelope that clearly had a message printed on it in large type about what was inside. She must have read the message. She must then, nevertheless, have opened the envelope and, no doubt, sat down somewhere to read it.

We have thought long and hard about what should be in the leaflets. We needed to get them out as quickly as possible. I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that, to try accurately to extract the names of, say, elderly people from what might have been out-of-date censuses or electoral registers would have been an almost impossible task and widely open to error. Indeed, there might have been some older people who would have been offended at being left out. We should recognise that there is a risk to the whole population and that the whole population needs to be included in a campaign of this kind.

The most serious counter-argument that I offer my hon. Friend was made by the Secretary of State in the debate on AIDS late last year, which is that we may have to risk offending some people in order to promote the greater good of the country as a whole. I hope that my hon. Friend can accept that.

Suggestions about the screening of students and visitors are due to be considered by the Cabinet Committee that is now so ably chaired by my right hon. Friend the Lord President of the Council, to whom I am sure my hon. Friend would like to add his words of thanks for the excellent work that the Committee is doing. I share my hon. Friend's misgivings about the practicality and the expense of screening everybody who comes to the United Kingdom, or who may be returning to the United Kingdom after a visit abroad. Whether it is practical and in the interests of the British people to screen particular groups will be for the committee to decide.

I began by paying tribute to the hospice movement in general and I shall close by saying a few words in particular about St. Christopher's. The sympathetic and honest relationships that have developed at St. Christopher's between patients, relatives, nursing and medical staff are a shining example in a dark world. Death has been recognised as a part of life and as a family affair. The bereaved are not only counselled, advised and assisted; they are uplifted and helped towards a better understanding of our lives and souls as human beings.

AIDS is a growing problem. This year we expect a further 1,300 cases. If St. Christopher's can help—by advice, training, counselling and support—it will help AIDS patients and their families and, in the end, perhaps it will help all of us to come to terms with this terrible scourge.

National Health Service (West Midlands)

10.6 pm

Mr. Iain Mills (Meriden): I am most grateful to be called so late to raise a number of matters concerning the National Health Service in the west midlands and their effect upon my constituents and others.

Expenditure on the National Health Service rose by over 20 per cent. in real terms between 1978-79 and 1985-86, and it will continue to rise. It accounts for £18 billion or £19 billion now, compared with £7 billion or £8 billion in 1978-79. That is a considerable increase in expenditure, and I wish to say a few words about the way in which this vastly increased expenditure is affecting the west midlands.

I wish to make some helpful, good and buoyant points on behalf of normally silent colleagues like my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South-East (Mr. Lightbown), who tells me that the establishment of the first part of the new district general hospital in Tamworth is extremely welcome to his constituents. As I live three or four miles away from that hospital and almost adjoin my hon. Friend's constituency, I, too, welcome it.

My good friend, the normally silent Member of Parliament for Warwickshire, North (Mr. Maude)—an area that I used to represent before the boundary changes — is as pleased as I was, when I represented that constituency, about the extension of facilities at the George Eliot hospital. As a resident of the area, I suppose that it would be the hospital to which I should be taken if I were taken ill. Therefore, I feel even more strongly that the extension of those facilities is most appropriate.

Having represented the area until the boundary changes, I am sure my hon. Friend will not mind my saying how strongly he and I feel that that expansion is extremely good news. It is of direct consequence to my constituents and to those of my hon. Friend the Member for Solihull (Mr. Taylor), as Meriden and Solihull represent the two parts of the borough of Solihull. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to refer to the splendid news a few months ago about the establishment at last of a district general hospital for Solihull. That news has been received with joy in the villages of Meriden, Hampton-in-Arden, Berkswell, Knowle and Dorridge, who will use that hospital, as well as by the people who live in the urban parts of Solihull who are represented so ably by my hon. Friend the Member for Solihull. The cost involved is more than £20 million. I do not wish to appear mean to my hon. Friend the Minister, but the sooner we get that hospital the better. It is extremely good news.

I wish to pay tribute to those who served in the inadequate facilities of the elderly, existing hospital in Solihull. I am sure that nurses, doctors, patients and those who represent their interests will keenly look forward with much joy to witnessing my hon. Friend the Minister cutting the tape and opening the first of the new wards when the new hospital is established.

The resource allocation—the RAWP formula—has caused some difficulties. In the north of my constituency there is an area known collectively as Chelmsley Wood. It encompasses the council estate area of Chelmsley Wood, the Kingshurst constituency and parts of Castle Bromwich. We have a large population of elderly, socially deprived and disabled people. Inevitably, their medical needs are large and they must look to east Birmingham as well as Solihull for their treatment.

In the past, I have been critical of the RAWP formula and the way it has coped with cross-boundary flows. I welcome the working party's report and I wonder whether my hon. Friend has any comments on the presentation of cross-boundary flow and the adjustments that may be allowed to cope with an area like Chelmsley Wood. Chelmsley Wood is in the Solihull district health authority to which I pay tribute. The chairman and chief executive of that authority, Mr. Black and Mr. Jackson, do an excellent job.

In the past I have felt that the RAWP calculation did not sufficiently allow for the large number of people who have specialist needs and who must cross to the east Birmingham hospital for treatment. I hasten to add that Birmingham is a friendly area—we are all Birmingham people in the Chamber tonight.

I wish that RAWP could cope with the extra allocation that is needed. That would help east Birmingham hospital which, as the Minister will be aware, has faced great difficulty because of the temporary closure of a number of wards. I was pleased to hear from the Minister that that temporary closure had resulted, not in a turnover of fewer patients per bed, but in the treatment of more patients per bed. That was due to the adjustments that the hospital made in answer to the demands made upon it. The hospital's approach was excellent.

It is important to pay tribute to the regional health authority that has had great difficulties during this period. I congratulate the Government on their allocation of funds, both capital funds and the recently announced increase that will give the west midlands a 6·7 per cent. revenue increase in the resource distribution.

I also pay tribute to Mr. Jim Ackers, the chairman of that authority, and the officials for the way in which they have transformed that authority to the benefit of my constituents who travel to that authority for treatment. The establishment of the Solihull district general hospital is welcome. My hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South-East welcomes the establishment of the first stage of Tamworth hospital. I only hope that the Minister can give us further good news tonight.

I hope that the Minister takes note of the fact that, in this debate, I have welcomed the establishment of better hospital facilities and pressed for a recalculation of the RAWP and to take account of its effect upon the Chelmsley Wood cross-boundary flow to east Birmingham hospital, but I also ask her carefully to consider the needs of the elderly and disabled who live in Hockley Heath, and their desire for a general practice in that village. Ideally, a pharmacist should also be part of that practice.

How will the RAWP announcement and the recent announcement of extra moneys for the National Health Service in the west midlands affect waiting lists throughout the region? If there is anything that my hon. Friend the Minister can say about that or the capital plan, I should be most grateful.

10.14 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): I am delighted to have this opportunity to speak a little about the good work of the West Midlands regional health authority and to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Meriden

(Mr. Mills) on seizing his opportunity this evening with such alacrity. It is good to see my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South-East (Mr. Lightbown) present. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. Maude) wishes to be associated with my hon. Friend's remarks.

I always think it is a great pity that elevation to the Whips Office means that excellent speakers cannot speak in the House as they previously did with such determination on behalf of their constituents. I assure the House, as one who must sign many hundreds of letters to colleagues every week, that they are among the most assiduous. They are undoubtedly looking after their constituents with the greatest determination.

I should like to thank my hon. Friend for his compliment that all hon. Members present were made in Birmingham. Although I am not Birmingham born and bred, I spent 11 years there as a councillor and as a member of various health authorities. I have always been delighted to be known as Brummagemware — a bit brassy, a bit hard, but jolly useful. Whether I have "Made in Birmingham" stamped on me, and where, is another matter.

This morning I had the opportunity to open and was pleased to open in the west midlands the Scott Atkinson centre for the Bromsgrove and Redditch health authority. We all had a thoroughly enjoyable time. The new centre cost more than £200,000 to build and was paid for with money that the health authority had generated from the disposal of surplus land. I congratulate all concerned in the west midlands and in the individual district health authorities for the vigorous way in which they have converted property which is no longer required for service into cash and then into further services for patients.

The centre I visited today is for pre-school children with developmental difficulties and its excellent work will ensure that when those children attend school they will have every chance of progressing normally and not of developing problems in later life. I thought it was excellent. I also had the opportunity to visit a joint funded community home for the mentally handicapped where I had lunch with the residents. That, too, was a delightful experience.

To return to the source of the money for the Scott Atkinson centre, so far land sales in the west midlands have realised £10·5 million and we expect further sales totalling £4·5 million. That is a valuable supplement to the £800 million which the West Midlands regional health authority plans to spend on new capital schemes over the next 10 years, some of which have already been briefly mentioned.

The health services in the west midlands, since I have lived in the region, have improved dramatically and I am sure that my hon. Friends would want to be associated with that remark. Historically the region received substantially less than a fair share of the national cake, taking account of the population and the needs and health requirements of its people. Many local people had to trek to London for health care or, indeed, to do without. As a Member of Parliament who represents a Trent constituency, I put it to my hon. Friends that it was even worse where I now live. However, the west midlands had considerable difficulties.

The Government are committed to redistributing resources to where the patients are. This year, 1986-87, the west midlands has received a cash increase of 8·5 per cent, which is well above the level of inflation. That has taken its budget to more than £1 billion. Next year — which starts in April — there will be a further cash increase of 6·7 per cent. In addition, many health authorities are releasing additional resources through greater efficiency which they can then spend on priority areas. The growth money is now funding a considerable improvement in services.

I mentioned the capital programme. New hospitals are being built, not only in Solihull and Telford but in Tamworth, Bromsgrove and Redditch. There is also a major rebuilding programme in Birmingham as the old single specialty hospitals close and are replaced with new facilities on district general hospital sites. We shall be sad to see the old accident hospital go. The facilities that we are building for the next century, which we hope our sons and grandchildren will see standing, are being planned and built right now with the money that the Government are providing.

The Health Service in the west midlands is expanding rapidly. The total number of staff employed by health authorities in the region increased by 11 per cent. between 1978 and 1985. The number of direct care staff — doctors, nurses and professional and technical staff — increased by 21 per cent., which included an 18 per cent. increase in the number of doctors and dentists and a 19 per cent. increase in the number of nurses and midwives. The west midlands now employs 4,000 more nurses than it did in 1979. Let it not be said that that was simply because we cut the hours. We did cut the hours, but we funded that with extra hours provided by paid staff. Over and above that, we have also funded growth considerably.

All the categories of hospital activity in the region show significant increases in the number of patients treated. For day cases—patients who until a few years ago may have had to undergo a spell of in-patient care—the increase between 1978 and 1984 was more than 50 per cent. In parallel, the number of in-patients treated increased by 19 per cent. and the number of out-patients increased by 11 per cent.

Solihull health authority covers the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Meriden. He is right: some exciting developments are taking place. There has already been considerable growth. The number of in-patient cases treated rose between 1982 and 1985 from just under 17,000 to nearly 21,000. The number of out-patient cases has gone up from 83,000 to 87,000. However many satisfied customers we have in Solihull, there are many more now than there were in 1982 and when the Government took office in 1979. The amount of revenue money allocated to the authority has risen from £21·5 million in 1982-83 to £26·5 million now. That is a considerable increase.

My hon. Friend asked for more details of what is planned in Solihull for the new hospital. Phase 1, which will cost £1·1 million and is due for completion in 1988, will be for diagnostic services, particularly for the district pathology service. The laboratories of our health authorities are assuming a bigger and bigger part in the planning that we have to make. As we increase the importance of prevention and diagnostic and screening services, the laboratory is an essential part of what is happening. We must ensure that our staff are able to work in good, clean and safe facilities. I am glad to see that this is the first stage of that movement.

The main phase, phase 2, which will cost £23·6 million, is due to open in 1993. It will comprise 155 acute beds, 96

[Mrs. Edwina Currie]

geriatric beds, 72 mental illness beds, four theatres and, I understand, seven X-ray and other suites for diagnostic services, as well as the full support services. It will be a showpiece in the west midlands. I suspect that, knowing the calibre of people who will work there, it will be a showplace for the whole country. I am delighted that that development has been announced. We look forward to seeing it go ahead at full speed and providing services to my hon. Friend's constituents.

Many of those services are currently being provided in east Birmingham, the neighbouring district health authority. One of the results has been a build-up of waiting lists in east Birmingham. The long-term solution is to build the new hospital in Solihull. Many patients cannot wait that long. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made a major announcement this week about waiting lists and the money to be allocated to them in the two years starting April. The announcements which we have heard this week refer to the year starting in April, and we expect people to get cracking right away. In the West Midlands regional health authority, in March 1986, a year ago, 78,000 people were on the waiting list. The total number waiting over a year was 22,000 people, or about 28 per cent. In our view that was unacceptable, even though the number had been at its peak during the strikes that had been supported by various hon. Members who normally sit on the Opposition Benches, but who are not in attendance tonight.

An allocation of £2·88 million has been made to the west midlands. We understand that this will mean that 12,300 extra in-patients will be treated, which will include, for example, 266 extra joint replacements and 860 extra cataract operations. Discussions are still continuing on the exact allocations in east Birmingham, but I understand that we can expect allocations of about £41,000 for ear, nose and throat waiting lists and about £70,000 for ophthalmology waiting lists which, of course, will be particularly helpful for elderly people waiting for cataract and other operations. I understand that the authority also gives a high priority to trauma and orthopaedics. It has requested a substantial sum, but the exact allocation is being discussed. Trauma and orthopaedics are major elements in waiting lists all over the country. The excellent facilities throughout the west midlands need to be co-ordinated to ensure that the best service is given.

As my hon. Friend knows, I am constrained in making any comment about the primary care services in Hockley Heath because of the ways in which the system is functioning and the appellate function of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. I was deeply impressed when my hon. Friend the Member for Meriden came with a constituent to talk about these services and discuss his concern that people in villages in his constituency should get the very best service. My hon. Friend is right. I represent a rural area, which is not all that dissimilar from his, and I must say that the people in our villages deserve the best service that we can get for them. The problem is that the Health Service has to pay for all this. Our obligation is to ensure that that money is allocated as efficiently as possible. We therefore take into account everything that has been said by my hon. Friend on behalf of his constituents.

In these ways, therefore, we are ensuring that the west midlands is getting its share of the cake. We expect that the west midlands people will do as they always do and spend that money as efficiently as possible. We look forward to improved health care for all the people of the region.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-seven minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 20 February 1987

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Orders of the Day

Access to Personal Files Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

9.35 am

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

As stated in the explanatory memorandum,

"The Bill provides individuals with a right of access to certain classes of records containing information about themselves; it entitles them to have records amended where this is appropriate; and to be compensated for damage caused by inaccurate information."

It is true and fair to say that in essence this is a simple measure and it is based on the entirely reasonable proposition that people should be able to see the records held on them by public authorities and other institutions and to check that they are accurate.

I am sure that every hon. Member knows that our constituents do not have the luxury of being able to be treated by a single individual when they seek professional guidance and help from statutory bodies and public undertakings. They are inevitably involved perforce, whether they know it or not, with a collection of individuals, perhaps other members of staff, many of whom they have never met or seen but who, nevertheless, are involved at some stage in discussions or decisions about them. Many of the staff inevitably cannot act on first hand personal knowledge. They are obliged in many cases to rely on the material available to them through the vehicle of the personal file.

The information held in those files will not always be recent or comprehensive. There may be old correspondence, for example, about a problem that may or may not still exist. There may be incomplete forms or illegible notes. There may also be memorandums listing tentative conclusions reached some time ago but with nothing in the file to show whether those conclusions were later rejected or confirmed. There may be comments which mean something to whoever wrote them but which could give a different and perhaps misleading impression to someone who does not know the person to whom they relate or the context in which the notes were taken.

Therefore, a decision suddenly has to be made, but no one who knows him or her personally is available. Therefore, inevitably someone else reaches for the file and sits down to decide what to recommend based on information, which could, as I have said, quite easily be misleading in nature. We have the prospect of important decisions about people's job prospects, health, children's education, intervention that social workers may be seeking to make or entitlement to some badly needed service or benefit being taken against that background.

Happily, it is not surprising——

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, especially so early in his speech. However, may I ask him to consider the difficulty faced by head teachers in giving total access to parents of other children's records? I am not saying that there should be any secrecy, but there is a need for some aspects of head teachers' files to be confidential in the interests of the child.

Mr. Kirkwood: I am obliged to the hon. Gentleman. That is an important point. I hope that I shall be able to satisfy him in the course of what I have to say and during discussion on the Bill that there are some safeguards and exemptions that I hope will meet his important point. However, he must accept that there has to be a balance between allowing unfettered discretion to head teachers, which would, in effect, drive a coach and horses through the Bill, and the need to protect the situation that he has rightly described. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not oppose the principle of the Bill because of his attitude to an important but subsidiary matter. If the Bill is given a Second Reading today, we shall be able to examine the issue in more detail in Committee. I accept that it is an important one.

It is not surprising if mistakes are sometimes made in the keeping of records on others. It is not surprising either that people may feel that something which they once said may have been misinterpreted. They will therefore be anxious about what their records show. Obviously it is impossible to ban mistakes, but we can allow individuals to see what is recorded about them so that they can identify errors, omissions or misleading or irrelevant information. If they disagree with something, they can ask that their point of view is acknowledged explicitly on the record. That is what the Bill seeks to allow individuals to do.

The principle of access is surely beyond dispute and non-controversial. I say that because the principle forms part of the Government's computer legislation. From November, the Data Protection Act 1984 will allow people to see the personal information that is held on them provided that that information is held on computer files. However, they will have no right to see information about themselves that is kept on ordinary paper files and records, and that is where most important information is still kept. The Bill seeks to extend the right of access to certain classes of those ordinary manual records.

The Bill is already familiar to the House. It is based on a measure that was introduced by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith). I acknowledge the valuable support that he has given me as a sponsor. I value his judgment on some of the difficult decisions that have to be taken in the process of drafting a Bill. The idea is essentially a simple one, but, as so often is the case, trying to translate that into parliamentary language can be difficult. The hon. Gentleman has been a tower of strength in that respect.

I pay tribute also to the work and assistance given to me by the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris). With his usual wit, drive and intelligence he has assisted me in gettting the Bill as far as Second Reading. I cannot

[Mr. Kirkwood]

imagine why the hon. Gentleman, as the possessor of such sterling qualities, feels so comfortable as part of the ministerial team at the Department of the Environment. If he ever gains access to the personal file that is held on him by the Government Chief Whip, I advise him to ensure that a doctor, psyehiatrist or psychologist is present when the contents are revealed to him. That is a matter that I shall not pursue further.

The House will know that I introduced the same Bill under the ten minute rule procedure in October 1985. As well as enjoying support within the House from sponsors and others on both sides of the Chamber, I underline the fact that the Bill has attracted an extraordinary degree of support from more than 130 organisations, which have written to tell me that they support the principle and general approach of this measure. I appreciate especially the support that has come from bodies which represent those who hold records that are covered by the Bill. These include the Association of District Councils, the Association of County Councils, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the Association of Metropolitan Authorities.

There has been an enormous amount of support also from voluntary organisations, such as Dr. Barnardo's, the Children's Society, the Family Welfare Association, the National Union of Townswomen's Guilds, the Scottish Women's Rural Institutes — Scottish Members will understand that the institute's support gave me particular pleasure — and the National Council for Voluntary Organisations. These organisations hold records about the voluntary social services that they provide and they would be subject to the Bill. Some of them already allow voluntary open access to their records. I take their support as a sign that the Bill, taken with the important safeguards that it provides, is regarded as a practical, viable and valuable measure which does not interfere with their ability to keep the information that they need if they are to be effective.

I shall deal with the Bill's main features. People would have the right, on making an application and satisfying the record holder as to their identity, to see their own records and to obtain copies of them. If they find errors or misleading or irrelevant information, they can ask for amendments to be made. If the record holder is not convinced of their case, the applicant would have one of two options open to him. If he feels strongly enough about the matter, he can appeal to the court, and the court will then decide whether he is entitled to access. A less daunting alternative would be to prepare a statement setting out his or her own views on the matter that is in dispute, which the record holder would be required to incorporate into the record so that anyone consulting it subsequently would be able to see that the individual did not accept the view that had been stated officially.

The Bill would ultimately allow individuals to seek compensation in the courts if they had suffered damage that they could prove was the direct result of action taken on the basis of inaccurate or misleading information. The record holder would not be liable if he could show that he had taken reasonable care over the quality of information. The House will know that there is a similar provision in the Data Protection Act, which covers computer-stored information.

A number of those who hold records that are covered by the Bill have asked several questions and I shall deal with one or two of them briefly. First, there is concern that they might find themselves facing libel actions. For example, someone might see his record and feel slighted by a comment that he considers to be uncomplimentary. Record holders would enjoy qualified privilege that would protect them from such actions provided that what had been written was in good faith and disclosed only for legitimate purposes. The holder would properly lose such privilege if any comments had been made with malicious intent.

Retrospection has caused some concern. I reassure the House that the Bill's provisions would relate only to records written after the Bill took its place on the statute book and after the date of enforcement and implementation. I accept that to try to introduce a right of access that applied retrospectively would involve complications, to put it mildly. The right of access under the Bill would apply only to information written after the Bill's enactment. When people record something in future it will be in the knowledge that the person it concerns may see it at some time. As I have explained, earlier records will not be available.

A measure of this sort requires carefully balanced safeguards. I submit that the Bill as it stands contains them. There would be no right of access to personal information affecting the privacy of another person—for example, another member of the family—without that person's consent. In some instances a member of the family, or in rare circumstances even a neighbour, might need to speak to the record holder in confidence about a problem in the home: a family member suffering from a mental illness; or if he suspected that child abuse was occurring. At present he can do so in confidence, and he would be able to continue to do so under the Bill. Information that would identify someone who had provided information to the record holder would not be disclosed. This protection would apply only to members of the public or the family, not to someone acting in an official or professional capacity. Doctors, social workers or other professional staff are under an obligaton to communicate such concerns, and rightly so. They could not refrain from doing so because they would be embarrassed to be identified. Indeed, the purpose of the Bill is that those acting in such professional capacities should be prepared to justify what they say to the person involved.

Information that might expose a person who had recorded information, or anyone else, to risk of attack would also qualify for exemption under the Bill. This is an important issue that the Bill must confront. That situation would also qualify for exemption under the Bill, though strangely enough no such exemption seems to exist under the Data Protection Act. That is a matter of concern that the House may wish to return to at a later date.

The Bill contains special provision for difficult cases where it is thought that somebody might be badly upset, or even harmed, by what he reads in his records. I accept that people, particularly if they are in a vulnerable state, whether it is physical or mental, may react adversely to certain material. The Bill makes it possible to respond to such situations without denying access. It is difficult to imagine how a person can be told that he is not to be

allowed to see his file because it might upset or harm him without that producing enormous anxiety about what terrible information the file might conceal.

The Bill sets out two safeguards, which can be invoked only on the advice of a doctor or qualified social worker. First, if a doctor or qualified social worker thinks that somebody may be distressed at what he reads, the Bill allows the record holder discretion to ensure that someone is on hand to provide an explanation or counselling, or both, when the record is viewed. Instead of a copy of the record being sent to the home by post, the person will be invited to make an appointment to come into the office and read the record, where somebody can explain it or discuss it with him. Afterwards, the person should be able to have a copy of the record to take away with him. That is an important safeguard, and I hope that it reassures the House as an attempt to deal with those cases where distress might be caused.

There is also the safeguard that if a situation were more serious, and a doctor or social worker thought that somebody might be harmed by what he or she read, access could be deferred for up to six months. This would, for example, allow access to be given after rather than in the middle of a serious emotional crisis. It would allow time for treatment or counselling to be provided or make it possible to reveal information step by step rather than all at once. Deferring access would avoid the anxiety and suspicion that an outright refusal would produce. Handled sympathetically, it would probably be accepted by the applicant. If not, the Bill provides an appeal procedure.

I shall now describe how I see the Bill working in real life. I see people seeking access to their records only in certain restricted situations. For example, people may want to learn something about their past health or treatment or earlier life which is described on record. For some people, particularly those who have grown up in care, the records held about them may be a unique source of their personal history.

Another example concerns people who might want to see records because they feel that someone has misunderstood or misinterpreted something that they have said and they want to satisfy themselves that no false impression, which could prejudice the way in which they are dealt with, has been recorded. Again, they may feel that they are being kept in the dark about something, perhaps from the kindest of motives, as with the doctor who wishes to protect a patient from disturbing news about his condition or illness. Sometimes, such lack of information is as much a cause of anxiety as the news being withheld.

People may feel that they are simply not getting the help that they deserve or the benefit that they expect, and they want to know whether their circumstances have been accurately and fairly described. Nothing is worse in such situations than to be told that the file is confidential and cannot be seen. That confirms people's worst fears and suspicions and poisons the atmosphere.

On the other hand, if the request is treated as perfectly natural and reasonable, tension is immediately removed. An invitation to see the file is a sign that the record is there not to enable the record holder to exercise control over the applicant but to provide the best service. That gesture is enormously appreciated.

Many doctors, social workers, schools and local authorities that already allow access on a voluntary basis report that, although people often ask for the record out of suspicion, they usually go away impressed at what they have, for the first time, discovered is being done on their behalf. I suspect that opening such records will help many, even if relatively few formally ask for access.

The Bill covers a wide range of subjects, detailed in the schedule. I accept that this is an ambitious measure. The Government have said that they would find it difficult to countenance legislation to this extent and embracing such a wide scope. However, they have also said that they would not oppose the principle of the measure and if we were prepared in Committee to restrict the Bill to sectors such as education, housing and social work records we could continue discussions on some other sectors later.

As education covers 8·7 million children at schools in the United Kingdom, housing covers 11 million council house tenants and there must be 1 million social work records, even if the Bill is confined only to these three sectors it is a substantial advance in the rights available to individuals. Because it is important to see the principle of the Bill in legislation, and because even a restricted measure would be of great value to many people, I hope that I can persuade the House that even on that more constrained and limited basis the Bill should be enacted.

Mr. Greenway: I apologise for interrupting the hon. Gentleman for a second time and I assure him of my support for the principle that he is advancing. However, I wish to put my earlier point in another way. Some children need to be protected in some schools and open access to their files may take away that protection. What protection does the hon. Gentleman envisage for head teachers and teachers involved in setting out files for such children? I do not need to labour the point; I think that the hon. Gentleman will know what I mean.

Mr. Kirkwood: Difficult situations can arise. We have tried to meet those objections. We had a series of consultations with a large number of bodies in education. We have refined the exemptions and safeguards as best we are able. If there are points in the Bill that the hon. Gentleman thinks need to be refined, I hope that he will consider putting his name forward to serve on the Committee, because his valuable experience would be welcome to the sponsor, and we could make sure that the Bill, if it reaches the statute book, meets the points that he has rightly raised.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): About 20 local authorities have instructed that school records will be available to parents, and there is no evidence of a problem in any of those authorities. Some of them have run into difficulties in that they still have to keep a small part of the records hidden from the parents or from the child, when the child is older, because it contains information from educational psychiatrists or from professionals outside the school. That leaves a lingering anxiety. However, with school records and information that the head or other teachers put on record, there is no problem. That part of the Bill has been demonstrated to be working. The big advantage of a national Bill is that people will realise that they have the right to look at records. Unfortunately, in some local authorities, that right is not well publicised.

Mr. Kirkwood: What the hon. Gentleman says is probably the best way of answering the point. It is working in practice in many areas and causing no problems. The

[Mr. Kirkwood]

first consequence of this legislation will be a general improvement in record keeping. In future, records will be compiled with much greater care and thought. People would avoid recording unsubstantiated speculation because they would know that at some future date they might have to justify what they had written down.

The other main effect would be to create an atmosphere of openness in which people are told or shown what they need to know when they ask for it. It would not require the rigmarole of any formal request for access because questions are much more likely to be answered informally when they arise. Unfortunately, that does not often happen at present, but it would follow as a consequence of this Bill is accepted.

We need access as of right to information recorded about ourselves, and we need to have the right to ensure that such information is fair and correct. The legislation to create those rights will do more to enhance the quality of our democracy and redress the balance between the administrative arm of Government and the individual than almost any other Bill that could be introduced by a Back Bencher through the private Members' procedure. On that basis, I hope that the Bill will find favour with the House.

10 am

Mr. Steve Norris (Oxford, East): I congratulate the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on his good fortune in winning sixth place in the ballot.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): And on his wit and intelligence.

Mr. Norris: Yes, not to say on the ease with which he assassinated me politically, because his congratulations are, I suppose, the nearest equivalent in my party to a recommendation for the Order of Lenin or a place on the short list of directors-general of the BBC.

However, I pay genuine tribute to the hon. Gentleman for the way in which he has brought forward the Bill and for the tireless amount of work that he has put in behind the scenes to prepare support for the measure and to prepare the Bill and negotiate its way to this debate. I also pay tribute to Maurice Frankel, the director of the Campaign for Freedom of Information, and to his staff, who have been equally tireless in providing information for those of us who have a special interest in this subject, and in circulating hon. Members with the logic of the arguments to support the Bill.

The unanswerable logic behind the principle of the Bill commends it warmly across the whole political spectrum. I am delighted to see in his place the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) who is a co-sponsor of the Bill. I am equally pleased to see my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken), who is a long-time supporter of the Bill, my hon. Friend that most fair-minded and reasonable of men, the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) and my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) whose endeavours in this field culminated, if that is the right word —perhaps I should say whose endeavours along the way have included the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985. That in itself is a tribute to his dedication to the principle of access to information. I am also pleased to see in his place my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith). *[Interruption.]*—My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) reminds me of his own undying devotion to the cause, if only because it may give him another opportunity to make one of his pithy speeches which so delight the House on many occasions and to which I am sure we all look forward. It is a pleasure to listen to my hon. Friend, and I hope that he will have the good fortune to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I also see in his place my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden), whose dedication to this Bill is unquestioned—at least by him. How could I omit from such a glittering list assembled to debate this important measure my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway), whose continuing interest in matters of this sort he has already demonstrated in this debate.

This measure commends widespread support across the political spectrum. Over 50 Conservative Back Benchers responded to an invitation from me to support the campaign. We recognise that if hon. Members are sufficiently interested in the subject to return one of the thousands of questionnaires that they receive every week through the post, that in itself is indicative of a considerable degree of support, certainly on the Government side, for this measure.

I commend to my hon. Friends the conclusions of a recent MORI poll which established not only that there was overwhelming support in the country for the principle of access to personal files but that that support was marginally higher among Conservative voters than among supporters of other parties. Perhaps I may be forgiven for making that partisan point. Therefore, there is no reason for any of my hon. Friends to feel that support for this measure is not entirely consistent with the aims and aspirations of our party.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): In connection with that poll and for my benefit, will my hon. Friend distinguish between the issue of freedom of information generally, which carries much broader implications, and what is contained in this Bill?

Mr. Norris: My hon. Friend has made an important point that brings me to the first of the principles that I want to discuss—the philosophical basis for the concept of access to information. Very little distinguishes the philosophical principle on which both freedom of information and access to personal files are based. They are both founded on a concept which at least on the Government Benches is regarded as possibly the most important of all—the individual rights and freedoms to which we attach such great importance.

One simply cannot exist as a free person in a democratic sociey unless one is aware of why and how decisions are being made on one's behalf by those who serve in Government the society of which one is a member. Following from that, in a democracy one of the most fundamental freedoms to which one is entitled is the freedom to know what sort of information is being kept by that multiplicity of organisations which these days hold files on people. Those files are power in the hands of those who hold them.

I should like to turn to the principles on which the Bill is founded. As the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire said, the Government have already accepted

the logic of the principle contained in the Bill. As the hon. Gentleman said, the Government did that in the Data Protection Act 1984. That Act enshrines the European convention on data protection and, in turn, that convention is based on two broad principles, although there are more than two principles in the schedule. The two broad principles are first, the right of a person to know what is said about him in a file held by a third party, and secondly, the ability of computers to disseminate information worldwide. That may render a person especially vulnerable, because errors in the information could also be disseminated worldwide in a micro circuit.

There is one important distinction. Although access to a personal file is a cardinal principle, it must be clearly distinguished in the minds of those considering this Bill from a right of privacy. A right of privacy is an equally important right for every individual. As Access to Personal Files Bill does not mean an open access to files Bill, it means a particular right of access for an individual to the file that contains information relating to him.

Let us consider the principle of the right to know what is said about one on a file. Why is that, in practice, so important? One of the principal reasons—in my view, the dominant reason—is that files, almost by definition, develop a life of their own. If files are used only as an aide-memoire by a person with a note of names, ages, occupations and characteristics to remind himself of the person with whom he is dealing, and if that information never goes any further than the individual who collates it, it is hard to see why it is so desperately important that that person's privacy—just as important a concept—should be invaded. Almost by definition, in the vast majority of cases filed information will either be used for example in medical records to determine a pattern of treatment long in the future when the file note is the important starting point for the diagnosis of the patient's debility, or it will be used when a third party examines a file to find information which may have arrived from a variety of sources.

That is where the danger of not giving an individual access arises. That is also how errors occur. Hon. Members will know of the old story of how the message in the trenches in the first world war was translated from "Send reinforcements, we are going to advance", into, "Send three and fourpence, we are going to a dance." In a series of references from one person to another the information became ever so gently and ever so innocently transmuted into something which, in the event, bore no relation to what was originally intended.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham. Erdington): It was a good idea though.

Mr. Norris: The hon. Gentleman intervenes from a sedentary position with his usual good humour, and he is quite right. However, if one was looking for an advance on the three and fourpence, one might have been disappointed by the message that was eventually received.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman—who I understand will not oppose the measure, and to whom I hope to have the opportunity to listen—agrees that one of the most important considerations is that once an error finds itself on to a file it assumes the status of fact. It then assumes the status of eternal truth, and from then on it forms the basis of subsequent judgments. That is precisely the danger with which we are faced over the Bill. There is no question but that the life which a file obtains is a major reason for needing to be able to control it and assure that at all times this live animal is what it says it will be.

Files in this modern age are appallingly powerful weapons. I use those words advisedly. Files are collected by a huge variety of organisations — governmental agencies, local authorities, public bodies of various types and even voluntary agencies. Those files can affect a person's health; they can determine where or how a person lives; they can determine for parents how their children are educated; whether people are promoted or demoted at work; whether they are offered credit to buy items that they may need to improve their standard of living; whether they are entitled to benefits on which to live—which entails going though that morass of complicated legislation which forms the basis of our social security laws. All of these areas of a person's life can be vital in terms of their general comfort and the general standard of living that they enjoy. While it may be perfectly justifiable and lawful to maintain such files, individuals must have the right to see, correct or dissent from judgments on the files and to be compensated where errors have caused them harm.

Recent events are important in respect of this measure. It will not have escaped the notice of hon. Members that the recent "World in Action" programme dealt with the Economic League files, which apparently are held to provide employers with a list of so-called black-listed employees, whom, it is felt, it would be unwise to employ. The hon. Members who saw that programme will agree that it was a rather disturbing revelation. Many of those who support the broad terms of the Economic League—I would find sympathy with a lot of what it says—will be concerned at the existence of such files.

What is particularly important is that if a person wishes to keep a file, on which he collates a number of names and items of personal information, that is his perfect right. I do not deny anybody the opportunity to collate that information. Indeed, based on that information, he may wish to make judgments—right or wrong, foolish or otherwise—as to whether he will employ somebody. There is a crucial point here. An individual, so named, fully qualified for a job sees an employer. He says, "I would like to do the job." They discuss it, they agree terms, but that person gets a letter a week later saying, "I know we agreed terms. I know that you and I got on well. I know that you are the only applicant for the job, but you're not going to get it." That person is entitled to say, "Hang on a minute. Why is that? What has happened?" If the answer is, "I am not prepared to tell you", or, "I got my information from a source that told me that you were not the kind of person that I want to employ", it seems that a right exists which is as important as the right to maintain the files. It is the right of the individual to be shown the information relating to him and on which that judgment was made. That individual may then have the facility to say, "Hang on. You are making lots of assumptions about me having had a career of political involvement, or having been responsible for all sorts of industrial disruption or disorder. That is not me. You have confused me with my cousin, with my brother or somebody who merely shares the same surname, or my file has simply been entered under somebody else's name and you have been misled in drawing your conclusions." In those circumstances, a reasonable employer would say, "In that case, I will

[Mr. Norris]

rethink your application." One hopes that that would lead to the person not suffering a loss as a consequence and that he would be able to take up the employment.

Ultimately, let us assume that the employer says, "Frankly, I have looked at it. You may disagree with the conclusions that I have drawn about you, but they are factually correct. I believe that the fact that you do nothing but wear red ties and CND badges is clear evidence that you are a wholly unacceptable subversive. On that basis I refuse to employ you." The employer has a right to do that.

If the employer does not want to employ the chap, it is his own hard luck. Certainly, if the applicant is the best qualified, the employer is a fool to himself. But if he wants to do that, let him do it. The rights that would be conveyed by granting access to personal files would mean that that potential employee could go to his local newspaper and say, "Look, this is the basis on which these people are making judgments about employment." That is a very powerful weapon in his hands, and one that would ensure a greater degree of equity between the potential employer and the potential employee. It would convey to both parties an elevated status, which they do not enjoy at present, but which they should enjoy.

I shall now deal with some of the practical implications of granting access to files. I want to deal with them, essentially, in two areas. First, with regard to professionalism and, secondly, with regard to error.

Probably the greatest benefit to be conveyed by this measure is that when professionals — social workers, housing officers, doctors, teachers and head teachers — know that the records which they are keeping about an individual are liable to be looked at by that individual, the quality of record keeping improves. It is ironic that although many organisations and individuals have independently introduced access, almost always, when a professional body has to be convinced of the value of access, those people who are among the makers of policy and ideas and who are sufficiently interested in the profession for its own sake and do not regard it simply as a job from nine until five, lead the profession forward into providing it.

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): Does my hon. Friend believe that this legislation will help doctors to improve their writing so that it is legible and understood?

Mr. Norris: My hon. Friend touches on an important matter. The other day I received a letter on what I am sure was a frightfully important subject from a medical practitioner in my constituency whose qualifications were endless—in fact, together with his address, they took up a half his first sheet of writing paper. Having read his letter from about a quarter to 10 until 11.30 last night, I am none the wiser as to what on earth he was talking about. I feel frightfully inadequate. I am sure that I shall have lost his vote, if I ever had it, because he will think that I am a total fool when I reply in respect of the abolition of dog licences legislation when he was talking about defence policy.

The quality of record keeping is important. A doctor may understand his illegible script but if someone else is required to read it — which often happens — the possibility of error arises.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch) *rose*——

Mr. Norris: I see that my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) wishes to intervene. I am delighted that we have been able to attract him from his duties elsewhere. Of course, I give way.

Mr. Adley: I hesitate to interrupt my hon. Friend in full flow, so good is he. I support his comment about professionalism and increased performance. I remind my hon. Friend that, during the passage of the Local Government (Access to Information) Bill, the chief executives and chief officers of Bradford city council and one or two other councils which had taken a national lead in introducing these measures in advance of the legislation were insistent that there had been a major improvement because their records were tidied up. Their officers felt that the records were more accurate.

Mr. Norris: I agree with my hon. Friend. It is right to pay tribute to Bradford. All political parties on the council supported the idea of access to files. In support of the comments by the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett), I must say that, if these principles are adopted and the files are opened — there is nothing to stop any local authority, Government Department or statutory body from deciding to do so now—the end of the world does not occur. What happens is to the benefit of greater professionalism and improved service to clients.

I have referred to the circular which I sent to colleagues inviting them to support the Bill. In response, I received one or two representations from colleagues who said, "I am very worried about this legislation. I keep files on all my surgery cases. Constituents come to see me and I write things down. Frankly, I would be appalled at the idea that the people involved were going to see my files."

This leads us into territory with which all hon. Members will be familiar. We all have the white plastic bag constituent who arrives at our surgeries. I have a constituent — I hope that he will not read these comments, but I do not believe that *Hansard* is his bedside reading — who has been to see me at, I think, every surgery I have held over the past four years. Such is his enthusiasm that, the other day, I received a message saying that he was very sorry but he was ill and would not be able to come to see me. I thought that it was very kind of him to enter that apology, but, although of course I am keen to do everything that I can to help him, I must admit that I have probably reached the limits of my endeavours with him and that the file notes which I now keep on him are somewhat desultory. However, I set myself a target, saying, I shall keep my records in such a way that, however illogical the requests by constituents or however odd the stories that they want to tell me, I shall merely record what I am told, what they say they want and what I was prepared to say or do.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley (Surrey, South-West) *rose*——

Mr. Norris: It is a great pleasure to see my hon. Friend. Of course, I give way.

Mrs. Bottomley: Does my hon. Friend agree that greater openness may lead to greater difficulty? I am thinking particularly of the example of child abuse. It is difficult to assess and detect what is happening and there is great resistance among families to acknowledging what is happening in the family. If a social worker has suspicions which he may not be able to substantiate, what does he do? I am concerned that social workers will risk

euphemisms or will make no note on the file because they are afraid that the family will come in greatly affronted. In the early stages of the case, it is often a matter of surmise and suspicion. I am concerned that there will be an over-reaction to my hon. Friend's proposals and that very little will be recorded.

Mr. Norris: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who has made a serious point. Professionalism in record keeping and the knowledge that a record will become public do not mean that euphemism is the order of the day, or that neglecting important information, because it might be thought sensitive, is the way to proceed. We have taken very much on board the circumstances to which my hon. Friend refers. Her interest in this matter is well known.

Clause 5 deals with exemptions to the right of access. Clause 5(1)(c) refers to where disclosure

"would expose some person other than the applicant to the risk of serious or mental harm".

Clause 5(1)(b) refers to where disclosure

"would reveal the identity of an individual, other than a person acting in a professional capacity, who has provided information".

Clause 5(1)(a) refers to where disclosure

"would affect the privacy of another individual who can be indentified from that information".

The legislation refers elsewhere to circumstances in which disclosure might harm the individual—I hope that hon. Members will forgive me if I do not refer to the precise line in the Bill.

I remind my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) that we are talking about allowing the individual access to his file. We are not talking about allowing an individual access to any other file. If we have protected information — as in the paragraphs which I have read — supplied by a third party which might enable that third party to be identified, the risks to which my hon. Friend referred, — for example, in child abuse cases, would to some degree be catered for. I am sure that the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire would agree that those are precisely the types of issues which we would wish to debate in Committee. A great deal of attention was paid to those issues during the passage of the Data Protection Bill in 1984 and it is vital that we get them right if this legislation is to be of service to clients and is not to be an impediment to the proper course of social work.

Mr. Cash: I should like to refer to one point which arises from clause 6 and is connected with the point to which my hon. Friend has just referred — "suitably qualified" practitioners and what that means. There are circumstances in which a person goes to an acupuncturist or chiropractor. What about them? I speak as one who is chairman of the all-party committee on complementary and alternative medicine and I declare an interest as an adviser to some of the bodies involved in that work. A serious problem arises. We need to be careful that, in extending the rights as proposed by my hon. Friend, we do not end up by restricting other people's rights.

Mr. Norris: I agree with my hon. Friend's comment. He knows that in clause 6(2) of the Bill a "suitably qualified practitioner" is defined currently as meaning

"a registered medical practitioner or a person holding the Certificate of Qualification in Social Work or the Certificate in Social Service."

My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford has put his finger on a detailed matter which I did not intend to mention, but which should be considered in Committee. That is whether the definition of a "suitably qualified practitioner" is yet adequate. My hon. Friend may have exposed the point that it is not.

I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that the phrase "suitably qualified practitioner" is used in the Bill in the context of when and how it should be gauged that exemptions should apply. Clearly, there must be some sort of expert advice in those circumstances, and advice that will be quickly available to the person charged with the responsibility for the records.

I note that the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire agrees with that point. That aspect must be looked at in Committee. Before my hon. Friend intervened on this important subject, we were talking about professionalism and how the leaders of professions, those who set standards of competence and move professions forward, are in favour of the Bill. On the matter of medical records, the Royal College of Nursing, the Royal College of Midwives and the Health Visitors Association have all expressed support for the principle and general approach of the Bill.

In 1983, an inter-professional working group chaired by the then president of the British Medical Association, Sir Douglas Black, reported in favour of a legally backed right of access to health records provided that adequate safeguards to protect those who might be harmed were included.

Although it is true that the BMA annual conference last year narrowly voted against such a right — the voting was 183 votes to 169—the BMA's ethical committee and its full council were in favour of an access right. The BMA's general practicioners committee still remains in favour of a right of access subject to safeguards.

The *Lancet* said of the Access to Personal Files Bill

"it is a development that should be welcomed rather than resisted by doctors".

I shall give some examples of what poor professionalism can do. I mentioned some of these examples during the proceedings of the Education Bill, now the Education Act, 1986. They bear repetition because they are some appalling instances of how sloppy unprofessional reporting has left a scar on an individual that he will find difficult to overcome. I have some quotations from pupil records which the Campaign for Freedom for Information has gathered.

"Has a reputation for petty theft, which we are sure of, but there is a lack of proof in several cases".

If my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Home Office, who has a distinguished legal career, had that submitted in evidence against one of his clients, it would not take him long to demolish the prosecution's case. I have a further example:

"A bit concerned over X's honesty, though as yet no evidence".

That is fairly damning. It is damning without the slightest reference to fact on which to base that extraordinary conclusion about an individual's veracity and, who knows, his suitability for a position of trust, for promotion within the school, for subsequent employment and other matters. A further example is:

"This girl is a thief and a liar and sly".

It is interesting that that comment was forwarded from the girl's previous school and that a teacher at the new school reported on the same girl,

"This young lady seems honest, truthful, frank and extremely helpful."

[Mr. Norris]

Either that young lady underwent the most extraordinary transformation of character or someone wrote a report hastily, at the end of a long tiring week when perhaps things had not gone as they should have, when he allowed himself a lapse of professionalism which has left an unforgivable scar on that person's record.

Occasionally, a rather clipped approach is taken. The approaches taken go from the discursive to the curt, such as:

"Pasty, podgy, vacant, moribund, harmless, frustrating".

I used to know a party game that went something like, take the following words and list them in an intelligible sentence. I defy any hon. Member to come up with a sentence that links

"Pasty, podgy, vacant, moribund, harmless, frustrating."

We are not talking of six people but one. Another example said of a young girl:

"Very much inclined to sulk. Wants to be liked, and likes to hang around and curry favour with teacher. Very much inclined to cheat. Rather lovable in spite of all."

That is a lovely thought. One can just imagine that. The important question — I am sure hon. Members will appreciate—is what on earth is the conclusion that one may draw about that young person? How is that comment helpful to that young person? Just out of interest, that was written on a primary school record when that young girl was seven, and it was still on the file when that young lady was 14-years-old. That is the sort of nonsense that can be perpetuated by sloppy record-keeping. I shall quote one or two other examples that I hope will not bore hon. Members unduly.

Mr. Cash: Does my hon. Friend mean the Whips' Office?

Mr. Norris: My hon. Friend rather dangerously asks me to allude to the Whips' Office. If he is referring to my file there, I dare not ask for access, not because it would be denied, but because I dare not see what is said there.

I have two further examples.

"I believe he is moving inexorably towards a life of crime and terms of imprisonment"——

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): My hon. Friend has been to the Whips' Office.

Mr. Norris: I had always taken my hon. Friend as a friend. I shall have to question his approaches in future. The quote that I have just mentioned is a wonderful example of lack of professionalism. I must continue.

"I believe he is moving inexorably towards a life of crime and terms of imprisonment. He affects a nice side to his character but this is not genuine".

Come to think of it, one could say that about 649 of the 650 hon. Members, the exception being yourself, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): I am sure that the whole House wants to hear these examples. The hon. Gentleman should not really turn his back on the Chair when addressing his colleagues.

Mr. Norris: I beg your pardon, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I turned my back only to point out to my hon. Friends that the one exception, the 650th hon. Member, was your good self. I give one last example.

"Jimmy is a cancer to the student body—if he didn't commit this offence, then someone else in his family did"

In my village there used to be a family like that. I do not know how many of the multiplicity of offences committed in the village were committed by that family, but, my goodness me, they were damned for all those for which they were not caught with their hands in the till.

Although all this is amusing and one can enjoy some of the examples, they are serious and they demonstrate that those sort of records occur all too easily when the belief is that the persons concerned will never be able to look at that record and say "That is outrageous. It is subjective. It is unprofessional. It is damaging. It is gratuitous." All of those records exist. They have been discovered. They are bona fide records, and every one of them, as all hon. Members will understand, has had or could have had the most damaging effect on the individuals concerned.

I have dealt with a lack of professionalism. Let me also deal with cases where it is not lack of professionalism per se, but simple error that may cause difficulties for individuals. I shall give an example on housing. A man who was living in highly unsuitable private accommodation, and who applied to be put on the council's housing waiting list, was surprised to be turned down on the grounds that he was "reasonably accommodated" already. He asked the council to show him the information that he had entered on his application form. Incidentally, there is a right of access to that information on his personal circumstances under the Housing Act 1980 that the Government introduced and which is evidence of their good intentions in that whole area. Having obtained that information, the man discovered that one factor—hon. Members may find this minor or critical — had been omitted. That factor was that the man was blind. He wrote again and was supplied with the housing visitor's notes. That degree of disclosure is not normally practised by most authorities. Although those notes recorded his blindness, they overlooked some other important factors — that the man had to reach his flat by climbing an external staircase and that his wife was pregnant. He drew those errors to the authority's attention and soon afterwards received council accommodation.

Equally, in many cases errors can be made in medical records. A study of 1,500 general practitioner records in the Leicester area found that 1·4 per cent. got the patient's sex wrong. I imagine that it might have been possible for most doctors to determine that error on consulting the patient, although with fashions these days, who knows? If the doctors recorded the sex incorrectly or omitted it, it is potentially dangerous. Patients' dates of birth were wrong or omitted in 5·8 per cent. of those records. Eighteen per cent. of patients in the Oxford area who were sent a summary of their medical history found that additions, corrections or deletions were required.

In another survey 12 per cent. of patients who saw their records at a London general practice found errors, ranging from the wrong address to information about one child being recorded in the notes of a brother or sister. In one case a woman was described as having had an abortion when she had specifically refused one. In America 62 per cent. of patients in a psychiatric ward who saw their notes said that it gave them a chance to correct inaccurate information, 69 per cent. of the staff said that they became more accurate in recording because of the access policy, and 63 per cent. said that open records were more valuable as a clinical tool. In all those cases I have the data and the base material to justify those statements.

Hon. Members will not need to be convinced that faced with that error rate, whether 18 per cent. or as low as 6 per

cent., there is a case for saying, "The person who will recognise the error because it will be obvious to him is the patient. For goodness sake, it is in the interests of both doctor and patient that access should be permitted."

My hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West touched on the important question whether access to a file may cause the individual harm. We must examine that important subject. However, in my experience, a constituent or a patient with a particular paranoia who believes that his doctor, Member of Parliament or some other agency is conspiring against him, is much less likely to be convinced of the conspiracy if he is shown the notes about him than if they are denied him. He would regard that denial as evidence of the conspiracy. Sometimes in cases which superficially seem to be those where access should be withdrawn, on closer examination are not. If the notes are written properly and professionally there is nothing to fear from access and, if not wholly therapeutic, they may have a positive influence on a patient's treatment.

The campaign is not irresponsible and has also addressed itself to the exemptions that were discussed in extenso during the passage of the Data Protection Bill. It deals with the provisions of national security, the detection and apprehension of offenders, the prevention of crime and the collection of taxes or duties. I wish to make it absolutely clear that none of the Bill's sponsors believes that its purpose is to allow individuals to subvert the work of legitimate agencies or national security, or in any way to disturb the proper passage of the Government's work. We believe that exemptions must be tightly drawn in the interests of individual freedom and to ensure that on every possible occasion where doubt arises, it is exorcised in favour of access. Nevertheless, we believe that there is a proper place for exemptions.

Finally, I draw attention to a most important distinction which we must consider. So far everything that I have said could have been said about the Data Protection Act 1984. If every record to which I have referred is held on a computer, it will be covered by the Data Protection Act which comes into force in November and which will allow individuals access, subject to various exemptions, as agreed, and subject to various orders made by the Secretary of State, as agreed. Yet, there is an absolutely ludicrous anomaly. If a record is held on a computer, access will be granted, but if it is in a little black book, a manila folder or stacked in a drawer from A to Z, access will be denied. That distinction is indefensible.

In the early days of the Data Protection Bill that took on serious overtones. A pamphlet was issued under the aegis of the National Computing Centre, but with the usual disclaimer on the cover. In giving advice to computer professionals about how to apply the Data Protection Act it stated, "This business of serious confidential records is terribly worrying, so if the information is extremely serious, my advice is to take it off the computer and put it back on a manual record where it is not covered." There was, rightly, an outcry at that advice and the National Computing Centre disclaimed responsibility for what was said in the pamphlet and amended its advice.

In "World in Action", Economic League representatives were asked whether they kept records on computer, in which case the right of access would be granted under the Data Protection Act, and they replied, "Oh, no." In effect they said that they were not so stupid and that they knew that so long as the records were kept in a certain form, they were sacrosanct.

Mr. John Powley (Norwich, South): I have been listening with interest to my hon. Friend's remarks. Will he speculate whether there is a possibility—I put it no higher than that—of an unofficial file being created for some of the areas which he eloquently outlined? In that way one file would be subject to access under the provisions of the legislation while a discreet unofficial file would be available only to a few eyes. I am not suggesting that that would be a proper practice or that anybody should undertake it, but will my hon. Friend consider whether that may result?

Mr. Norris: My right hon. Friend is right to draw attention to that point, which was made during the passage of the Data Protection Act. We can do absolutely nothing about an organisation which is prepared to go to such lengths to be covert in its retention of confidential information on individuals. Such people have set out from the outset to embark on a practice which they know is, at best, anti-social and, at worst, illegal. I have no doubt that such files are kept now and that their existence is formally denied. In this place we must often deal with the law as we wish it to be and we must presume that every law-abiding citizen will obey it and that if he fails to do so, he will suffer the consequences. I cannot answer my hon. Friend's point except to reiterate that all hon. Members would hope that that practice would not be pursued by responsible employers and agencies.

The Government have no objection in principle to access to personal files, but hon. Members may recall an episode of "Yes, Minister", which is our favourite viewing, and which reached the summit of its achievement in a most wonderful programme on precisely this issue. In that programme Jim Hacker said to Sir Humphrey: "This access to information stuff is unanswerable. Surely we should do something?" Sir Humphrey said: "Yes, Minister. You are absolutely right". Sir Humphrey went away and within days came back and said that he was frightfully keen to pursue that course, but did Jim Hacker realise that it would involve the employment of an extra 10,000 civil servants at £15,000 a year, plus on costs, who would be needed to handle the volume of applications that would arise. He said that it would cost £80 million a year. It would require substantial computer facilities plus the introduction of a right of appeal. Obviously, that would place a load on the courts and the Lord Chancellor would not be keen. Moreover, the Chancellor of the Exchequer would be breathing down his neck, but of course, subject to all that, Sir Humphrey said "Yes, Minister it is possible".

That programme brilliantly illustrated the wonderful technique of senior civil servants who never have to say no, but always say yes, but make it clear that when they say yes they mean no.

I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on his appointment to the Privy Council. I had intended to circulate him with a copy of that script—it has been published in book form—and to circulate it to my other right hon. Friends whose officials—I avert my eyes from the Box—may have already circulated advice to them.

We are in danger of making precisely the same mistakes regarding costs that are implicit in that amusing script. In

[Mr. Norris]

evidence of that I cite information, now available, about the difference between anticipated and actual levels of requests. That information is derived from the number of requests received in Australia after the passage of its Freedom of Information Act 1982. They make interesting reading. In Britain the Secretary of State may be told: "Minister, there are 12 million people in council housing. If 1 per cent. of them wish to have access to their files that represents 120,000 applications and 120,000 applications costing £50 to process is"—My maths leaves me, but no doubt hon. Members know the answer before me.

The Department of Employment in Australia estimated that the number of requests would be between 100,000 and 200,000. In practice the number of requests received in 1983-84 was 166. The Australian electoral office reckoned that about 86,000 requests would be made. In practice there were 19. The Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs—an important area involving individual files—estimated that there would be 103,700 requests for access. In practice there were 1,069. We need go no further.

If my right hon. and learned Friend is prepared to take a step of faith with us, I am sure that he will discover—it needs a step of faith as I recognise that there is no way that my right hon. and learned Friend or myself can estimate what the statistics will be — that, as has happened in every other country where access has been permitted, the actual rate of take-up will be substantially less than that predicted.

It is no secret that the sponsors of this Bill have had extensive negotiations with the Government on how practicable it will be for this Bill to pass through its remaining stages—on the generous assumption that it receives its Second Reading today—and in what form it will finally emerge. I shall not discuss those negotiations, because I want to hear what my right hon. and learned Friend has to say. I do not need reminding of the desirability of consultation before any measures are introduced. I accept that we must get the Bill right and that means that, in Committee, we must discuss all the implications of the Bill and any possible amendments.

I stand by two cardinal principles. In this life half a loaf, a quarter of a loaf or, as I have heard some of the sponsors of the Bill say, even an eighth of a loaf is better than no loaf. I have heard it said elsewhere that one should never let the perfect be the enemy of the good. I make no bones about the fact that I would have liked the Bill to have passed untrammelled, but for improvement in Committee, on to the statute book. I believe that, however tortuous the process, in due course that will happen.

It is impossible to object to the Bill in principle. It will be possible to meet any objections in Committee. The campaigners for this Bill accept that there are necessary exemptions and exceptions that must be built into the Bill. The cost will not be astronomic, but will be a small price to pay for improved professionalism. It is necessary for the Government and for supporters of the Bill to take a step of faith. They must put aside their timidity and the objections of those who see every social development merely in terms of a few pounds, shillings and pence and give enthusiastic support to the Bill. I commend it to the House.

10.55 am

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I wish to add my warm congratulations to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on his success in the ballot and on choosing such an important and fundamental issue for discussion in the House. The Bill has attracted all-party support, and I hope that it will receive a confident Second Reading.

I also add a word of congratulations to the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris), who is clearly not only a man of intelligence and wit, but, from his speech, a man of stamina. He has played a major part in the discussions that have led up to this morning's debate. He has ensured that there is at least some chance of the Bill reaching the statute book in some form this year.

For most people in Britain freedom of information is a worthy-sounding, rather grand concept. Because it sounds worthy and good they believe, quite rightly, that it is a good thing. However, it is also rather remote. Freedom of information to open up the workings of Government, the thinking of Ministers and the operation of the state does not impact directly upon individual citizens. However, this Bill does have such an impact. It represents the front line on freedom of information and deals with those areas that matter most to ordinary citizens.

I well remember one of my constituents who came to my surgery and told me how she had been receiving treatment at St. Bartholomew's hospital. When she had been visiting the consultant in his office at Bart's, she happened to see her medical file open on his desk. Written across the inside of the front cover in large capital letters were the words "Husband in nick". Her husband was in prison at the time, but she was deeply upset that that information had been recorded on her medical file. It had no relevance to her medical treatment. She came to me to complain and I took up the matter with the authorities at Barts. They agreed to remove the wording from the file and instead it stated that the patient was currently unsupported at home and, therefore, that that factor had to be taken into account when considering her medical treatment. That information should have been on the file in the first place—not the form of words that appeared in it.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): The hon. Gentleman knows that I fully support the Bill. However, should not that particular phrase — in language more acceptable to the hon. Gentleman and me — have suggested the need for some form of tranquilliser for the person concerned because of the additional stress that had been caused by the location of her husband?

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman has anticipated the point that I was about to make: that on the file there should be information about the particular circumstances of the individual that is couched in non-prejudicial terms and that is relvant to their medical needs and treatment. If access were made available to that file, doctors and consultants treating the patient would ensure that any possibly prejudicial information was not contained in it in a form that might be detrimental to the medical treatment involved. There is a wide measure of agreement across the House that it would be sensible to legislate to give to citizens in a proper, sensible form the right of access to what is written about them.

The hon. Member for Oxford, East referred to the Government's intentions. We shall hear later about the Government's view of the Bill. However, it is no secret that the Government are not entirely happy with the Bill as it stands. I am deeply unhappy about the prospect of losing certain parts of the Bill. Already there has been the inclusion in clause 4(2) of the provision for a maximum fee to be charged for access to records.

The original Bill that I introduced about two years ago under the ten-minute rule procedure did not provide for the charging of a fee for access, apart from the cost of photocopying any record that the individual concerned wished to copy and take away with him. To my considerable regret, the charging of a fee for access is now included in the Bill because the Government are worried about cost. The charging of a fee will probably remove the practical possibility of access from millions of people. About half of my constituents will now be prevented from gaining access to their records because a fee is to be charged. I hope that in Committee the Government will have second thoughts.

The other change that the Government have not yet secured but that they are likely to seek, with some degree of acceptance by the mover of the Bill in Committee, is a restriction on the types of record that the Bill can cover. I understand that the Government have said that they would be happy for access to be made available to educational, housing, social services and welfare records but that the other records listed in the schedule to the Bill should not be made available. They include medical, benefit, employment, bank and credit and immigration records. The Government want many records to be excluded from the Bill. I regret the Government's intention to try to secure their exclusion. Again I hope that they will have second thoughts—in particular about the exclusion of medical records, as most people would like to have access to their medical records. I shall return later to the question of medical records, because they are important. We need to explore further the Government's reasoning about their exclusion.

Why do the Government want to exclude these types of record? First, there is the problem of administrative difficulty. It is interesting to note that the types of record that the Government accept should be included in the Bill are administered by local authorities, not by Government Departments. Secondly, the Government are worried about cost. It is nonsense for the Government to be worried about cost. The hon. Member for Oxford, East referred to the Australian experience. One could also refer to the experience in the United States and Canada.

In Canada and the United States the predictions about the number of applications for records, the cost of meeting those applications and the number of people who would need to be employed have been wildly exaggerated. The impact upon the nature of Government administration has been proved to be minimal.

Mr. Cash: The hon. Gentleman says that the cost has been exaggerated, and he referred in particular to the United States. It was said in 1966 that the United States Freedom of Information Act would cost the Department of State involved $55,000 a year. In fact, last year the cost was $35 million for that department alone. The source of that information is unattributable, but it is most authoritative.

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman is confusing two completely different points. We are dealing with access to personal files. The experience in the United States is that the number of requests received has been far fewer than was expected. I shall give the hon. Gentleman one example. A study was published in 1980 of patient requests in a Massachusetts general hospital. This relates directly to the hon. Gentleman's point about access to files. It does not refer to generalised freedom of information — to access to secret information or to the requests to the Department of Defence that form most of the applications under the various bits of sunshine legislation in the United States. This study relates directly to files. The Massachusetts general hospital said:

> "To identify those patients who requested and read their charts we monitored six medical and surgical wards, comprising 150 beds with 5,000 admissions annually, continuously for six months".

This is absolutely accurate information from a survey that was conducted over six months. The report then said:

> "11 patients were thus identified as having requested and read their own charts."

That is a take-up rate of 0·44 per cent. I could provide other examples.

Another factor that may be of concern to the Government in relation to medical records is the attitude of the medical profession. The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire referred to the Royal College of Nursing, the Royal College of Midwives and other major bodies that represent the professionals in the National Health Service who support this measure. The council of the British Medical Association has voted in support of the principle. At its annual general meeting there was a very narrow vote against that principle, but opinion is clearly moving within the medical profession on this issue. I hope that it will move further.

One of the reasons that it is likely to move further is that increasingly medical practices and a few hospitals are already putting into practice the principles of this Bill. They allow and encourage patients to read their files and see their records. The universal experience of those who have done it suggests that it helps the process of treatment and makes it easier to conduct a proper professional relationship.

There are many reasons for supporting the Bill. As I have said, I regret the Government's decision to try to amend it and thereby diminish its scope and content. However, on the principle of a quarter of a loaf being better than none, I strongly support the Bill, although I am disappointed that it does not go as far as I would wish.

I should briefly like to state why the principle of the Bill is important. First, it will lead, as the hon. Members for Oxford, East and for Roxburgh and Berwickshire have said, to more careful record keeping by officials. The fact that less sloppiness and fewer sweeping assumptions about the character and nature of individuals will be put on files —which would otherwise have stayed there and haunted their welfare for the rest of their lives — will be of benefit.

Secondly, the Bill will provide an opportunity to correct inaccuracies. At the moment, there may well be inaccurate information in or omissions from files that can affect crucial decisions taken by people who are trusted by the community to take decisions about the welfare, career and figure of individuals. Such inaccuracies cannot be justified and opportunities must be available to correct them.

[Mr. Smith]

Thirdly, there is an imbalance between access to records that are kept in computerised form and access to those that are kept on paper. It is nonsense that, because one social services department keeps its records on computer and another keeps its records on paper, someone served by one local authority can have access to his records, but someone served by another authority cannot. That imbalance should not exist and, in the interests of equity, it should be corrected.

Fourthly, there is undoubtedly a benefit in the relationship between the professional and his or her client as a result of access being available. Too often, the relationship between doctor and patient, DHSS official and applicant social worker and client, or teacher and parent, is one of arrogant assumption on the part of the professional that he or she always knows best. That is not the right sort of constructive relationship. A constructive relationship that would make for good treatment, care and social work practice is one of partnership and not of patronising paternalism, and part of that partnership is access to information and files.

When I proposed my ten-minute Bill two years ago, I received a letter from a team of doctors in a Birmingham health centre which stated:

"Since 1977 it has been the policy of this practice to hand patients their medical records when they come for an appointment with one of the practitioners, or when they ask to see them in the surgery. The practitioners like them to read the notes before the consultation if the patient wishes to."

The word "like" was underlined. Quite clearly, that experience, over a period of about 10 years, shows that making access to the files available to the patients who come into the practice has improved the relationship between the doctor and the patient and that it has improved the standard and the quality of the medical care that is given.

Fifthly, over and above the practical issues, and practical benefits of enshrining the principle of access to information in our legislation, there is an overriding moral reason. Individual citizens should be able to see what is written about them, supposedly on their behalf, by people who are entrusted by the community to serve them and to administer services to them. Surely this House of all places should support that basic principle.

Too much has been done in this country over the past few years that is fundamentally unliberating and restrictive to the freedom of the individual, and too often it has been done in the name of liberty. We now have an opportunity, as a House, to endorse a fundamentally liberating idea and I very much hope that the House will take it.

11.15 am

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): I pay an unreserved tribute to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) for the superb way in which he presented his Bill and also for the amount of work, and preparation, to which I have not been privy, that it reflects.

His Bill will do for manual files what the Data Protection Act 1984 does for computer files. I strongly support the whole principle of the right of the individual to have access to his or her personal files, especially credit rating and medical files. Therefore, I support the Bill in its general terms because it heightens public awareness and brings pressure to bear to ensure that personal files are fairer and more correct.

However, when one looks into it, the principle of personal access to files is not a simple one. It has serious practical implications. The Bill needs more serious thought in certain areas — I do not wish to disparage the hon. Gentleman — and I shall try to bring those to the attention of the House.

First, the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire assured me in his opening speech that the Bill will allow for retrospection. I accept what he said.

Secondly, there is the question of libel. Although the hon. Gentleman referred to this, I still think that it is a difficult area. Although I entirely accept the thrust of his idea, I urge some caution.

Thirdly, caution is required on specific issues such as school records. The Bill could have the effect of dissuading school authorities from putting on their files the quite legitimate comments of school children—for example, at times when there is a suspicion or even evidence of cruelty to the child from the parents. It may be that the parents could demand access to the files of a minor and see that the child has told his or her teacher of the parents' cruelty. They might then take it out on the child.

Mr. Kirkwood: That is an important point. Although I was unable to cover it in as much detail as I should have liked in my initial presentation, I refer the hon. Gentleman to clause 11(I) and especially to clause 11(I)(d). We have tried — I put it no higher than that — to meet that objection so that any information would only be available to any parent if it quite clearly would not conflict with the interests of the child.

Mr. Browne: I accept the general thrust of the hon. Gentleman's remarks, as I do his words about libel. I am not criticising the hon. Gentleman's proposal, but am simply trying to say that this is a difficult area that needs revision and that we must make sure that we get it right.

Mr. Richard Page: I have followed with great interest what my hon. Friend has said. Does he agree that a possible danger is not what is on the records but what is not on them? Therefore, every child will be described as honest, unless he is not, in which case that will not be recorded on the file. Does he agree that one might look for the negative, rather than the positive, aspects?

Mr. Browne: I think that I understand what my hon. Friend is saying. I almost intervened in the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris) when he talked about getting credit. He made an illuminating and amusing speech, but, underneath the good jokes and the analogies, I sensed a similar suspicion. The granting of credit by a financial institution is not only a question of analysis, but a personal assessment of the character of the individual, say the entrepreneur or the man starting up in business. When that great banker, J. P. Morgan, was tried in the Medina case in the 1930s, he was asked whether he had ever refused a loan to someone whom he had never met. He said, "That is not the question you should be asking me. The question is, have I ever made a loan to anyone whom I have never personally met? The answer is no. It is not the ability to repay the loan, but the willingness to repay the loan, that matters."

An important point that could have been overlooked in my hon. Friend's amusing speech is that the impressions given by a person applying for credit from a financial institution or a lending officer could be very important to

his credit assessment. That illustrates vividly one of the dangerous areas which the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire may have considered, but which it is difficult to put into legislation without overkill and the creation of a destructive measure. The Bill is a very constructive measure.

Mr. Norris: My hon. Friend is generous in giving way to me, especially in view of my lengthy speech—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear!"] Having heard that reaction, I do not know whether I should bother intervening in his speech. He is making an interesting point, and I accept it. But he must equally accept that, in assessing a person's creditworthiness, the professional must take account of some factors and discount others, such as whether one happens to like the person. If one believes that the applicant's personality is a key to his creditworthiness, one should be prepared to say so. Nothing in the Consumer Credit Act forces someone to provide credit. It merely allows an applicant to see the information on which the decision was based. It does not give him the right to question the decision, nor would the Bill.

Mr. Browne: It is an interesting point. I do not use it to attack the Bill, because in general I support it, but it is a critical area. I agree with my hon. Friend that if the file said that the man had been bankrupt and he had not, that is the sort of error which the Bill should catch. But to take my hon. Friend's illustration of someone pretending to be something on the one side and on the other side not being lovable, I am not sure that it would help the person about whom it was said to see the assessment. Indeed, he could not refute the assertion and say, "I am lovable." It is a delicate area on which my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister must concentrate if, as I hope, he accepts the Bill as a serious measure and revises it in the light of the general pressure that has built up.

There was a big disparity between the figures given by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) and those given by my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) with regard to the cost of the American Freedom of Information Act. I believe that the Government should push into the background any question of the cost of freedom of access. Unless they can prove that the cost would be inordinate, we should not spend too much time considering it. I speak as a hawk on public spending. We spend much money, legitimately, on defence and on the police—I strongly support both—and money spent, within reason, on these aims would be well spent.

But we must also remember the administrative cost of keeping better files and providing better access to files. As the chairman of the Conservative Back-Bench small businesses committee, I am thinking especially of smaller businesses. The Bill would apply very well to larger businesses which have sophisticated filing systems and ready acccess to information, especially with today's high technology systems. Most big companies have a large back office staff which is sometimes completely dedicated to filing documents and to the retrieval and storage of files. For a relatively large and mature company, the Bill would present no serious administrative problem. There would be a marginal problem in terms of cost.

But it would be a different kettle of fish for smaller businesses, many of which have relatively unsophisticated manual filing systems and few, if any, employees dedicated to filing. The demand by individual traders for access to information could almost break a small business, in terms of the overhead costs that would be inherent in providing access to files. It could be a heavy cost to a small business, especially to the one or two-man business.

It is well known that the greatest deterrent to new start-ups is not the lack of capital or heavy taxation, but the administrative burden. The Government are correct to concentrate on cutting the administrative burden on smaller businesses.

Mr. Norris: I noticed your brow furrow as I rose, Mr. Deputy Speaker! What on earth does my hon. Friend think that burden on small businesses will be? If, at some time during the year, each of 200 employees asked to see his file—which is highly unlikely—that would not be too great a burden. If my hon. Friend is suggesting that files are strewn round the office, the argument is so unprofessional as to be unsustainable. If it is merely a case of saying, "This is what we have", and giving it to the person, I see no problem. No personal files will be held on customers or suppliers of the business which they will want to see. My hon. Friend must not exaggerate the impact of the Bill.

Mr. Browne: There was no exaggeration. I was talking about small businesses with few employees, not about 200 employees, which I would regard as a larger business. Demands for access to files could create a serious financial burden on small businesses. There are two sorts of cost: first, the cost of compliance by the small business and, secondly, the cost of operation.

Mr. Richard Page: Does my hon. Friend agree that a small business man is required to be a VAT expert, a tax expert, a health and safety expert and every other sort of expert as well as doing his job? Is this not yet another task for him to perform in keeping his records and his paperwork together? Although it is a small burden, and we must not make too much of it, will it not inhibit his efficiency in helping his business to grow?

Mr. Browne: I agree with my hon. Friend, who put it much better than I have been trying to do. I emphasise to my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister that the Government's thrust has been to reduce the administrative burden on smaller businesses, which is not just one deterrent but the greatest deterrent to business start-ups. Although it may be a small administrative burden I urge my right hon. and learned Friend to regard it as important. It is an addition to the action which the Government have already legitimately taken.

I strongly support the Bill's general aims. It treads on some very complex areas. It has already been given considerable thought, but the Government must give it more professional thought. That requires time. On this occasion we have time. We need to improve the Bill and we have time to do that since the Data Protection Act is not yet fully effective. That provides an interesting forerunner and we shall see its practical effects vis-a-vis computer files. We shall learn a lot from that Act and so improve this Bill. I do not say that in disparaging terms.

Normally the Government are criticised for doing too little, too late. The danger of accepting this Bill in its present form is of the Government doing to much, too soon. I urge my right hon. and learned Friend to take careful note of the Bill and the genuine and strongly felt

[Mr. Browne]

pressure behind it. I urge the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire to accept the need for revision and, in the meantime, to persuade my right hon. and hon. Friends that we have time to see the results of the Data Protection Act.

The Government have already introduced important measures which move in the same direction as the Bill. I think of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 which gives a right of access to documents relating to local authority meetings. That is an important step in the right direction. The circular of 1983, issued under the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 makes personal information available on request. Social security records are already disclosed on a voluntary basis on request. Similar facilities are available for probation, unemployment and housing records.

The Government are already moving in the right direction. It is right that people have access to personal files as a general principle. I strongly support the Bill's aims. It has heightened and focused public opinion upon the issue and has done a great service by that.

As a result of today's debate added pressure will be put upon the Government and my right hon. and learned Friend's colleagues in the Government to move faster and further in this direction.

All I urge is that the Bill be considered as a forerunner. The Government should look at it in a willing way and revise it — I hope with the co-operation of the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire. It steers us in the right direction, but the danger is overkill and we must be very careful about that.

11.33 am

Mr. Terry Fields (Liverpool, Broad Green): Anyone reading the Bill and listening to today's debate would think that there was a spirit of bonhomie in the Chamber. The only friction seems to be between a couple of Tories. It might be thought that this was a good Government, but I refer to the headline in *The Guardian* of 18 February which read:

"Information bill blunted to win government nod."

The schedule,

"Records subject to this Act"

lists health, education, housing social services, welfare, employment, bank, building society, credit and immigration records. That is a comprehensive list. It is laudable to progress in that direction.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) that there are inadequacies in the Bill which are apparently being discussed behind closed doors. I understand that deals are being struck, despite the good intentions of the Bill's supporters.

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): The hon. Gentleman claims that deals have been struck. The nature of politics in my 20 years' experience is that that is always so. One of the distinguishing features between the hon. Gentleman and his attitude to life and hon. Members elsewhere is that he does not recognise that.

Mr. Fields: That is an illuminating intervention. I can talk about 26 years in the trade union movement. If I went back as a shop steward, struck a compromise with the boss and achieved only three points out of eight I would be strung up and would not be in office long. Such compromise will not do in the trade union world, although it might in politics and big business.

Mention has been made of retrospection in the Bill. That the Bill is non-retrospective is alarming. The Secretary of State for the Environment has introduced all kinds of retrospective legislation to cover his tracks and to disguise the failure of draftsmen to take account of certain matters. I do not see why this Bill should not have an element of retrospection.

The Government accept the principle of access but do not want to bite off too much at one go. We have not achieved much from this Government. Why do the Government accept the Bill in principle? They accept it because this is election year. In the past weeks all sorts of largesse has been dispensed to us, as well as promises. Why this sudden outbreak of democracy? We must remember the Government's record, in relation to local government, their attack on the people of Liverpool and Lambeth, their attack on the metropolitan authorities and the removal of a tier of government.

Why are we suddenly witnessing a move towards democracy by this Government? After all, the Government support attacks on the BBC's democratic right to broadcast certain programmes; they support phone tapping and assaults on individual liberties.

Reference has been made to the programme on the Economic League shown on ITV on Monday. Perhaps the Government had pre-knowledge of that programme, since they are reluctant to accept the employment aspect of the subject of the Bill.

I draw attention to early-day motion 630 on the subject of the Economic League's secret files, which

"calls on Her Majesty's Government to immediately allow freedom of access to all personal records and additionally to conduct an immediate inquiry into disreputable organisations such as the Economic League."

We must look further at what is going on in relation to the personal files of workers. We must consider the Economic League's links with the Tory party. There is well-documented evidence of that hand-in-glove relationship. It is no coincidence that personal employment files—a key feature in the election campaign—will not be dealt with in the Bill. While concentrating on employment records, we have to say that it is already bad enough being unemployed in the north, north-east, Scotland, Wales and even in parts of the so called affluent south. One of the largest groups of unemployed people are building workers, whose names featured largely in the television programme. The unemployed are suffering difficulties enough but they are in fear and realise the hopelessness of their position and their dignity is being affected. Additionally, we found through the television programme that there are secret files on them and that that is one of the reasons why some of them cannot find work and have not worked in previous years.

To my way of thinking, this is a class issue. The activities of the Economic League and the closed situation in society that stops people knowing what is going on and why they are not getting work, is a sinister aspect in line with the current activities of special branch, MI5, MI6 and other organisations.

In the *Financial Times* a headline stated:

"Police help to vet workers claims TV programme."

That is the reality of what is going on. There are statistics showing 250,000 people being involved, but that does not

deal with the human aspect outlined in the programme about how it affects families because of the inaccuracies, lies and distortions that appear on people's files.

Through the wonders of science and technology a comrade of mine videoed that programme and froze a section of the film. He could read the names and addresses of people who are blacklisted through the Economic League and whose names are given to employer organisations that Conservative Members support. Surprisingly, and rather frighteningly, we discovered the names and addresses of people who live in the Liverpool area. In the past 24 hours I have spoken to four different people whose names and addresses I gleaned from the television. One man in particular was prepared to give me his name, but, because of fear of reprisals against his son who currently works in the building industry, he asked me not to disclose his name. That same man and his brother, again a building worker, have suffered blacklisting for the past 20 years because of the activities of the Economic League, in league with Conservative Members.

Since 1956 that man's only involvement in politics has been as a trade unionist seeking to represent ordinary working people in adverse working conditions on a building site. He has tried to get decent rates of pay and look after health and safety but has been labelled as a dangerous revolutionary and subversive who should not be given employment. For a period of 20 or 30 years, that man has intermittently been in and out of jobs. He has been sacked by firms because he has stood up for himself and for his fellow workers. His record was pitted with remarks about him being a good worker. But because he was a trade unionist, not an activist but a spokesman for his fellow workers, he was continually sacked from his job and had to go to industrial tribunals on a number of occasions to be reinstated so that he could start again and seek to develop the job and trade that he had been trained for.

That has gone on since 1966. That same man saved this country during the last war. He was wounded and invalided out of the Navy but he is listed in an Economic League File as being a subversive. His brother has been blacked and his son is also in fear of being blacked.

A second man knew two or three years ago about blacklisting through the Economic League. Over a period of 20 years he has been blacked in job after job by that league. The description of decent members of society in the books of the Economic League can be bought if one applies for membership of that organisation. The league states:

"We rely on keeping old-fashioned files on people based on party membership lists, attendance at conferences and their bylines in certain newspapers."

Therefore, if one has a byline in a newspaper and makes a comment in a certain direction, one is picked up, put on file and the name and particulars can be bought and touted round various building employers' organisations as being a subversive.

The Economic League has about 2,000 members and the companies which support that organisation, which is an adjunct of the Tory party, include Barclays bank, Lloyds bank, National Westminster bank, the Royal Bank of Scotland, Hawker Siddeley, Bridon, GKN, Guardian Royal Exchange and Tysons. When we read about the scandals in the City, we find that some of those institutions are affiliated to the Economic League, which is, of course, in league with the Tory party.

We have to be careful about warning workers and the Labour and trade union movement about the nature of society and the suppression of information in the secret files that exist. The Economic League is well aware of that. It points to the instability within society and the capitalist system, the economic problems that will develop in the future and the need for the bosses to look out for subversives, deal with them and isolate them. For our part and my part, as a representative of working people, we give warning to the workers of the country that it will be their strength, organised through the trade union and labour movement, which will seek through the bourgeois democracy, to change society. We need to understand the powers that are used against us in seeking to suppress democracy as we know it.

When we see and read the files on people we have to ask who appoints the members of the Economic League? What right do they have to dictate whether a man, woman or youth works? Those files are on sale. We must pose the question; who are the subversives in society? Is it a man who will stand up in front of his workmates and bosses demanding decent conditions for his fellow workers or those who go behind the backs of people in a clandestine way touting for business on their own personal prejudices about people? We have to understand why such things are emerging today. We see it as an indication of capitalism in crisis and the forces of reaction coming out to combat the forward movement of the Left and the working class in particular.

There are economic difficulties ahead, and the suppression of democracy in this country will be an increasing feature of industrial life. We have to root out and expose those people and explain to workers what is going on in society. The openness that the sponsors of the Bill are looking for will not be obtained by making compromises with the Government and the leaders of the Tory party. Only with complete openness and democracy in society can any of us feel safe.

I shall be supporting the Bill, limited though it is, and seeking assurances from the sponsors that when it gets to Committee they will seek to reinforce it and incorporate amendments that will ensure that working people who are trying to do a decent job on behalf of themselves, their families and their workmates, are not subjected to tyrranical pressure. I shall give my support to the Bill with reluctance.

11.50 am

Mr. Gerald Bowden (Dulwich): I wish to give my warm support to the Bill and to congratulate the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on introducing it. I had some slight misgivings when I read it, but I appreciate and support the idea that freedom is best preserved by individuals having the right to know what is said and written about them and placed on a file.

I recall my own experiences in the teaching profession at several levels. I realised that it was important when teaching primary school children informally to consult other teachers so that one could understand behavioural problems in the context, for example, of a difficult home background. These exchanges, which took place in semi-confidence—they were not covered by any technicality or privilege—allowed one to understand and make provision and allowances for any difficulties.

I accept the contention of the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) that the

[Mr. Gerald Bowden]

recording of facts in a file should be done formally. As my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris) said, files have a habit of becoming a body of their own. They have a life of their own which continues independently of those who make them or hold them. I recognise that there was a need for formalising any facts that are recorded about people while maintaining the opportunity to exchange ideas and opinions without having them subjected to scrutiny.

I discovered at a later stage in my teaching career, when I was involved in interviewing children from secondary schools who were about to go into higher education, how the facts recorded about them by their headmasters and headmistresses on testimonials or references could damn or, as it were, elevate them. When I was first undertaking interviews I asked the person who had carried out the interviewing for many years before I arrived how one went about it. He replied, "First, you sit the candidate down. You have read the papers beforehand. You go through the formality of putting him at ease. You pick up a piece of paper and say 'I want to read your headmaster's report.' You read it through, allowing your face to light up as you do so. When you get to the end of it you say 'He seems to have a pretty good idea of what you are like and he has a good opinion of you. Now, tell me about yourself.'" Whatever was set out in the headmaster's report, I was told that that was the way in which to get the best out of the candidate.

I found recently that it is difficult to get any understanding of what is in medical reports or in the references that are recorded about employees by their employers. Two cases have come to my attention during the past week, and I think that both of them are covered by the broad provisions of the Bill. Both raise the difficult question of where we draw the line between what is passed on confidentially by word of mouth and what is recorded formally.

The first case—this has been a matter of some public discussion—concerns a mother who has had difficulties with her family and her family circumstances. However, by her own admission, and by the acknowledgement of the social services department concerned, she is in many senses a good mother. Unfortunately, certain facts were recorded against her, which she was unable to discover, and these operated against the family. She took up the matter with a firm of solicitors, which wrote to me about it. I wrote to the director of social services in Kent where she was then living and who was responsible for the problems which had arisen. I have recently received the director's reply and it is a mixture of acknowledged fact, innuendo, rumour and smear. I felt that I could no longer deal with the matter personally, so I sent the director's letter to my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State for him to consider and make a judgment upon. If that mother, that firm of solicitors and I could have had access to the social services file in Kent, a great deal of trouble might have been saved.

Another case has come to my attention. The decision on it was made on Monday and the appeal must be lodged by next Monday. I think that I am in order in alluding to it because it is not at the moment sub judice. At present, no appeal is pending. The case involves a woman who was a part-time receptionist in a medical centre, a clinic where doctors see patients on a panel basis. It was alleged against the receptionist that she had made racist remarks. There was a difficulty within the medical centre and there was a physical assault. This woman had the opportunity to pursue that by private prosecution but she chose, or has chosen for the moment, not to take that course.

The assault was accepted and the cause of it was alleged to be racist remarks. The two parties involved were suspended. The disciplinary hearing and the grievance procedure which surrounded it were due to be heard. I contacted and went to see the chairman of the health authority concerned and asked, in a meeting with his other officials, that I should be given the facts about the alleged remarks made by my constituent. I was told that they were not available.

I then wrote to the health authority saying that my constituent should know of what she had been accused before she should answer any particular charge, and her trade union, the National and Local Government Officers Association, has followed that up. She was then told that there was to be a hearing last Friday, and I wrote and advised her that she should not go to any such hearing until she knew of what she was accused. No such facts were forthcoming, she refused to attend the hearing, which was heard in her absence, and she was sacked.

That was disgraceful. I acknowledge that the chairman and general manager of the Camberwell district authority are honourable men trying to do a good job. However, their supporting staff have been inadequate in giving the required professional support. It is intolerable that somebody should be sacked from a job without having heard of what she is accused.

One might think that I was telling the story of an unpublished novel by Franz Kafka, but this happened last week. There is to be an appeal. I shall publicise the case as much as I can. I welcome the opportunity given by the Bill for people who might find themselves in such a situation to be saved the trauma and trial suffered by my constituent.

On that basis, if on no other, I welcome the Bill. This case prompts me to congratulate the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire on introducing a Bill, which will solve the problems from which my constituent is suffering at the hands of the Camberwell district health authority.

11.57 am

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): I echo the congratulations to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood). This is a significant and important Bill, which may be a major advance in strengthening democracy. The House should congratulate the hon. Gentleman, first on winning the ballot—many hon. Members go for years without doing so—and on having chosen this as an advance that is beneficial, popular and achievable. The tone of the speeches today, every one of which has welcomed the Bill, although in some cases praising with faint damns, has shown that that is so. The whole weight of the argument has been in favour of the Bill.

I cannot conceive that the Government, or any other body, should want surreptitiously to quash the Bill at the last minute, because they have not dared to show opposition by putting the argument clearly here, and having it discussed openly. I repeat my congratulations to one who is my hon. Friend for this purpose. I am happy to be both a supporter and a sponsor.

People have a basic right to see information about them that is held on file. We have to face the fact that in this democracy, and with our increasingly complex bureaucracy, information is power. In many respects, it gives Governments power over people, which is why Governments want to be so secretive when they should be more open. Information and files give institutions and organisations power over people.

I want to redress the odds in favour of the people and against the institutions. Our purpose, certainly that of the Opposition, should be to empower the people, strengthen the odds in their favour and give them more control over their destinies, lives, work and housing and over the whole circumstances of their lives. We cannot give them that control unless we give them access to information.

Democracy is far more than just simply giving people the vote if they are willing to turn out every four or five years. Democracy is about giving people the power to make a nuisance of themselves, giving them control and power over their destinies because that is what they want. That is a tide that cannot be resisted. There is a growing inchoate feeling that I cannot express as articulately as the hon. Member for Oxford East (Mr. Morris), but people certainly want that power. They feel that they are not being consulted and, therefore, feel frustrated.

It is right that we should give people the benefit of control in every aspect of their lives. We should give them that power at work where, clearly, what is recorded about people on employment records has a bearing on their ability to get jobs. In education, a cluster of attitudes can settle about a pupil and can damn him throughout his career because records are transferred with the pupil from school to school or into secondary education. We know how teachers' attitudes are often conditioned not by the intellectual ability of a child, but by irrelevant factors such as gossip and hearsay and in some cases by prejudice, and all those things will follow the pupil. In housing the same thing can apply.

In the field of health it is especially important to redress the odds that are presently in favour of the medical profession and turn them in favour of the consumer. This is part of the general idea of giving people power. They have power to choose as consumers and they want that power in all aspects of their lives. We have a duty to give them that power and that applies especially in medical matters where there is a kind of awe of the medical profession that can shelter incompetence and inadequacy. The only way to get accountability in the Health Service and in the medical profession is by giving the consumer more power, by helping him to know what is going on. Information is that power.

The purpose of the Bill is absolutely right and by passing it we will advance democracy. The power in the Bill about the right to see information will be used more by the middle class than by the working class, if I may use the conventional stereotypes, one of which is the prickly middle class individualist. I do not see any great harm in that. My hon. Friend the Member for Islington South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) was perfectly right in saying that access will be constrained by the fees required. That is a retrograde step because I would rather see the information provided free. However, that is a detail that we can attend to in Committee because we have to argue the principle today.

There is bound to be a trickling-down effect. David Stockman talked about trickle-down economics where the horse eats the hay and the birds get it from the manure. Power trickles down in exactly the same way, because when people reach a certain standard of living they want the power and the control associated with the freedom to decide their own destinies. Although prickly middle class individualists might be the first to use the power, everybody will have the right to use it and that will make institutions much more scrupulous about the records that they keep.

We are establishing the principle and power will trickle down in the way that we want it to trickle down. I am surprised that we should have to argue this principle. It is so obvious, right and self-evident that it is surprising we ar so belatedly debating it. The onus should always be on power to the people. The only real argument against the Bill is that of administrative convenience, the desire of the administrator, the bureaucrat and the people keeping the files not to be troubled. They have a desire for a quiet life and want to be able to put down prejudice, fact, misinformation or information without the nuisance of people coming in wanting to know what has been said about them.

The argument about the convenience of the administrator and the organisation is the only one that I have seen advanced against the Bill, and it is totally wrong because the onus should always be on power to the people. In that sense, for far too long we have had a diffident and a deferential democracy. We shall not have a real democracy until we confer that power.

Let me briefly put the case. The first and obvious case is that this legislation works well. It has been installed in more advanced democracies than ours with no painful consequences. It has the beneficial consequence of enhancing the power of the people. It has been installed in the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. The best example of all is Sweden, where it has worked well for years. Unless somebody in the Government, or anybody who wishes to criticise the Bill, tells us that the system has not worked well in those countries, we shall accept it.

People want this power. An opinion poll was conducted for the Campaign for Freedom of Information. A sample was taken of 1,900 people, which is a representative sample. People were asked what records they thought they should be able to see. Interestingly, on the issue of personal medical records held by general practitioners, 73 per cent. of the people asked thought that they should be able to see those. I support that. A total of 67 per cent. of the people asked wanted the right to see their children's school records. Sixty-four per cent. of the people asked would like to see any records kept on them by banks, building societies or financial institutions. I would like to see the records kept by Barclays bank in Otley Road, Shipley. On second thoughts, perhaps I would not. Of the people asked, 57 per cent. would like to see personal records kept by their employer, 55 per cent. would like to see social security records, and 54 per cent. would like to see Government records that do not have anything to do with national security. There is a discrimination there. Not many of the people asked wanted to see material relating to security — only 30 per cent. The public are discriminating. They clearly want this power.

The third point, which was well emphasised by the hon. Member for Oxford, East, is that undesirable practices flourish in the dark. The Bill is a means of getting greater efficiency by improving the quality of records. If people

[Mr. Austin Mitchell]

have access to the records, their quality must, ipso facto, improve. We have seen a series of examples of information retained on files that is inaccurate. For example, "parents are not married". That is an interesting example because the parents had been married for some years. I quote an example:

"Contacted Mrs. Smith, Health Visitor. Her impressions are that Mrs. Knight is immature, looking years younger than her husband and is always well made up, looking like a 'dolly bird'."

One can see how these immediate suspicions are created. It goes on to say that she might be a member of the IRA. That kind of prejudice and misinformation will be impossible if people have the right of access to files. They will be able to correct that information.

As politicians, we all know how inaccurate information can get into clipping files and remain there for ever. Some of us are left festooned with the record of our own past follies around our necks. I will not give examples of mine, the clipping files will show them. But it stays with us for ever. That is wrong for ordinary people. Official records must be maintained accurately if people are to have the right to see them.

I was appalled to watch the "World in Action" programme on Monday night about the activities of the Economic League. Examples were given of people's employment careers being prejudiced by information kept by the Economic League and passed on the telephone to employers. I refer to information such as somebody being a member of the Communist party, or imputations of Left-wing associations — they might be members of the Grimsby Labour party. Imputations were made that Left-wing opinion meant unsuitability for employment. That was all there on the files which were passed over on the telephone. That was wrong. The Bill will not cover that kind of situation. It covers employment records held by the employer. If information is put in that file from the Economic League, or from any such agency, it will be covered by the Bill but the source of the misinformation will not. The files of the Economic League are clearly in need of radical pruning to make them accurate. That information should be covered by the Bill. We can argue in Committee about that and perhaps about extending the measures to cover trade associations. Light should be shed on that information because it prejudices people's employment chances. It is wrong for gosip, misinformation and prejudices to be recorded on files where it can affect careers. We want to stop that from happening. We should extend the measures to the type of files about which I am talking.

I understand that the Government are reluctant for the Bill's provisions to be extended to health although they are acceptable for education, housing and employment. It is important that health should be included and that people should have access to their health records. The Royal College of Nursing, the Royal College of Midwives and the Health Visitors Association have expressed support for the Bill. The *Lancet* supports it as well. Referring to the Bill, it stated:

"it is a development that should be welcomed rather than resisted by doctors".

I support that view.

I could cite a number of examples of access, but I shall refer to only one — the interesting experiment at St. Thomas's hospital in London. For several years, obstetric patients—of whom I hope never to be one—have kept their own records. Professor Ronald Taylor, consultant obstetrician at St. Thomas's hospital, has commented:

"My patients are better informed than those who don't have their records".

If patients have their reports in their possession, it involves taking a bit of time to explain, for instance, what a blood test report means. As Professor Taylor said:

"if you're happy to explain everything in the report and the records, patients will be responsive to you when you need to tell them something serious".

That is an extremely telling point. Patients who have their records are better informed and have a greater interest in their case.

A London general practitioner whose patients are invited to look at their notes in the waiting room as they wait to see the doctor has said:

"One of the fears some doctors have is that people will read their notes and jump out of the windows and kill themselves because they are so terrified. It's absolutely the opposite of what happens. In reality it's tremendously reassuring to the vast majority of people."

Patients will be reassured if they know that their doctor takes a serious attitude to their case and that serious attempts are being made to deal with it. The principle of allowing access to records is beneficial to the Health Service, to doctors and to patients.

I again avow my strong support for the Bill. All hon. Members who have spoken have favoured it. There is no need, therefore, for me to be more strenuous than I have been in putting the case. The House is dealing with the legislation far too late. We should have done this years ago. This is part of a longer process of spreading power to the people and weakening the powerful Executive. Information is central to that power. The Bill is essentially part of the rational process of growing up as a democracy.

12.13 pm

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): I speak in support of the Bill and as a sponsor of it. I pay warm tribute to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), who has acted in a non-political way in seeking approval from people of all colours in the political spectrum. He realises that it is important to get general agreement on this private Member's initiative.

Today we have seen the House at its best. It is being non-political and is debating a social matter that requires reform, and Members on both sides of the House can make an urgent plea for reform. The Bill is, if anything, a small island in the middle of a sea of political troubles. I am sure that the House will welcome it, if only for that.

We have also heard—even from hon. Members who have opposed parts of the Bill—approval for the general intentions of the Bill. We have heard some interesting contributions. A great service was paid to a constituent by my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden). A contribution which will be long remembered by those who heard it was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris). His erudition and his good humour make anyone who speaks after him rise in trepidation. There has not been a contribution for many weeks before or since that will rival his speech.

Some other most interesting contributions have been made. The hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) said that he hoped that he would never be an obstetric patient. I remind him that, at the beginning of his life, he was. If he was not, we should be told.

My hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) made a contribution in general support of the Bill, but he made a specific plea that small businesses should not be hurt by bureaucracy and the cost of trying to adhere to the principles of the Bill. My hon. Friend, who is regrettably not present, will on reflection, realise that Conservative Members, and many Labour Members, would do nothing that would impose increased bureaucracy or cost upon small businesses. Small businesses are the lifeblood of this country. Two million small businesses, incorporated and unincorporated, provide employment, profit, taxation and VAT revenues and are, therefore, invaluable to us all. Anything that would decrease the possibility of those small businesses providing employment would be resisted firmly, if we genuinely believed that to be the case.

In a militant speech, the hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields) pointed out certain problems that perhaps existed in society because of secrecy. I agree with him and with other hon. Members that the Bill is a positive step towards openness in other areas. I welcome the Bill wholeheartedly, together with my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire), who introduced his Local Government (Access to Information) Bill, now an Act, in February 1985.

During the passage of that legislation, which my hon. Friend so successfully and skilfully piloted through the House, we reminded him that 25 years before my hon. Friend's Bill an hon. Member had introduced a Bill on terms similar to those of the Bill of my hon. Friend. That Member was my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), the Prime Minister. She introduced the Public Bodies (Admission of the Press to Meetings) Bill as one of her first political acts. Therefore, I am certain that this Bill will find favour with my right hon. Friend. In view of what that Bill did for my right hon. Friend, one can only imagine what might happen in the year 2010 for my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch. I hope that I have not lost the sympathy of the House in saying that.

The Bill should be supported, as should any sensible attempt reasonably to remove the veil of secrecy in Government, local and national, where secrets are unnecessarily classified as such, and also because knowledge is power and secrets are the building blocks of that power. There is nothing wrong with building up knowledge. It is when it is built up on false premises, inaccuracies or downright lies that society as a whole, and particularly those who inherit the knowledge of those who have gone before, is damaged.

However, secrecy is often an abuse of power and tends to show evidence of a lack of self-confidence on the part of Governments and authorities which, paradoxically, find that secrecy reduces their standing in the eyes of those for whom they have responsibility sometimes to keep secrets. The same must be true for commercial and non-commercial organisations and companies. Strength can come from self-confidence in one's policies and information which openness of government and personal files help to produce. The Bill is a valuable but modest step towards the desirable openness that I hope will become more prevalent in other areas of our life.

In essence, the Bill allows people to discover whether certain types of records are held about them. I do not believe that people are innately curious and desperately trying to discover what is on file about them. Most people let life run its course and are not desperately trying to find out every piece of information held on them by a local authority, council administration office or commercial organisation.

I, like all Members of Parliament, must be the subject of many files. It is often said that only those with something to hide will want to search their file. However, I must admit that, while I have no curiosity about the contents of many of those files, I am curious when my personal safety is at stake or when those files have affected me or my family in a way which I believe to be unjust. In other words, if something happens to me and I believe that the reason for it is inaccurate information. I am worried. We all worry when we feel that something is unfair. It is not lies so much — one can counter those, strangely more robustly than, perhaps, misinformation. But we must react when our lives are affected by an injustice, particularly when our lives may be in danger. That is why I press the Government to consider including medical records in the Bill.

The Bill also intends to correct inaccuracies. That will mean that those who keep records will feel that they must be more accurate in preparing the files. They will also have to think twice about their choice of words. My hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East, the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) and others have given examples of words on file which are insensitive and by their nature exaggerate a particular person's condition. Therefore, more accurate record keeping will flow which must be to the benefit of those who keep records.

An example is shown by a brief sent to hon. Members. Yesterday it arrived in my hands and today in other hon. Members' hands. It was produced by the Building Societies Association. I do not know whether building societies will or will not be covered by the Bill, but what it has said in the brief must be mentioned. The association states:

> "It is very important that people who have suffered injustice should be able to have it put right. However, the . . . Bill will not achieve this: it only provides a remedy for correcting inaccurate information. The real danger is caused not by bad information, but by bad decisions and a bad decision can be based on perfectly accurate information. The Bill provides no remedy for bad decisions."

I submit that good and bad decisions may flow from correct information. However, one cannot obtain a good decision based on bad information except by pure luck. The matters covered by the Bill, such as health, are so important that luck should play no part whatever. The Bill provides an important safeguard regarding decisions made by anybody: they must be based on accurate information correctly recorded. Any inaccuracy should be corrected.

I hold the Building Societies Association in high regard, and I hope that it appreciates that my sadness over this brief is perhaps greater than that of other hon. Members. It states that the Bill will be

> "of no direct benefit to people who have suffered injustice."

That is absolutely wrong. The Bill will introduce an appeal procedure and incorrect decisions can be put right. Accuracy of information results from the right of an individual to consult his files.

In the brief the Building Societies Association states:

> "There will shortly be a remedy against bad decisions by societies in the form of an ombudsman".

[Mr. Jeremy Hanley]

I approve of the ombudsman system. The brief reminds us that banks already have such ombudsmen, but it goes on to state that, if the Bill becomes law, it will:

"hinder rather than help the work of the ombudsman."

If accurate information is on a file, how on earth can that hinder the work of an ombudsman? An ombudsman is hindered by inaccuracies. The brief continues:

"It is wrong to apply the Bill to one group of businesses but not others. For example, both the National Home Loans Corporation and the Department of National Savings compete directly with societies and will not be subject to the Bill or to an ombudsman scheme."

That may be true and, if so, it is a matter for the Committee to discuss. It is for the House to decide whether building societies will fall under the jurisdiction of the Bill. It is an over-reaction to say that the Bill is wrong because certain prvileges exist for others. The final part of the brief states:

"The anti-competitive nature of the Bill is particularly relevant because it will impose considerable administrative costs."

I am reminded of a certain organisation in London, Capital, that stated during the passage of the London Regional Transport Act 1984 that 27 tube stations would close as a direct result of the intended legislation. Since London Regional Transport came into being, an extra tube station has been opened and none has closed. I am not trying to make a party political point against those who opposed that Act, but exaggeration is part and parcel of Opposition tactics. The final result of legislation is nothing like the exaggerated claims made when the legislation was discussed.

There was a most interesting article in *The Times* by a former Member of the House, Matthew Parris, who gave a list of exaggerated claims made when certain legislation was opposed. In retrospect, those claims looked ridiculous.

Feeding on fears is part and parcel of opposition, whichever side of the political divide one is on. It may be the fear of the imminent dropping of a nuclear weapon or the imminent arrival of Russian troops on our doorstep. There are exaggerations on all sides.

The exaggerated opposition to this Bill is as ridiculous as those past exaggerations. Opponents believe that vast costs will flow from this legislation. Building societies have stated that 130 lists exist with about 30 million names on them. It gives the impression that hundreds of thousands of people will want to look at their building society files.

Today my building society has sent me my annual statement. It shows the amount outstanding, the amount that I have paid in the year, the insurance premium and the final balance. I cannot imagine that my building society file contains very much more information than that, apart from the times that I have written to it asking for a little longer to pay when times were tight, or for details about my house or surveys and alterations. I have no intention whatsoever of visiting the Abbey National Building Society and searching through my file and asking for a copy, even though I am certain that, with the excellent assistance available to the society, it would be able to provide a copy for me in a matter of minutes. I am certain that I speak for millions of people who trust somebody to carry out a job for them and to act upon certain information when I say that I do not intend to look at my file.

The only people who might want to see their files would be those whom the building societies reject. Their 30 million customers do not want to see their files. The few people who would want to see their files would be those whom the building societies reject because their backgrounds suggest that they would be a credit risk if money were advanced to them. The granting of a mortgage is a most important matter. Buying a house is perhaps the most expensive project that anyone undertakes, and the information upon which the building society's decision is based must be accurate. The Bill does not say that if something is true but inconvenient it should be hidden. It provides that if it is true but inconvenient it should be accurate and recorded and that individuals should be able to see the information that has been used against them.

This Bill is the right Bill at the right time. Unlike the hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields) I do not believe that it is a failure to achieve three out of eight. Most of the trade union representatives whom I know would be thrilled that even three had been achieved. It is no measure of strength to say, "I have fought my corner and got nothing, but by God I fought it hard." It is far better to come away saying, "I fought my corner and look what I have achieved."

The Bill is fair to the individual. It redresses the balance against the individual versus large corporations, local government and security organisations. People will feel that the Bill advances their rights. Their right to correct things will have been promoted by a Parliament that so often in recent years has complicated their lives by more and more legislation. I am proud to be a sponsor of the Bill and I am grateful to its promotor for the generous way in which he has allowed members of my party and of the official Opposition to participate. It is a tribute to him that he has done so. I hope that the House will show its approval of the objectives of the Bill by moving it a very important stage forward today.

12.34 pm

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): I should like to join in the congratulations to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood). I know exactly how he feels on this of all days in his parliamentary career, because I was lucky enough to draw a good place in the ballot and to put a private Member's Bill on the statute book, concerning the anonymity of rape victims. However, in those days I had help from the Home Office and a day of Government time in which to complete my Bill.

Those who support this Bill see no conflict between those who govern and those who are governed. It will be generally accepted that any such conflict would be dangerous to our democracy. Only those with things to hide, want to keep things hidden. As my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) has said, the Bill will help to develop and extend our democracy.

In terms of democracy, a stagnant society is one which runs the risk of losing that democracy. We approach the Bill against the fact that Britain is a citadel of secrecy. We have developed a national passion for secrecy and for making secret things that simply do not justify that status. In a truly free society, there should be no secret records about individuals, save on the genuine grounds of security or the prevention and detection of crime.

The Bill will encourage a better partnership between those whose job it is to make judgments about individuals,

—often judgments that will follow those people for many years afterwards—and those who are being judged. As my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) has said, that has nothing at all to do with paternalism, but with partnership. The process of the delivery of services such as housing, health and education or of welfare benefits entitlements, or medical records, will improve only when the professionals who are paid to make judgments involve those about whom they make judgments in the course of their work. It has been said that open files should make for better decisions and lead to better care for those who want to make use of those services.

The Bill should encourage records to be kept in a better form and in plainer English. That should encourage those making judgments to be more thoughtful about what they write and to take better care that the comments that they make can be justified, even though they still may be wrong.

A child at a primary school, for example, may have been judged as difficult or disobedient. Such a judgment is not much help to anybody. We really need to know the behaviour that has demonstrated that, and the reasons why it happened. In any event, children change rapidly during the first few years of life. If a young person, transferring from primary to secondary education, has such a judgment on his or her school record, he or she is bound to start off on the wrong foot with the new teachers. However, that comment could relate more to the standard of the teaching in the primary school, or to the particular teacher who made it, than to the young person concerned. Access to those records by parents and children can only help them to get a better understanding of what lies behind the behavioural problems as a first step in trying to overcome them together. I am sure that that happens in all properly run schools because it is an important part of the process.

If the case is made out, as I believe it to be, why do the Government oppose people seeing their medical records? No doubt the Minister will tell us why the Government will agree that people can see reports by social workers —although not by probation officers—but they cannot see their medical records. In medical records and social services documents, judgments and comments are likely to be made about an individual that are equally significant.

The Government give the impression of believing that when people seek medical treatment they walk into a doctor's waiting room, pliantly thumb through dog-eared copies of ancient magazines, go in to see the doctor and then sit in total silence while the doctor goes on a lengthy hunt to discover what is wrong. That simply does not happen. The best doctors invite and welcome the patient's view on what is wrong as part of the process of treatment. It is even stranger than that. From November, under the Data Protection Act, patients will be able to see medical records that are stored on a computer, but not records that are stored manually. It is like "Alice in Wonderland".

The Minister is likely to make much of the cost of the Bill, but I agree strongly with the hon. Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) that we should not pay too much attention to cost. Indeed, access to the areas set out in the schedule could be phased in to take account of costs. In any event, what price do we put on the extension of democracy? When is it manageable and when it is not? What amounts are we talking about? Even this Government, thank goodness, have not tried to put a cash limit on what we spend to ensure that Parliament works as effectively as possible on behalf of those who sent us here.

The hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris) and my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby gave examples of the likely demand. Those who oppose the Bill may say that the demand will be so small that it is not worth bothering about. Indeed, my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby said that access is much more likely to be sought by what he described as prickly middle class individuals. That will go down well in Grimsby! Whatever is said about demand, it cannot be an argument for not making access available. If that were suggested, we might as well remove what is left of local government and county council elections, because substantially fewer than 100 per cent. of those entitled to vote take part in those elections. Perhaps I should not say that to this Minister, because he might be tempted to do just that. The point about local elections—the Government misjudged this grossly when they abolished the GLC—is that people can choose whether they vote. Similary, they can choose whether they want to see documents which contain personal information about them.

The hon. Member for Oxford, East mentioned the estimated demand for access in Australia and what happened in practice. But there is no doubt—there is MORI poll information on this—about the support which the Bill and other measures for freedom of information have attracted across all shades of public opinion. The poll showed that 73 in every 100 people believed that they should be able to see personal medical records: that 83 per cent. of the people with children aged under 15 say the same; that 64 per cent. want to be able to see bank and building society records; and 57 per cent. want to be able to see personnel records held by employers. Perhaps not surprisingly—here I disagree with my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby—as little as 55 per cent. want to see national insurance and social security records. I slightly disagree with my hon. Friend, with whom I share an aim, because that low support reflects the despair into which joblessness and deprivation pushes people. Those of us with constituents who have to live in rotting, crumbling, pigsty inner city areas will know that from what happens at advice bureaux and the balance of people who attend them.

Some will see the Bill as some kind of snoopers' charter which enables malicious people to peer into the personal affairs of others. It is no such thing. The Bill contains full protection against that happening. The only people who have anything to fear are those who want to keep information locked away in dark corners because it gives them a sense of importance and perhaps an illusion of power. Those who genuinely believe in the right of personal access have an instant remedy. They can volunteer to make records available on request. I am glad to learn, for example, that the Birmingham city council makes information available to its tenants. Dr. Anthony Bird, a Birmingham GP has been doing that for years for his patients and is surprised—although perhaps we are not—that none of his colleagues in the city do the same.

More than 120 of my right hon. and hon. Friends are supporters of the Campaign for Freedom of Information. The star among them is my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury. We welcome and support the Bill. We shall do everything that we can to get it on the statute book.

[Mr. Robin Corbett]

Unless I misjudge the Minister totally, I suspect that he will be lukewarm, half-hearted and slightly begrudging about the Bill. I hope that that will not be so, but I say that because I understand that he was one of that gang of villains who helped to mug the Bill on its way to the House in the last few days.

I want to make it clear that the Bill, if needs be, will be replaced by a full-hearted commitment to access by an incoming Labour Government. We shall use powers in the Bill to add further classes of records which can be seen and corrected in the context of our allied pledge to introduce a freedom of information Bill. I say openly that the last Labour Government had an opportunity to do this and did not. The next Labour Government will. That is a firm pledge. I hope that the House will give an unopposed Second Reading to the Bill.

12.48 pm

Mr. Lewis Stevens (Nuneaton): I add my congratulations to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on introducing the Bill and to those who support him. The Bill is an important step in bringing compatibility between the individual and bureaucracy. That compatability in society as it develops is critical.

I also congratulate the hon. Member on producing a Bill which is almost understandable. I am a member of the legal profession, and I find that a remarkable achievement. The Bill covers a wide and complex set of issues in its details, but it is understandable. It is a pity that in Committee where we shall examine the "ifs" and "buts" we might spoil a well-written and understandable Bill. It is the first Bill that I have come across in this Parliament that has had more than a single page or so that has been capable of relatively easy understanding inside and outside the House. That is an important factor.

The claims of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) take little away from the main purpose and what was described earlier as the bonhomie between both sides of the House. It is very easy to claim freedom of information. It is a good piece of jargon that goes down well with almost anybody, no matter what their political persuasion. What we are trying to do and what the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire set out to do and has, to quite a degree achieved, is a practical working document that will give access to files that will help people, whether in education, medicine or whatever. People will be able to use that to their advantage and improve their understanding of where they stand in a particular area.

I have some fears, not particularly about the Bill but about the application of some aspects. As the Data Protection Act 1984 has done for computers, this Bill would bring about an automatic benefit in the accuracy of records kept. The fact that they can be scrutinised means that they will be made into a format that will tend to be more accurate. I do not think that the figures quoted earlier are surprising at all. If one checks records in companies, whether on production items or anything else, it is not surprising to find substantial numbers of inaccuracies. The Bill certainly would have the effect of improving that. In areas such as medical records that is critical. Medical records should be much more accurate than some are at present.

Having obtained, almost certainly, a belief that we would improve the standard of records, I think that we would come across something called costs, which has been dismissed for various reasons. One can perhaps dismiss to some extent the cost of having to show records to people because there may be a fairly low demand. However, what cannot be dismissed, either in terms of companies or Government services, is the need to look at how records are kept, the type of records that are there, how they will have to be modified and how systems will have to be modified to make those records understandable and what it is reasonable to put out.

There is also a little bit of a question about the definitions that may be involved. Can records that are subject to disclosure be satisfactorily defined so that such things as informal notes may or may not be included? That is one of the difficulties that may have to be looked at in Committee.

If the Bill is applied to the personnel records of employers in the industrial sector, which are those that will be involved, many will certainly have to set up systems satisfactory to them and that meet the demands of the Bill. That will almost certainly mean rejigging systems. That has come about reasonably easily with computers because with the discipline of computers we have not yet started to write footnotes on the computer. That will come as computers become more sophisticated and that will waste a lot of computer space as opposed to the amount of paper that we waste now. It will mean looking at systems, and within the public sector that could be expensive.

There is also the question of how records will be kept in the future. If one keeps records, what does one have to keep? Would one have to keep a job application? The application comes in, one gets references and makes comments but there are time factors about when people can ask for information. What would one keep? If one does not want people to look at things, it is easy to drop them in the receptacle at the side of the desk so that they are no longer part of the record. However, it does not mean that that record cannot be simplified to have bold and simple statements that are just as damning but which do not have to be justifed in the same way.

What is the obligation to keep records and how should they be kept? What records should Government Departments and local government departments keep? In many instances there is no obligation to keep certain types of record. The Bill may raise the issue of what records companies, the Government and local government should keep and the manner in which they should keep them. This consideration does not detract from my view that the Bill is a worthwhile measure to introduce.

My hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) talked about the burden that could be faced by small businesses. These businesses may feel it necessary to alter their system of record-keeping so that they can deal with the possibility of individuals wishing to read the documents that have been filed and retained by the personnel department. The need to do so may be an imagined one but it will be present. We should not place an extra burden upon small businesses when introducing new legislation.

A great deal of information is currently placed on computer files, which do not take up much space. In many Government Departments, however, there are huge numbers of files and archive documents. The Bill may encourage the keeping of necessary records only, and that

will lead to a great deal of saved space and reduced costs. The Bill may also encourage less to be written, with the result that only specific information will find its way into records and files.

At what stage does a child take over from the parent when it comes to access to information? There are some children who would prefer their parents not to see any school records. How confidential are records and references in the education sector and outside it? The Bill may discourage the giving of references or encourage those who write them to make them as accurate as possible. It may make them step back from what they would otherwise supply. That might have a bearing on the references that head teachers supply to employers when children leave school.

I am surprised that there appears to be some reluctance to make medical records generally available to the individual. I accept that in some instances it may be difficult for an individual to accept some of the information that is recorded about him, but the Bill's provisions are designed to try to cover some of the difficulties. Surely medical records should be 99·9 per cent. statements of fact and not of opinion. Subjective assessments appear more frequently in personnel records and these could cause misunderstandings.

The Data Protection Act 1984 has encouraged organisations and local government to release information to individuals in the right circumstances. This movement is encouraging the opening up of information. The Bill is undoubtedly a major step forward, and I welcome it.

There will be problems with applications. Perhaps the Committee can look at this in detail to see what balance will be acceptable and how to get over to the public exactly what the information is there for, and how it is trying to help people. The balance that the hon. Gentleman has tried to draw in the Bill is the one that we need to allow the information to be given in a practical way that can be coped with by employers and local and central Government, with the protection for the parties involved, both individual and professional. Overall, I welcome the Bill and again congratulate the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire.

1 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Waddington): It may be for the convenience of the House if I intervene to explain the Government's position. I have much pleasure in adding my congratulations to those that have already been given to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on obtaining a high place in the ballot and having the common sense to introduce such an important measure. I pay tribute to his pertinacity in his support of the objective of individual access to personal records. For some time, he has been a leading supporter in the campaign for a measure such as this, and I recall that, just over a year ago, he introduced a Bill similar to that which we are discussing today. Finally, I congratulate him on the attractive and lucid way in which he opened the debate.

Many of the issues we are discussing are familiar to me, mainly because I took the Data Protection Act through the House not once but one and a half times. The dissolution of Parliament in 1983 rudely interrupted our deliberations, and after the general election we started all over again. On that second occasion, a newly elected Member of Parliament was serving on the Committee. We soon realised that he was in a unique position because he, among all of us on both sides of the Committee, knew what he was talking about. I am referring to my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris). That was probably the first Standing Committee on which he served, and it was obvious that he was the sort of person who did not speak without authority, because he did not speak unless he had studied the subject. The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire has been lucky to have such an ally in his endeavours.

I do not have much to quarrel with in the speech of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett), who spoke on behalf of the Opposition. However, perhaps he was a little ungracious in not mentioning the Data Protection Act, because both the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire and my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East spoke about the way in which the Data Protection Act had blazed the trail. It is a bit rich for an Opposition Front Bench spokesman to speak as though the Government have done nothing when the Labour Government did nothing about access to personal documents. That is the only political sentence that I shall utter, because the debate has been all sweetness and light.

During the debates on the Data Protection Act, I felt that there was a special case for legislation on computer records, and it was more than the need to comply with the European convention on data protection to safeguard the interests of business and jobs. We recognised the public perception that computers pose a special threat to privacy because of the ease with which information held on computer can be extracted, transferred, disclosed, processed and handed on to other people. It cannot be denied that the precedent of access to personal information has been well and truly established and the important question that we have to address is whether now is an apropriate time to extend that access to a particular range of manual records and whether that should be achieved by voluntary or statutory means.

I have had discussions with the sponsors of the Bill and I am grateful to them for the helpful way in which they have approached this matter. I do not think that they would agree with the hon. Member for Erdington that I set out to mug the Bill. I made it clear at an early stage that the Bill was not acceptable in its present form. I also said that it might be possible to amend it to produce a modest and workable measure acceptable to the Government, and that that at least would be a step down the road that the sponsors want to travel.

In the time available I have not been able to work out detailed proposals. Trying to do that has proved a complicated exercise, not least because I have to lead for the Government in this matter and the interest of the Home Office is far less than, for example, the interest of my hon. Friend the Minister for Health who is sitting behind me.

I am sure that all hon. Members will be tolerant towards me, because I have obviously had to gather together the strands of the argument by listening to all that has been said. Obviously, it is a complicated exercise to try to work out detailed proposals which it might be possible to put to the sponsors of the Bill. However, it is obvious to the sponsors and they knew before today, that the Government do not think it right to oppose this Bill on Second reading.

We think that the Bill ought to have a fair run in Committee and that we ought to try to produce something

[Mr. David Waddington]

that is acceptable to the sponsors and to the Government — not least because we have already recognised the value of access in certain fields by making special provision for it. I am thinking especially of the commitment that the Government have already given to make regulations about the maintenance and disclosure of records kept in schools. I know the sponsors recognise that our efforts to reach agreement with them may not succeed. I also know that there will be no recriminations if that happens, but we shall try our best to reach agreement.

One must accept that if right of access were to be granted to the whole range of records held in Whitehall the result in terms of increased bureaucracy would be considerable. My hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley), who is not in the Chamber at the moment, was right when he said that estimates of the work involved in granting access ought to be treated with great caution, because very often such estimates come from those who in the first place have no sympathy with a measure of this sort. One looks at all the estimates that are given with caution.

I am told that if this Bill covered the whole of Whitehall, new systems and procedures would need to be established. That point was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Stevens). It has been estimated that a very large number of registry staff would be needed to carry out the initial work of adjusting the existing record systems and new systems would have to be set up. That has already been mentioned in the debate.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does the Minister accept that education authorities which pushed through this right of access found when they examined their record keeping practice in order to make it available, that they achieved savings through having much more efficient records? Taking that into account, should the Government not offset any cost involved in putting in new systems — given the savings to which those more efficient systems will give rise?

Mr. Waddington: That is true. The hon. Gentleman has picked on one of the areas where something is happening already. That is happening because, first of all, it is considered right to do so, and also because it is considered practical and possible to do so within the resources available. However, it does not alter the argument that I am deploying now that if one were to extend this sort of right throughout the whole of Whitehall it would be absurd to say that the amount of resources involved would not be sufficient to be worth bothering about.

To illustrate the point further, the number of documents involved would be mind-boggling. There are 75 million social security records, most of which are still in manual files, and some of which are extremely bulky. In the Home Office there are 3·75 million personal files in the immigration and nationality department, many of which, I know to my cost, are well over 1ft deep. We can imagine the sheer effort and manhours in picking up the file of one particular person and extracting from a file over a foot deep the personal information which we would be required to deliver to the person under the requirements of the Bill. Do not let us exaggerate it, but neither can I accept the suggestion that the resource implications are not worth bothering about and that no expense would be involved.

Mr. Cash: I agree with my right hon. and learned Friend, but is he concerned about the order-making power, which would modify the schedule by adding further classifications to it? Try as I might—it may be that I am partially blind this morning — I cannot find any reference to the manner in which a statutory instrument would be brought in to deal with this question. At the minimum, were there to be such an extension, one would expect it to be subject to affirmative resolution.

Mr. Waddington: I intended to deal with that matter later, but I shall tell my hon. Friend now that I cannot envisage the Government agreeing with the sponsors that a Bill of this kind should be on the statute book with an order-making power. We have to decide what categories of information it is proper to put in the Bill.

There has been some comment this morning on the rate of access requests. We have a lot of information about the position in other countries, but I am told that most of that relates to information which is on a computer file. There is little information available as to the rate of access to manual files. In so far as there is information about the extent to which the right of access is used, I am told that after a first flurry of excitement it settles down to anything between 0·1 per cent. and 1 per cent.

The argument advanced by the sponsors tha few would avail themselves of the right to access, in a sense, cuts both ways. If one is considering the resource implications one has to ask whether, in a particular category of files, the expense of setting up the system would be justified, bearing in mind the unlikelihood that few people will avail themselves of the right of access. I am not terribly impressed by that argument about the possible low rate of access.

The main point is that many manual files are far more detailed and complex, and contain more by way of comment and opinion than do computerised files. Computer files tend to be far more factual and innocuous. When there is a requirement for information on a manual file, more time, effort and expense will be involved in extracting the personal information.

Mr. Norris: Although that may be true now, my right hon. and learned Friend will understand if he talks to representative companies such as IBM, with which I have had the useful benefit of discussions, that those companies have already moved to an almost completely paperless environment in which the very sensitive information of which he speaks is held on computer. Clearly, where large companies such as that lead many others will follow.

Mr. Waddington: Again, my hon. Friend's argument cuts both ways. If there is going to be a swift trend towards computerisation, this problem will be solved and the Bill, however worthy it may be, will be outdated before it even comes into effect.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: The right hon. and learned Gentleman takes us back to the argument about the data protection legislation discouraging people from moving on because it gave the right to prevent anyone from looking at information, provided that it was manually held, but allowed that information to be seen once it was put on computer. If there were uniformity, we would not be slowing any progress towards mechanisation and information retrieval.

Mr. Waddington: As for the economic advantages of computerisation, I do not think that there are large

numbers of people who say, "It is clearly to the financial advantage of our company to computerise, but we shall not do so in case at some time someone asks us to give him access to our computer files." That is pretty fanciful.

Some hon. Members have commented on charging. There is a provision in the Bill for charging those who seek access, but one big question is whether any charge remotely acceptable to the public would meet the costs involved. We must bear in mind that, if costs were involved, even after charging—as some of us are pretty sure they would be—we would be spending resources which could otherwise go on valuable social causes such as, in the case of the NHS, better patient care. Choices are involved. One cannot ignore costs. I certainly cannot agree with the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) about charging.

There is a power to charge in the Data Protection Act 1984. A charge will be levied from the time the right of access comes into force on 11 November. It would have been anomalous if the Bill had been printed without the power to charge provision in view of the terms of the Data Protection Act. As to the private sector, we would in one and the same breath be telling firms that we were determined to lift burdens from them and inflicting new ones, even if they were not comparatively heavy. That point was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne).

I do not believe that any hon. Member would be surprised at the concern expressed by small businesses. My hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East gave a colourful example of a person being denied employment, but I do not think that he would suggest for one moment that that was typical. The Bill's sponsors recognise, I think, that if the Bill as any hope of making progress, it is right that we should concentrate our efforts on seeing what we can do in the public sector. To some people, this might sound negative, but I do not mean it to be. The fact is that access to manual files is already being granted within the public sector. That is perhaps an argument not for doing nothing more, but for proceeding slowly, learning from the experience of access being granted voluntarily and also from the experience of access under the Data Protection Act which will not come into force until 11 November this year.

I said experience of access being granted voluntarily. That may be something of a partial answer to the point made by the hon. Member for Erdington about medical records. The medical profession has indicated its willingnes to negotiate more formal access to medical records for patients. It is clear that support for access within the profession is growing. Therefore, things are already happening in the way of statutory and voluntary provision and in the way of persuasion being excercised in particular areas, and movement occurring as a result.

One idea that was canvassed with the sponsors was to establish firmly in a statute the right to access to personal information in manual files by tackling those areas where things are already happening and where it is already accepted that access schemes are practicable.

Since the issue of the 1983 circular under the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970, it is now common practice in many social security authorities for people receiving personal social services to be able to discover what is said about them in social service records.

During the passage of the Housing and Building Control Act 1984, my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, said that he accepted the principle of access to records by public sector tenants but that he thought that the non-statutory guidelines approach would be better than a legislative one. I gather that, since then, there have been consultations with interested parties.

As I have said, in education the Government have already given a commitment to make regulations on the maintenance and disclosure of records kept in schools. It is against that background that we have explored in detail the question of whether statutory access could be provided within the framework of the Bill in those specific areas. At present, our view is that even that raises serious problems that we may have the greatest difficulty in surmounting. One of the principal difficulties—this has not yet been mentioned this morning—is in enforcement. The Bill provides for access to the courts. If one goes to someone who, under the Act is required to grant one access and he refuses to do so, one must go to the county court or the High Court, start an action and one hopes that the court will give an order entitling one to the access that was first sought.

I am not sure that it is right to impose new burdens on the courts. That is an expensive way to obtain a remedy from the citizen's point of view. Yet the possible alternatives do not seem attractive, either. Some sort of equivalent to the Data Protection Registrar would be an expensive luxury.

Therefore, it would be better to proceed rather differently. We should examine the possibility of placing on local authorities a duty to devise schemes for access to records, and then rely upon the details to be set out in regulations. That might be a better way of getting around the problems involved in trying to bring into private legislation in the limited time available the sort of qualifications that would almost certainly be necessary to enable a general right of access to be attained. For instance, special arrangements would be necessary for information which it might be to the detriment of its subject to disclose.

My hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East knows the hours that we spent in Committee on clause 29(2) of the Data Protection Bill and the effort that has since gone into the preparation of regulations to meet the requirements of that section. We could do it that way. Then there may be a legal requirement to report on the development of these schemes to ensure that adequate progress is being made. Those are some of the ideas on which we are working at present. I hope that in due course we may be able to present them to the sponsors for consideration.

On the assumption that these plans will bear fruit, and because the Government do not oppose the principle of access to personal records, I am not advising hon. Members to oppose the Second Reading. However, the House will realise, as the sponsors have throughout, that we cannot accept a Bill of the size and range of the present one and that something along the lines that I have indicated is as far as we shall be prepared to go.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Will the Minister give the House an idea of the timescale for the Government's proposals? When will they reach Committee stage, when we can make reasonable progress on them? I understand

[Mr. Andrew F. Bennett]

that at present one or two Government Committees are vacant. If the Government introduced the proposals, we could make rapid progress.

Mr. Waddington: I am not responsible for ordering these matters, but I have been told firmly by those whose duty it is that we must not let grass grow under our feet. We must get cracking in the next week or two. We certainly will and I will not waste any time.

If we can reach agreement with the sponsors on a limited scheme, the Government will be happy to support the appropriate amendments to the Bill in Committee, so let us see how we get on.

1.26 pm

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): First, I wish to make it absolutely clear that I support the Bill. I would not want any queries that I may raise to suggest that I oppose it. I would be the first to confess that I cannot match the quiet determination of the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), nor the roaring enthusiasm of my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris).

When the measure was ably presented earlier, the hon. Gentleman described it as a simple measure. When any hon. Member says that, alarm bells start to ring immediately in my mind because I have never found anything in politics to be simple. There will be a wide gap between the theory and the practice. I seriously wonder about the take-up that will occur on this measure and whether we are creating a sledge hammer to crack a nut. Before anybody leaps up and starts to berate me, I assure the House that I fully accept the importance of the measure, especially if one happens to be the nut in an investigation or in need of help.

I would have liked the dust from the Data Protection Act 1984 to have settled first. I should have liked that Act to have had a year or so in service, to see how it worked and then to introduce this measure, which obviously buttresses the Act. I also fully accept that if one is lucky enough in the ballot for Private Members' Bills, one does not have the luxury of putting a Bill on the shelf for a couple of years. One must seize the opportunity whenever it comes. Nevertheless, the timing of this is not quite right.

The Government have moved a considerable distance in producing more access to information. It is clear from the Bill why the Government in the Data Protection Act drew the line under electronic access to files. I cannot speak for other hon. Members, but when we discussed the Data Protection Bill, it was not large companies who came to me and said, "We are worried about this and we do not know how that will work", but dedicated church workers who had managed to put all the parishioners on their parish council computer to help with the distribution of the parish magazine. They wondered whether it was necessary to have their names recorded on the register. The Bill is a logical extension of the Data Protection Act 1984 and should be welcomed.

I was glad that my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State delicately chided the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) when he launched into the Labour party's present political thinking regarding secrecy. Over the last few years the Government have added an impressive amount to the list of the rights of access of individuals. Those opportunities were available between 1974-79 but were not taken up. The Tory Government introduced the Data Protection Act—a huge measure of great value regarding the rights of the individual. We also introduced Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 and that gave access to documents relating to local authority meetings. In 1983 a circular was issued regarding social work records. That circular resulted from measures contained in the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970, which provided that personal information be made available on request.

There is also widespread disclosure, on a voluntary basis, of probation records and I understand that a code of practice on clients' access will be issued early in 1988. Other measures contained in the Criminal Justice Act 1982 have helped some individuals to obtain the right of advance information. That is of particular relevance in the prosecution of cases. Unemployment benefit records are immediately available under the Data Protection Act. I have outlined just some of the measures that the Government have introduced and the cry of secrecy does not stand up. The Government have already done a great deal to give individuals greater access to files on their activities.

I appreciate that the Bill has drawn together many of those measures, but my hon. Friend the Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Stevens) did raise other matters of concern and, to some extent, I echo his concern. Those specific matters should be discussed in Committee, where we shall have the chance to define them.

I question the capacity of some bodies that hold records to deal with the greater volume of applications. The bureaucratic delays that are experienced regarding correspondence with council housing departments or social services does not inspire confidence that they will be able to produce those records within the time scales set out in clause 4. However, I accept that the keeping of more accurate records may help speed up the process.

We must also consider the grounds on which a record holder may deny access, especially if the information affects the privacy of another identifiable individual or would reveal his identity. There is considerable latitude within the Bill. There is no clear line drawn between the professional comments of an employee or an agent and the rights of that employee or agent as an individual. That should be put right in Committee.

Disputes are bound to arise over what is relevant to the purpose of compiling a record. That is contained in clause 9. Is there to be a strict definition of the word "relevant", or will the definition be broader than that? I hope that in Committee that word will be closely defined so that people know exactly where they stand.

I was delighted that the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire said that this is not intended to be a retrospective Bill. However, I understand that the hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields) would like it to be retrospective.

Mr. Waddington: Does one not have to use the word "retrospective" with a certain amount of caution? There is an element of retrospective legislation in clause 3(2). It says:

"The Act applies to records of the classes listed in the Schedule to this Act compiled prior to the date of the commencement of this Act which are referred to"

in documents that come into existence after the commencement of the Act.

Mr. Page: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for touching on a point to which I was about to refer. As drafted, the Bill is extremely simple, but we are puzzled about some matters which will no doubt be dealt with in Committee. For example, on Wednesday there was a headline in *The Guardian* that read:

"Information Bill blunted to win Government nod."

The Independent carried a headline that read:

"Personal records reform on course."

Those two headlines are explained in a little more detail underneath, but I am puzzled about the intended scope of the Bill. My right hon. and learned Friend's reference to retrospection conflicts slightly with what the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire said when he moved the Second Reading of the Bill.

I see no reason why doctors' files should not be added to the list of records in the Bill. I made a few facetious remarks about doctors' handwriting and about nobody being able to read it. However, if such information is already stored electronically under the Data Protection Act 1984 I see no reason why handwritten records should not be included.

My hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) spoke vehemently about the effect that the Bill could have on small businesses, but the burden will be very small. The Government have an impressive record of trying to reduce the burdens on small businesses. There are certain exemptions for companies that employ five or fewer than five people under the Employment Act 1982. Perhaps a similar exemption could be made for small businesses in this Bill.

My last point is that there seems to be a trend towards the negative file. We read in a file what is not there rather than what is there. If one applies to a bank for a reference, it issues a piece of paper that says that the person concerned is good enough for the sum quoted. However, if a person is not good enough for a reference, the bank does not provide a negative; it just does not reply. There will be a great deal of skill in reading the files that will presently be constructed.

In drawing my remarks to a close—I know that one or two of my hon. Friends would like to speak on this important matter—I take up the point that my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister made about cost. Some of the estimates that have been put forward are frightening in their quantity and size, for example, the number of civil servants that might be involved and the millions that might be employed in implementing what is, basically, a simple measure. I appreciate that democracy usually does not come cheap and that there is a principle here that must be maintained. Nevertheless, a degree of wisdom and common sense should be applied in putting this Bill on to the statute book. I support the Bill and wish it a fair wind in Committee but wonder how much it will be used.

1.41 pm

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): I begin, as many hon. Members have begun, by congratulating the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on his selection of subject and the way in which he moved the Second Reading of his Bill. I have sat through many, but not all, of the speeches made today, and I thought that he spoke in a good and sound way. He knows that, in saying that, my comments are tinged with some jealousy. Having had the good fortune a couple of years ago to carry through an access to information measure, with the permission of the House, I envy his fortune today. In the most unsurprising statement that I shall make, I wish his Bill all possible good speed on to the statute book, where it is much needed.

In fairness, I should congratulate my hon. Friend for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris), whose presence, along with mine, I have come to expect on the occasion of all such measures. I know that he has been a sound supporter of and assistant to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire in drawing up and discussing the Bill with various authorities. My hon. Friend deserves the appropriate credit for that.

The speeches that I have heard seem to fall into two broad categories — that sounds a familiar statement. Those of us who are clear and unambiguous supporters reiterate, perhaps boringly, the Bill's various advantages with little contradiction. However, some reservations have also been uttered—not all from Conservative Members —about the dire effects that the measure may have. I reassure the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire that there is a sense of déjà vu about this Bill for those of us who took through the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985. Most of the comments made today have been variations of the comments made then. We were told that chaos would strike local authorities throughout the country, that it would be too expensive and that, in any case, nobody would want to look at or bother about that information. Surprise, surprise, there has been no chaos, and, as far as I can ascertain from my contacts, the cost has been minimal, if indeed measurable. Some people have asked for access to information, but many have not. I am sure that hon. Members on both sides of the House would not support the contention that, because only a minority of people seek to take advantage of the law, it is unnecessary. The measure provides the opportunity, but no one is forced to look at his records. However, if he wishes to see them, who is to deny him that opportunity?

For reasons of time, I shall summarise the main reasons why I support the Bill, some of which have been clearly put already. The first is the obvious one of consistency with the Data Protection Act 1984. We shall find ourselves in a strange position if we do not incorporate manual records into the legislation. I shall say a little more later about medical records, but I put a marker down at this stage. It is manifest nonsense that, from November of this year, organisations will be able and required to make available the records that they hold on computer to those who ask for them, if those records are about themselves, but to deny those people identical information simply because it is in manuscript form. It is impossible to justify.

My second reason for supporting the Bill is that it follows smoothly on from other freedom of information Acts. I know that we do not have the big one yet, but we have several others which cover local authorities and community health councils. An individual's access to his files must rank high in any league table of important freedom of information measures, and I welcome the Bill as coming fully and smoothly in line with that progression.

Like those other measures, the Bill challenges the presumption that, when someone asks for information, he must be asked, "Why do you want it?" We should not be in that position. The reply should be, "Here it is. We have collected it at public expense on your behalf, and there is no reason why you should not have the information." Of

[Mr. Robin Squire]

course, it is common ground that he should not be given the information if it breaches national security or other important exceptions.

Britain lags visibly behind countries with which we are naturally compared. I shall not repeat the list. Of course, the fact that other countries do it does not mean that we should do it, but when we examine how Canada is governed—its legislature and system of government are similar to those in Britain — we see that it has introduced such legislation without any of the major problems which opponents of freedom of information suggest will arise.

It is worth repeating the points made about security. It is in the interests of the subject and of local authorities administering housing files or doctors administering medical records that the information be accurate. If it is not, the solutions recommended may not be appropriate.

The Bill, which has been in preparation for 18 months to two years, has been honed in the light of comments received and reflects a wide range of opinion. The letters received by hon. Members urging support for the Bill bear witness to its acceptability.

The objections to the Bill are not terribly weighty and need not delay us long. Some people say that it would overload local authorities. In London alone, four authorities already provide full access to the files of housing tenants, and they seem to have had no major problems. Haringey quotes an average of two cases a week. That is not a borough with which I naturally identify on matters that could be remotely described as party political, but on this non-political issue Haringey is telling the truth. At two cases a week, it is scarcely being overloaded.

I shall devote the remainder of my speech to medical records. I regret that I was unable to hear the speech of my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister. I shall read his comments carefully, although I believe from the inspired leaks that we occasionally have, even without freedom of information, that on medical records his comments were negative. I regret that. In many respects, medical records are the most obvious example of records which people will want to see. What right do we and doctors, sheltering under the legislation, have to deny people details of their lives, illnesses and ailments? However, I know that if I wished to see my records—I am not sure that I would—I would resent any suggestion that some other authority had more right than me to know about my life. One thinks of the immortal title of the famous play, "Whose life is it anyway?" If a person is ill, he may wish to see information. If he does not want to know, he will not be affected by the Bill because he will not ask. If someone wants the information, who has the right to deny access to it? I do not believe that anyone should be able to do that.

Various medical bodies, including the Royal College of Nursing, the Royal College of Midwives, the Health Visitors Association and 130 other organisations, support access to medical files. Safeguards are built into the Bill to preserve the position of the patient. The doctor might believe that a patient would be unduly distressed or react adversely to certain information. Under the Bill the doctor can insist on being present when the record is read so that he can explain and counsel. That will allow a crisis to pass.

The BMA is divided on the issue, not so much because it is concerned about patients being badly upset, but because the doctor might be upset by being with the patient and having to explain entries on the record. I understand that fear, but it is not a strong enough reason to deny access. The patient, or the customer, comes first. Medical records are maintained not for the convenience of doctors, but for the treatment of the patient. We should remember that.

The other serious issue concerns the accuracy of files. In terms of medical records, it is not a case of somebody being denied credit, which is serious enough, or of people throughout their lives carrying an inaccurate school record. We are talking about people possibly being prescribed drugs which are positively dangerous because their prescription is based on inadequate or inaccurate records. A doctor was reported in the journal of the Royal College of General Practitioners to have done a check on records to discover a 27 per cent. diagnostic error rate. That is so frightening that I hope and believe that hon. Members on both sides of the House will appreciate why medical records should be included in the measure.

I reiterate my full support for the Bill. If it reaches the statute book—I hope that it does so in its present form — it will be a small but important step towards our society being much more open.

1.54 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): I welcome aspects of the Bill. I accept that it could perform an extremely useful purpose. I am concerned about the thin end of the wedge aspect. I endorse all that the Minister said about the legislation becoming greatly enlarged by the use of ministerial orders. I go further and say that the Bill has in it an order-making power in a Henry VIII-type clause, which enables the measure to be altered by order without providing for a statutory instrument, let alone one that is subject to the affirmative procedure. That is such an obvious and extraordinary omission that it cannot have been done deliberately. If it were deliberate I should be extremely surprised. Therefore, I endorse what the Minister had to say. After the Bill has been through Committee it should be much more precise and any future extension of activity in this area would need to be constrained by an Act of Parliament and not by an order.

I see that the Minister of State, Department of Education and Science has taken her place on the Front Bench. I am particularly glad to see her, because I tried to telephone her earlier, not directly, but her Private Office, because I have an interesting case in my constituency. I wrote to her, admittedly with short notice so I am not criticising her for not replying, and asked whether I could have some further information by the time I meet my constituent. It is a ticklish problem. Interestingly enough, not only am I seeking information from the Minister but it is a question of the educational records of a constituent that is causing me a good deal of concern.

A report has been prepared in a school relating to a child in my constituency in which, as I am informed, he was described as "dangerous" by certain people. I am deliberately not going into detail, but I use this as an illustration of the case. It was apparently also the case that he had been punished and regarded as impossible and disruptive by certain teachers.

All that arose in the context of a report and I am checking on the facts to see whether that report is accurate. The important point that lies behind that is that I have discovered from further information that the child is

dyslexic. There is an important problem that can arise when there are questions relating to access to personal files, which can in themselves throw up an enormous amount of confusion and can lead to a child or person being misrepresented in some way. That could easily arise in the context of AIDS.

There are a whole host of issues that make me extremely concerned that we should tread warily and carefully in extending the right of personal access to files. I appreciate that the Bill talks about personal access by the individual concerned and I have great hopes that the provisions, as and when they are enacted, will perform a useful task, not least because I have the same name as my son. I always worry about whose bank statement I am opening and, as he has pointed out on several occasions, there are letters that he might receive from some of his girl friends that I am sure he would not want me to look at. Although that is not strictly a manual file, the principle I am discussing is important. For example, in America they have Henry Heinz I, II and III. Once those are in the filing system it will be difficult to distinguish between people if there are mistakes in the compilation of the filing system or, in the case of the Data Protection Act 1984, with the computer itself.

I was given an example at a conference recently—I accept the fact that in the case of this Bill there is an exemption for cases where crime and criminal matters are involved—where a journalist who had reported on a terrorist case ended up by being described as the terrorist. That caused him immense concern, not least because he was being shadowed all over the place. He was apparently being harassed on the grounds that he was the terrorist. In the whole business of data protection and in relation to manual files we must be extremely careful.

There is a good case for clarification and I am sure that our consideration of the Bill in Committee will lead to elucidation of many of the problems that could arise.

There is a bag of tricks employed by Government departments in America, which includes the charging of fees without justification, refusing to act on request until money is paid for information that might be useless or that is never released, ignoring response times set by law, intentionally understaffing departments and the forcing of expensive court cases.

A Bill of this sort could be used for the purpose of pushing for a Bill of which I would not approve. Any pressure for a general freedom of information Bill would have to be resisted. I see difficulties in extensive and expensive litigation being incurred when attempts are made to push back the boundaries of the Bill to achieve a broader objective. I do not wish to exort people not to misuse the Bill because I am sure that they will not do so, but there is the possibility of the Bill being used as the thin end of the wedge.

The Government's record in extending access to information has been chronicled today and I do not propose to go through it all. It is a good one and I believe that by taking the process in stages we are likely to be able to make some significant progress.

There are those in society who feel that it is possible to dispense with confidentiality, or who do not appreciate sufficiently that confidentiality is essential to the proper workings of society as a whole and to the workings of the machinery of Government and properly constituted authority. I could easily spend more time talking on that issue but I shall not.

I conclude by repeating what I said earlier about costs. It was said at a recent conference that one of the United States departments was told in 1966 that it would cost $55,000 a year to run its brand of freedom of information. That was in 1966, and the cost last year was over $35·5 million. We were told also that every United States citizen has 18 files on the computer. That is the other side to the argument. It is clear that we must get the balance right.

I am not in principle against the provision of reasonable information, but I am against that provision when the information is misused or when it is used in an anarchical way by journalists or others for the purpose of being troublesome and without helping to preserve security either of the individual or of the state.

2.3 pm

Mr. Kirkwood: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should like to reply to the debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Does the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) have the leave of the House to speak again?

Hon. Members: Yes.

Mr. Kirkwood: I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and to hon. Members for allowing me to sum up the debate, which is now drawing to an end. I am obviously grateful for the generous remarks that have been made about my success in winning a high place in the ballot. As the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) said, these remarks are often tinged with a shade of green. I am aware that I am fortunate, following my third attempt to win a place in the ballot, to have the opportunity to introduce a measure of this nature under the private Member's Bill procedure.

The generous remarks that have been made about the Bill as it stands are right and proper. Such a Bill is never the result of any one Member's efforts. The hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris), in his usual generous way, adverted to the work that has been done by the Campaign for Freedom of Information and by James Cornford and Maurice Frankel in particular. If generous recognition is due to anybody, it is due to these two individuals.

We have had a constructive debate. These Friday debates have much to commend them. Those in which I have taken part have been sensible, with much cross-party consensus, as has been the case today. The debate has reassured me. We had valuable contributions from the hon. Members for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway), for Winchester (Mr. Browne), for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) and for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley), all of whom raised potential problems. However, we had already anticipated those problems. Although we may have not got the formula right to deal with them, I give the House a cast-iron guarantee that the sponsors of the Bill will bend over backwards to meet these objections and accommodate these genuine fears. I am reassured by the fact that there was nothing new in today's debate.

I recognise the Government's position, and I am grateful for the way in which the Minister reponded on their behalf. I know that the Government have not been idle, and there has been progress in some of these matters. I should like the Minister of State to take away for careful consideration the fact that not one hon. Member was opposed to the principle of the Bill. The House is the better for knowing that.

[Mr. Kirkwood]

Nearly every hon. Member mentioned health records. I understand and fully accept that the Government will give no undertaking on those. However, I ask the Government to listen carefully to the arguments about this. We may not reach accommodation, as the right hon. and learned Gentleman said, but if that happens, there will be no recriminations from sponsors. As the right hon. and learned Gentleman said, the best thing that we can do is give the Bill a Second Reading, take it into Committee and see what progress can be made.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee.

Education (Nutritional Requirements) Bill

Order for Second Reading, read.

2.7 pm

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The spirit of cordiality that has broken out in the House will, I am certain, be continued when the Minister speaks to my Bill. We have time for only a brief debate, and I wish to place on record my thanks to a number of people and organisations who have assisted me in the preparation of the Bill. The London Food Commission is primary among them, but I pay tribute also to the Coronary Prevention Group and the National Union of Public Employees, the chairman of whose parliamentary group, my hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) is here.

The Bill has two objects. The first is to recognise that school meals still play a very important part in the food and nutritional intake of a significant number of young people. We need to make sure that nutritional standards are maintained, and that food is of high quality. The second is to recognise that since 1980, when nutritional standards were abolished, there has been a change of attitude towards food, mirrored in reports by the Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy, and by the National Advisory Committee on Nutrition Education showing that there is a clear link between food and health and a clear connection between food and long-term health. This must help us to tackle problems such as coronaries among people in later life. The time to begin the process of adequate food education is not when people are under the threat of this medical state, but when they are still at school.

This change since 1980 justifies the House looking again at nutritional standards. I am sure that the Minister will point out many examples of local education authorities that have progressive policies on diets at schools. For the benefit of the House, I shall quote a couple of examples which apply across the political spectrum. I pay a sincere tribute to Surrey education authority, which is Conservative controlled. It introduced a traffic light system for food served in school meals cafeterias and has also given special promotion to healthy types of food, such as jacket potatoes to replace chips. That has had a great impact and the uptake of jacket potatoes has increased by 1,100 per cent. while there has been a 40 per cent. decrease in the consumption of chips.

North Yorkshire is another example of a progressive local authority which has recognised the need for dietary requirements and has tried to establish something that is acceptable and educative. What is more, it is successful in encouraging young people to use the school meals service. Redbridge in the Greater London area found when it introduced a healthier and more balanced diet to the menu that it led to no great cost increase but to a 10 per cent. increase in the number of pupils who chose to take school meals.

There are good examples of local authorities doing what they can. Equally, many local authorities are not doing that. For the first time in recent years, we would have by way of this Bill a minimum standard to which all local authorities would have to conform. In no sense

would it penalise the good local authorities that I have mentioned, but it would set a standard for authorities that do not conform to good practice.

This morning I spoke to a pupil of one of the schools in Manchester where the authority is Labour controlled. She has just organised a petition signed by her colleagues at the school and by the teaching staff. It complains about the monotonous diet and the chips-with-everything school meals provided at Poundswick high school. I hope that the Bill will have an impact on Manchester.

While there are good examples of school meals services, it is important for us to recognise that there are bad examples and that we should legislate for the recalcitrants as well as for authorities that follow good practice. School meals are an important source of food for our young people. It is not a matter of talking about a trivial item that is slipped on to the agenda. Nationally, about 17 per cent. of all pupils are in receipt of free school meals. In Manchester the figure is 26 per cent. That is a high percentage and shows that one in four pupils in that city now receives free school meals.

It is generally recognised that there is an underestimate of the number of children entitled to free school meals. Manchester is an increasingly poor city and the school meal is a necessary and important part of the diet. The evidence about the need for adequate standards is overwhelming. In a study carried out in 1979,

"it was found that school dinners were eaten by 95 per cent. of the low income children attending school and, amongst these children, uptake of free school meals was very high. The school lunch provided on average, 36 per cent. of the energy, 28 per cent. of the protein, 38 per cent. of the calcium and 39 per cent. of the iron in their diets. In some instances, the meal contributed as much as 51 per cent. of the energy, 49 per cent. of the protein,".

We are talking about very poor children, and in the days when we had nutritional standards in some cases school meals provided a high proportion of the nutrients received by those young people. A recent DHSS survey was adamant in its conclusion that the school meal was an important part of the diet of older children. In a sense, the DHSS supports the existence of school meals and it is important to underscore that fact. In some ways the report was horrific in what it said about the diet of schoolchildren, and not necessarily about those who take school meals but about those who have ceased to take them in the general downturn in the taking of school meals.

The DHSS report says that free school meals are important in supplying the nutritional needs of children. It says:

"They were found to be partly responsible for keeping the energy intakes of older school children up to the levels of the rest of the children who ate at home or took a packed lunch."

What is surprising and important is that that survey, which looked at the packed lunches taken by children to school in East Sussex, found that only 42 per cent. of the children were consistently given a suitable meal by nutritional standards. Nearly 50 per cent. of them had no fruit or vegetables in their lunch, and in 25 per cent. of those lunches the only protein or calcium that they received was in the bread of the sandwiches. Even packed lunches under the control of parents do not conform on many occasions to acceptable nutritional standards. I accept that there is no way that we shall dragoon young people into the cafeterias or kitchens. We cannot say that school meals will be the only source of nutrients on offer. That is not the case. By establishing minimal nutritional standards, and by making sure that all school meals conform to those standards, we can play an important part not just in diet but in the long-term health education of our pupils.

I shall conclude because of the shortage of time. It is important for the Minister to place her views on the record. There has been a revolution in Britain in attitudes towards food and the understanding of the links between food and health. That may well have percolated down to the readers of the colour supplements in the Sunday newspapers, but it is a right of each and every one of my constituents — I represent a poor part of Britain — in particular, a right of the next generation, that health education and healthy attitudes to food should be available to them as well as to those who are more affluent. Cost should not be a bar. We can make a considerable impact by looking at the school meals service and by accepting that these minimal nutritional standards, which would be subject to the Secretary of State's guidance and discretion, should once again be established to provide for my constituents as well as those of the rest of the country.

2.17 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): I welcome the opportunity to discuss this important topic, which has been raised by the Bill of the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd). The hon. Gentleman presents us with an opportunity to make a few observations about the kind of philosophy that he has put forward about minimal nutritional standards. I should like to counter with some of the views which the Government have on his proposals.

Both you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the hon. Member for Stretford are gallant gentlemen. I imagine that you would not observe the sad fact that I am getting old. The reason why I draw the attention of the House to that sad matter is that my own experience as a younger woman and, indeed, as an adolescent, confirms a certain amount of what the hon. Gentleman said about the nutritional importance of school meals.

As a girl, I recall that the compulsory school meal that many of us had to eat comprised two parts. One was the statutory meat and two veg — we called it something else, but I am sure that that was what it was. A lot of us, I fear, did not participate in that part of the meal. The second part of the meal consisted of suet pudding or treacle pudding. I was a greedy little girl — I dare say that some hon. Members were greedy, and I dare say that they, too, indulged not in one helping of treacle pudding but two. The net result of this sad tale was that by the age of 14 years I was, to say the least, a portly child. That was a great disability to me, and it was as a direct result of unhealthy eating.

The physical exercise that was available to me was twofold. I was placed by my unkind hockey team in the goal because they regarded me as large enough to fill up the hole, and was entered for swimming by the people who wished to win the swimming events, because, curiously enough, one of large size could get through the water quite quickly. That was something that I managed to prove to myself.

I made a speech to this effect at an education conference some years ago when I first became involved in education. The conference discussed the importance of school meals and their place in terms of nutritional value and the responsibilities of the education service. We concluded that, apart from the rather dubious anecdotal evidence

[Mrs. Angela Rumbold]

given by many of the speakers, such as me, there was little proof to hand to support the view that the practice of subsidising school meals should continue.

By the time the House was considering the 1980 education legislation and the continuation of subsidies for school meals, many people involved in local education authorities, such as me, were confronted with schools pressing to be allowed to move to a cafeteria system of providing school meals. The reason given was that young people benefit from being able to go into a cafeteria and choose nutritional food that they want to eat rather than leave food that they do not want to eat—thus providing considerable help for the farmers but not much for the children's nutrition. It is true, as the hon. Member for Stretford has pointed out, that children are tempted by chips and that many will continue to each chips and foods that are far too sweet. Nevertheless, with the improved health education evidence given to schools by some of the better local education authorities, such as North Yorkshire and Surrey, young people are being directed towards a better and healthier diet.

The comprehensive survey conducted in 1983 by the Department of Health and Social Security has been commented on by the public. The main evidence from the report was that there was no significant difference in nutrient intakes between children from differing socio-economic groupings. It did not matter where the children came from. On average, the children's nutrient intakes were above the DHSS recommenations. The evidence showed that children were taller and heavier than expected and that school meals of all kinds were providing adequate nutrients. Older children who are not out of school, especially girls, seemed to choose poorer meals. Much of the evidence in the report, which was the only substantive report that we received, pointed not so much to the need for school meals to be subsidised as to the importance of health education about the contents of meals available to children everywhere.

The hon. Member for Stretford said that about 1·4 million children receive free school meals. It is to the needs of those children that we carefully address our attention and that of authorities which follow different policies. Those authorities that have to provide meals for young people should be aware that a sandwich of wholemeal bread with a sensible filling is as nutritious as many a meal that a young person might be found eating out of school. It is important that all school meals should provide good nutrients and we have clear evidence that this is so.

It is certainly true that the proposal for a better cash benefit will help low income working families to fulfil their prime responsibility to give their children a proper diet. In that context it is important to remember that the prime responsibility for ensuring adequate child nutrition rests with the parents as well as with the schools.

School meals can play only a secondary role since they are provided only five days a week. There is no provision for the weekends and holidays, but better financial support for parents, especially as it would go directly to the mothers, would certainly help them to fulfil those responsibilities. It is for those reasons that the Government, for the time being, are interested, but somewhat doubtful, about the entire value of this extremely interesting Bill.

2.25 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Like the Minister I welcome the fact that my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) has had the opportunity to raise this issue today. I regret that it looks as though the Government are reluctant to allow the Bill to go into Committee. We could usefully have spent a little time in Committee further exploring the issues that my hon. Friend raised.

It would certainly be worthwhile having the Bill on the statute book. I readily accept that, over recent years, there have been considerable improvements in school meals in some areas, but that does not go back to the Education Act 1980. Most of the efforts that were being made by enlightened authorities to improve the nutritional standard and the choice for pupils go back well before the 1980 Act. The 1980 Act caused more problems than it solved. I very much regret the way in which some authorities have pushed up the charges and reached a position where, in many cases, few pupils pay for meals and the only ones who take meals are those who get them free and where almost all of those pupils who would have to pay for them have switched to sandwiches. Although I agree that sandwiches may sometimes have a high nutritional value, they are not satisfactory in very cold weather when hot food is a major advantage to children.

When I visit schools I am also worried to see that children have sandwiches made up of white bread, often quite thickly spread with butter and where the main filling ingredient is often crisps. Those are supplemented by sweet biscuits, to be washed down by a can of coca cola or some other fairly over-sweetened liquid. That is not the sort of thing that we should encourage children to have at midday.

On the one hand, there have been increased charges and some children have been pushed into having sandwiches that are unattractive nutritionally, and on the other hand one or two authorities, such as Dorset and Buckingham, have completely abolished their school meals service. That has caused great hardship in those areas and is an example of the worst things that we predicted would happen when the 1980 Act came into effect.

Other authorities have moved towards the continental day. Although some of the authorities that are considering the continental day are offering pupils a meal at the end of it, the take-up in those cases seems to be small. I do not welcome that development. I am also worried that in some places the cafeteria system encourages pupils to select chips and perhaps to wash them down with currant sauce. There are also examples of the low nutritional standards of snacks.

What is most encouraging is the way in which some authorities have tried to combine teaching in schools with the provision of the school-meal service, and where health education has become a substantial part of the curriculum and discussion of healthy eating within the curriculum is linked to the opportunities for healthy food within the school meals service.

In Salford I saw impressive efforts in some schools to encourage pupils to think carefully about their diet and to make choices at lunchtime that fulfilled that sensible eating. In Tameside, one of the areas that I partly represent, the same thing has been developed to some extent within the schools meals service. We need to have

far more discussion about the nutritional requirements of school meals, and this Bill would be a useful opportunity to fulfil that.

2.29 pm

Mr. Steve Norris (Oxford, East): I regret that time will not permit me to devote to this important measure the attention that it undoubtedly merits. Hon. Members on both sides will agree that it raises important questions. However, the conclusions——.

It being half past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed on Friday 27 February.

PRIVATE SECURITY BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 3 April.

UNBORN CHILDREN (PROTECTION) BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Second Reading—[23 January.]

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 27 February.

PROTECTION OF SHAREHOLDERS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 3 April.

GAMING (AMENDMENT) BILL *[LORDS]*

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 6 March.

HUMAN RIGHTS BILL

Orders read for resuming adjourned debate on Second Reading—[6 February.]

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 1 May.

HEDGEROW PROTECTION BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Second Reading what day?

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): With the agreement of the sponsor, Friday 27 February.

ANIMALS (SCOTLAND) BILL *[LORDS]*

Read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Standing Committee.

REGISTERED ESTABLISHMENTS (SCOTLAND) BILL

Read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Standing Committee.

HOUSING (HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION) BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Second Reading—[13 February.]

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 1 May.

POLICE COMPLAINTS AUTHORITY (INFORMATION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: What day? No day named.

Hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe

2.31 pm

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am sorry to raise a point of order at this time on a Friday, but the matter has only just arisen and the House needs your guidance.

I can genuinely claim that every hon. Member present will be appalled to hear of an attack made today on Mr. Speaker. You, Sir, more than any of us, will appreciate that respect for the Chair and its rulings have always been seen as central and essential to the workings of the House. It is one of the first lessons that any new Member of Parliament learns. Indeed, in the past the House has treated such attacks with such seriousness that hon. Members have been suspended — and I draw your attention to pages 139 and 159 of "Erskine May".

I have before me an extract from the Press Association tape headed

"Tory MP hits out at Speaker."

I have taken the liberty of providing you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with a copy. It refers to the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Hickmet) who, according to this report, issued a considered statement; it was not a casual comment. Referring to events relating to the Prime Minister in the past year, he said:

"The Speaker has allowed that to happen and has not lifted a finger to stop it."

In relation to attacks on the Leader of the Opposition, the hon. Gentleman states:

"Why is it then, as soon as a campaign is mounted against him . . .the Speaker immediately intervenes?. . . we look to the Speaker to be even-handed in these affairs."

The hon. Gentleman continues in that vein.

You will appreciate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that these are serious and possibly unprecedented allegations, especially as they were made outside the House where Mr. Speaker would not have the opportunity to defend himself. I suspect that the hon. Gentleman did not even have the courtesy to notify Mr. Speaker that he intended to make such a personal attack on him and upon the Chair.

In one of today's newspapers a senior Tory is quoted as having told the Government Chief Whip yesterday,

"We"—

that is the Tories—

"have a lot of thugs on our side."

The statement made by the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe seems to confirm that.

I ask you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to give us guidance as to what action the House can take to protect the Chair against such verbal thuggery from petulant junior Members of the House who apparently resent the fact that the other day they had to be reprimanded for unparliamentary conduct.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Waddington): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have not read what my hon. Friend has said, but have only read the reports of it on the tape.

If the reports are in any way accurate, the Government would deplore them. Mr. Speaker commands the confidence of the Government and, I believe, the overwhelming majority of the House. I have no doubt that the correct course of action for my hon. Friend is to seek an appointment with Mr. Speaker to explain what he has said. It would not be right for me to comment further.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East) *rose*——

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I wonder whether it would be wise for the House to reflect on what the Minister has just said and perhaps give the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Hickmet) the opportunity to take the advice that has been offered to him. That would also allow Mr. Speaker to reflect on it over the weekend. I am sure that if Mr. Speaker has any comment to make he will seek an opportunity to do so next week. Perhaps that would be the wisest course.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not think that this is a matter that should be treated in any sense as a party matter. I am grateful to the right hon. and learned Gentleman the Minister of State for what he said, giving the Government's position. I think that this is a matter of great importance. Respect for the Chair is fundamental to good conduct in the House. It has always been my understanding — I should be grateful if you would confirm this, Mr. Deputy Speaker — that if a Member felt so provoked as to criticise the Chair it would be done only on a substantive motion.

I believe that it is utterly wrong that statements of such a provocative and disturbing nature should be made in the country. I certainly hope not only that the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Hickmet) takes the advice that has been offered by the Minister but that, on Monday we shall have a statement and a full apology from him.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The right hon. Gentleman is correct in drawing attention to the seriousness of this matter. Because of that, it might make sense for the hon. Gentleman whose conduct has been criticised to reflect over the weekend on what has been said from both sides of the House, and perhaps he will decide what is the appropriate thing to do on Monday.

Mr. Winnick: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) asked whether the hon. Gentleman in question had informed Mr. Speaker about what can only be described as an outrageous attack on the judgment and integrity of the Speaker. It would be appropriate for the House to know at this stage, regardless of what may happen over the weekend or on Monday, whether the hon. Gentleman, before he made the attack, informed Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I listened to the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams), but I am unable to give the House the information that is now sought. No doubt that will be one of the matters that will be reflected upon over the weekend. It might be wise for the House to allow for a period of reflection before returning to the matter.

Police Computer Records

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

2.38 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): The debate on the Access to Personal Files Bill and my Adjournment debate on the weeding of police computer records means that Friday 20 February 1987 will go down in parliamentary history as the only sitting in the lifetime of this Government when most of the business on the Floor of the House has dealt with the promotion of civil liberties. There have been plenty of debates on the Government's abuse of civil liberties, but today—not surprisingly—Back Benchers, not the Government, have raised this matter.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cohen: No; my time is short.

Why do police records need to be weeded? First, the public need to be reassured that police records are not kept for too long and that they are being used properly. In an increasing number of cases that is not happening. Too many records are held at the moment. The records of one in eight of the adult population are held on the police national computer and they are operational for far too long.

There is also the widespread risk of such data being used for all sorts of different purposes that have more to do with big brother than with effective policing. The Government's intention to replace the police national computer and the Government data network will increase that risk.

The safeguards are insufficient. The Data Protection Act 1984 does not help. In fact, the data protection registrar is prohibited by the Act from serving notice on the police regarding a wide range of data. I intend to seek to introduce a Data Protection (Amendment) Bill to increase the safeguards for the public. The need for the weeding of police computer records is accepted by the Home Office, but the problem is that it is not taking it seriously.

As for the number of police records, 5,119,354 names were on the criminal names index of the police national computer last year. That information was given to me in the *Official Report* on 9 July 1986. That figure represents one in 10 of the population as a whole—perhaps as much as one in eight of the adult population.

As further records on cautions, bind-overs and juvenile records—not to mention criminal intelligence records—are held on local police force computer systems, it is reasonable to suppose that the police have records on one in five of the population or, to put it another way, on one member of each family in the United Kingdom.

The written answer that I received on 14 March 1986 from the Minister shows that the records of the police national computer are being weeded out. By 19 November 1986 the weeding out had resulted in 23,059 records being deleted. However, the written answer also showed that the number of records had increased by approximately 50,000 during the period in which weeding out took place. Thus, despite the weeding out of the index, it is still growing. That says a great deal about the rapidly rising crime rate under this Government. Another inevitable conclusion is that a feeble weeding policy is being pursued.

In another written answer, on 1 December 1986, the Minister told me that the Metropolitan police had 16 people weeding records as a significant part of their duties. All I can say is that the non-significant part of their duties must be sleeping. It seems that 16 officers have weeded out 23,000 records in eight months. Put another way, one officer has weeded out fewer than seven records per day—less than one record per hour. Perhaps the Minister will arrange for the Audit Commission to look into the efficiency of the Metropolitan police. With a little effort, it might increase to eight records per day. In addition, there is no indication of whether the weeding policy extends to the local police force computer systems. I bet that it does not. Perhaps the Minister will clarify that point.

How many times are these records used? The number of accesses to the criminal names index alone on the police national computer is 8·6 million per annum. The figure for the vehicle data index on the police national computer is 25 million accesses. Furthermore, many constabularies have computer equipment whose design is meant to increase the availability of criminal information—that is, criminal records. Most of the constabularies are connected to the police national computer by network and this increases the utilisation of such records. Given this volume and scope of use—nearly 33 million accesses on the police national computer alone—it is reasonable to conclude that every person in the country may expect to be checked every year on a police computer. I refer to recent abuses of PNC data, especially for illegal purposes. Cases are proceeding about that at the moment. The possibility of that abuse is extended by increasing the data kept, and its availability.

What are the prospects for the future? The PNC is 10 years old and due to be replaced soon. If technological improvements are taken into account, there will be at least a tenfold increase in processing power and data storage capability. In fact the consultants PACTEL, who assisted the Greater Manchester police force with its computer, reported that the use of criminal records

"might increase tenfold during the life of the system".

In addition, the report said that

"more detailed and still formal information on the force criminal records office".

will be given to ordinary police officers. Therefore, technological change will make more data available and it will be used more often.

For the PNC alone, ignoring any other use of police data, we can estimate that a tenfold increase would mean 86 million inquiries about people on the PNC, and 250 million vehicle checks per annum. On that basis, the average citizen, who now expects to be checked against police records every year, could expect that delightful prospect every five weeks. There will be added implications as a result of the widespread use of the criminal records index, which provides extra information and complements the criminal names index and, in future, details of bind-overs, juvenile records and cautions, which will be either centrally held on the new PNC, or accessible by its network from local police force computers.

My estimate is that the number of adults on whom data is already held on police computers—one in five of the population—may well become as many as one in two. That is the path that the Government are travelling.

[Mr. Cohen]

Inevitably, that will meet with a negative public response. Those figures present a shocking vista and clearly demonstrate the need for proper controls on police data.

What can be done and why are records weeded? The Government will not countenance the control and reassurance that would be possible if elected members of the community were partly responsible for the police force and were a focus for complaints. They have even ignored the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, which lays down the criteria for when an individual's criminal record can be forgotten, and the crime expunged from society's memory. Under this Act the criminal record will not be expunged for years. A fine, for example, is not expunged for five years and a minor prison sentence is not expunged for seven. Instead the Government have set up criteria by which the police can keep records for at least 20 years, well beyond the period stated in the 1974 Act. The Government should recognise that people who have old, minor offences, and who try to start afresh should get better treatment.

The Minister knows that I am not asking the police to erase all their records. They have a statutory duty to keep records on criminals, and that is not in dispute. It is valuable, and, wherever possible, the process should be automated. However, the bureaucratic necessity of keeping those records for statutory purposes is completely different from allowing the myriad use of them for all policing purposes for the next 20 years. If data are automatically used for all policing purposes however irrelevant it might be, cases will arise that are similar to the complaint that I passed on to the Home Office. A man was stopped by the police, who were able to discover that he had stolen a bottle of milk 22 years earlier when he was a teenager. That record should not have been available to the police officers when they stopped him in his car. Perhaps in the future, at the whim of a Minister, such information may be made available to the DHSS or to another Government department via the Government data network.

A balance must be achieved. It is obvious that records which say "Mr. X attacks police officers" should always be available to police officers performing their duty. However, a record that says "Mr. Y stole milk" should be expunged quickly. At the moment, the only weeding out criteria is the 20-year period. My complainant, who is now 40 years old, at last qualifies to have his record removed, at least if the Metropolitan police staff get their fingers out.

Failure to implement efficient weeding out leads to problems of policing the streets. Suppose that someone is stopped by the police and the officer discovers that that person was arrested for a shoplifting offence eight years ago. His record would be spent under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act, but not under the 20-year rule for weeding. The availability of this record could prejudice how the police officer deals with the incident. The person's bag might be searched, or some comment made to remind the person of his criminal past.

The mathematics of stops and searches make that argument compelling. The report of the Policy Studies Institute on the Metropolitan police in 1983 showed that only one in 12 stops resulted in an arrest. In future, a stop may be co-ordinated with a criminal records check for information. The increased availability of criminal information, which is held on one in five of the population, will mean that, of the 11 people stopped randomly and who would not normally be arrested, two will have a record which will be given to the police officer on the street. Those two people will be harassed and will feel alienated because their past will prejudge them, and the likelihood of their being arrested will increase.

Unless the system is modified or changed drastically, it will not only abuse individual civil liberties but will promote erroneous policing, based on the assumption that once a criminal, always a criminal, or once on police records, always of interest to the police. That is wrong for policing and wrong for civil liberties.

There is a balance between the needs of the police and the protection and reassurance of the public. The Government must justify the massive police record-gathering capability that they have created, but as a small step in countering his trend towards a police state, the Government should at least reflect on the need for more sophisticated criteria in the choice of records that should be operationally active and the circumstances in which they should be available to ordinary police officers on the street.

2.51 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): I congratulate the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on raising this important matter so clearly. But I hope that by the time that I have finished he will think that some of his anxieties are less than well-founded. I hope that he will forgive me if I say to him, through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that he has exaggerated some of the problems and that he has understated or failed to state at all the number of safeguards that exist.

Before I deal with the hon. Gentleman's point, it might be helpful if I outlined briefly the sort of information about individuals and their property which is held on computer systems by the police nationally and locally. Then I shall say something about the safeguards on the use of that information.

I shall deal first with the information held on the police national computer. Since 1974, the police national computer has provided police forces in England, Scotland and Wales with immediate access, day and night, through an extensive communications system, to information of national and local significance. The computer contains information on a range of topics, such as details of people convicted of criminal offences and, in some cases, a list of their convictions. It holds records of the registered keepers of motor vehicles and a comprehensive list of stolen vehicles. It holds information on the fingerprints of criminals. It holds details of people wanted by the police or who are missing from home in suspicious circumstances. This is of special value to the police when they are searching for children abducted from their homes. As the hon. Gentleman said, the police service relies heavily on the information held on the police national computer. The police access it about 30 million times a year, or about 80,000 times a day.

In addition, there are force computer systems. Police forces make extensive use of local computer systems, and many have introduced crime reporting systems which hold information about crimes committed in a local force area. Information held on those systems includes details of the victims of a crime and, in the case of theft, details of stolen property. Such information is useful in enabling the police

to return recovered stolen property to its rightful owner. Computerised criminal information systems have also been introduced by some forces. They contain additional information about local criminals whose names appear on the police national computer, for example, a complete list of convictions. They may also contain information about people convicted of offences not sufficiently serious to warrant inclusion on the national criminal names index on the police national computer, or who have been cautioned. The police need to have access to this information should an individual re-offend.

In addition, although this was not mentioned by the hon. Member, I must mention the use of the HOLMES computer. Perhaps the major advance of the use of computers by the police in recent years has been the introduction of HOLMES — the Home Office large major enquiry system. This is a standard computer system developed by the Home Office scientific research and development branch which is being acquired by forces. It allows full details of witnesses' statements in a major inquiry to be held on computer, and accessed and cross-referenced quickly and efficiently.

The senior investigation officer can know instantly what actions are outstanding in the inquiry and with this can deploy his officers in the most effective manner. Investigating officers can follow up leads and make comparisons between witnesses' statements which would have been impossible under a manual system. HOLMES is a powerful tool which has greatly enhanced the police service's capability for investigating major incidents.

The Government fully recognise that the use of new technology in police work requires safeguards. We recognise that, as more and more police information is held on computer, the public expect safeguards which ensure that only relevant information is held by the police; that the information is used properly; and that it is not disclosed to unauthorised people. Effective safeguards exist. They are three in number. These are the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1984, the code of practice for the protection of personal data on the police national computer and the weeding criteria for police records drawn up by the Association of Chief Police Officers. I should like to describe how each of these safeguards work in this context.

The Data Protection Act 1984 applies to police computer systems. All such systems are registered under the Act and the police must conform to the eight data protection principles. These require, for instance, that personal data held for any purpose shall be adequate, relevant and not excessive in relation to that purpose; that personal data shall be accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date; and that personal data shall not be kept for longer than is necessary. The data protection registrar has the power to investigate if he believes that the police are failing to comply with data protection principles.

As from 11 November this year, individuals will have the right to demand access to any data held about them on police computer systems and, where appropriate, to have such data corrected or erased. The exceptions to this right are limited and clearly defined. First, access may be withheld where my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary determines that national security is involved. In such cases he may issue a certificate of exemption from the provisions of the Act. Secondly, access may be withheld by the police if personal data are held specifically for the prevention or detection of crime, or the apprehension or prosecution of offenders, and when, in the opinion of the police, granting access would be likely to prejudice these matters. The data protection registrar is responsible for monitoring claims for exemptions by the police. Individuals may make a complaint to the registrar, and the registrar has the power to look into it.

There is a second area of safeguard. As I have mentioned, there is a code of practice for the protection of personal data held on the police national computer. That was published in 1982 and a copy is available in the Library. It may well be that the hon. Member for Leyton has had an opportunity to read it. That code sets out the nature and purpose of the data which may be held on each of the applications on the police national computer. It instructs forces as to who is responsible for adding data to the application and on those circumstances when data may be removed. For example, it specifies that the index of criminal names is to comprise an index to criminal records held by the national identification bureau of persons convicted of recordable offences. Broadly speaking, those are offences which can lead to imprisonment. The index of criminal names is also to include particulars of accused persons awaiting trial, to ensure that other alleged offences are correctly attributed.

The code of practice is being revised by a working party of the Association of Chief Police Officers in the light of the Data Protection Act 1984, and its scope is being widened to cover all police computer systems. That work is being undertaken in consultation with the data protection registrar and it is well advanced. I expect that the revised code of practice will be ready later this year and a copy will be placed in the Library. Therefore, there are two major safeguards. First, the Act and, secondly, the code of practice to which I have referred.

The third safeguard is the weeding out criteria on which, understandably, the hon. Gentleman concentrated in some detail. The revised code of practice will incorporate that third safeguard. Revised criteria have been prepared by the Association of Chief Police Officers. Those for recordable offences were announced by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary on 14 March 1986. Those criteria guide chief officers of police as to how long information should be kept. They apply to information held both on computers and manually.

There are different criteria for different types of offence. I will deal first with the criteria for recordable offences—those offences which can lead to a sentence of imprisonment. The criteria for those offences provide that records will normally be weeded out, where offenders have not been prosecuted for an offence of this kind for 20 years since their last conviction, whatever the number of convictions before that. There are exceptions to this 20-year rule, where retaining information on offenders seems justifiable, for example to help in the investigation of major crime. Records are not, therefore, deleted if they include evidence of mental illness; indecency; offences of homicide; and custodial sentences of more than six months. I must stress that records which are kept in this way are, of course, confidential like other police records, and access to them is limited in the same way.

The hon. Gentleman has concentrated, understandably, on the question of civil liberties. It is not easy to strike a balance between the length of time for which the police should hold information about an offender, to help them in the prevention and detection of crime, and the important need to protect the rights of individuals who

[Mr. Douglas Hogg]

may have offended in the past, but who have become law-abiding members of society. There is inevitably a tension between those two purposes. However, the police have concluded, on the basis of their operational experience, that they need to keep a record of an individual for 20 years after his or her last conviction for a recordable offence. They consider that many offenders may well commit further offences during that 20-year period, particularly if the first offence was committed early in life, and that that information needs to be readily available to them—I stress, available to the police, not anybody else—during the whole of that time. But the revised criteria recognised public concern that an individual should not be prejudiced by youthful misdemeanour. Under the previous criteria, no records of anyone under 40 were weeded, irrespective of the length of time since that offender had been convicted. Now, the criteria provide that the record of an offender is normally to be removed after 20 years, irrespective of his or her age. This is an important step forward that I feel sure the hon. Gentleman will wish to acknowledge.

Mr. Cohen: Will the Minister acknowledge that we are talking about small-scale offences and that the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 criteria could apply? Does he accept that these offences could be weeded out after a shorter time instead of being held for the arbitrary 20-year period?

Mr. Hogg: I would make three points in reply to the hon. Gentleman's question. First — I make no bones about this — I am not particularly friendly to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act. The Act was placed on the statute book at a time when we were applying rather different principles. Personally, I would not wish to enact such a measure again. Having had the opportunity to reconsider it, I think that it was a mistake. Secondly, minor offences are non-recordable offences, to which different criteria will apply. Thirdly, we must set down principles. There may be occasions when such a long period is not justified, but we must apply a principle. The one that we are applying seems to make a great degree of sense.

What is the approach to lesser offences — in other words, non-recordable offences — and, for example, occasions when an individual has been cautioned and has not subsequently reoffended? Normally these offences would be weeded out after three years, which is the sort of period that I think the hon. Gentleman would support. Information relating to someone convicted of only a non-recordable offence should normally be weeded out after 10 years if he or she has no further conviction. When there is a caution and no subsequent offence the weeding out process will take place after three years. When there is a conviction for a non-recordable offence, the weeding out process will take place after 10 years, assuming that there is no further conviction. We are seeking to strike a balance. I do not expect the hon. Gentleman will agree with me entirely——

Mr. Cohen *indicated assent.*

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman signifies by nodding that he does not. I hope that he will accept, however, that we are trying to pursue a balanced approach.

The Government are committed to giving the police the technology and back-up that they need to fight crime, and undoubtedly computers and computer systems make an important contribution to that. The Government believe that it is essential that safeguards should be built into the system to protect human rights. There is always a necessary and proper tension between the two objectives, but I believe, I hope the House believes, and I hope that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, believe, that we have reconciled the two competing objectives and that the balance is about right.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at seven minutes past Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 9 February 1987

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Overseas Allowances

Mr. Cockeram asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, what overseas allowances are paid from Church Commissioners' funds to members of the stipendiary ministry.

Sir William van Straubenzee: The Commissioners do not pay overseas allowances to members of the stipendiary ministry.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

State Security

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Attorney-General, pursuant to the answer of 4 February, *Official Report*, column *672*, concerning his meetings in 1986 with Mr. Duncan Campbell, what was discussed; and whether the publication or broadcast of classified information was raised.

The Solicitor-General: I have nothing to add to the answer given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General on 4 February.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Attorney-General whether he intends to prosecute the publishers of the "Interspace" newsletter under section 2 of the Official Secrets Act for publishing information on the Zircon satellite project.

The Solicitor-General: No.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Attorney-General why he did not seek an injunction to prevent the distribution of an article in the Interspace newsletter detailing information on the Zircon satellite project in 1984.

The Solicitor-General: The articles published by "Interspace" which it has subsequently been claimed referred to this project were not considered to be sufficiently based on fact as to reveal a breach of confidence or to constitute a threat to national security.

Child Destruction

Mr. Evennett asked the Attorney-General how many cases of alleged child destruction have been considered by the Crown Prosecution Service in each of the months since its formation; and in how many of the cases in each of those months the service advocated the bringing of prosecutions.

The Solicitor-General: I have asked for inquiries to be made and will write to my hon. Friend when the information is to hand.

Housing Disputes

Mrs. Peacock asked the Attorney-General how many housing rights disputes between landlord and tenants over repairs, improvements or service charges have been handled by courts in West Yorkshire during each of the last five years.

The Solicitor-General: I regret that figures are not collected on this specific area of county court work.

Justices of the Peace

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Attorney-General how many justices of the peace in Northern Ireland have tendered their resignation to the Lord Chancellor since November 1985; and what reasons were given.

The Solicitor-General: Eight justices of the peace tendered their resignations to the Lord Chancellor between 1 November 1985 and 5 February 1987. Two of these arose because the justices were leaving the jurisdiction; two for health reasons and three for personal reasons. The eighth resignation was tendered for political reasons, and the question of its acceptance is under consideration.

Diplomatic Immunity

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Attorney-General, pursuant to the answer of 5 February, what criteria the Director of Public Prosecutions uses in deciding whether the evidence in a particular case justifies initiating proceedings for extradition; what weight he attaches to the evidence adduced by the police in their decision to bring charges; and how the criteria were applied in the case of Mr. James Ingley.

The Solicitor-General: Before deciding whether to make an extradition request, the Director of Public Prosecutions must first establish whether there is sufficient evidence to support a prosecution in this country, and if so, whether a prosecution is in the public interest. In making this decision, he applies the criteria set down in the code for Crown Prosecutors, a copy of which was placed in the House of Commons Library in June 1986. Where he decides that the evidence adduced by the police is insufficient to support a prosecution, as he did in the case of Mr. James Ingley, it follows that no extradition request can be made.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Radio Telephone Licences

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make it his policy in considering any extension of radio telephone licences after 1987 to ensure that all trunk roads are covered by the system.

Mr. Butcher: Licences for the provision of national radio telephone services have already been granted to BT and to the two cellular operators, Telecom Securicor Cellular Radio Ltd., and Racal Vodafone Ltd. It is a condition of the cellular operators' licences that by 1990 they cover an area where 90 per cent. of the United Kingdom population live. This will cover most trunk roads. Modification of the conditions of licences is a matter for the Director General of Telecommunications.

I will of course bear in mind the right hon. Gentleman's suggestion if the licensing of any further national radio telephone operator arises.

Disabled People

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to the reply to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe, on 21 January, *Official Report*, column *581*, if he will list the committees and councils which have not appointed someone with knowledge of disability; what action he has taken to bring the requirements of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 to their attention; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The following nationalised industry consumer councils do not at present have someone with specific knowledge of disability:

Central Transport Consultative Council
Transport Users' Consultative Committee for Eastern England
Transport Users' Consultative Committee for Scotland
Transport Users' Consultative Committee for Western England
Post Office Users' National Council
Post Office Users' Council for Wales
South Western Electricity Consultative Council
Electricity Consultative Council (Eastern Area)
Electricity Consultative Council (South Wales)
North Eastern Electricity Consultative Council
Domestic Coal Consumers' Council

In the case of four of these bodies, appointments of persons to represent the interests of the disabled are currently under consideration. The requirements of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act are taken into account when the chairmen of the councils and committees are consulted by the Department about membership requirements, prior to decisions on appointments by the Secretary of State.

Hearing Aids

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his policy on the issue of licences for audio-frequency induction loops for hearing aid purposes; if moneys forwarded in error by applicants is returned; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: My Department expects to make an exemption order under the Wireless Telegraphy Act 1949 this year to remove the licensing burden from a wide range of low power radio devices, including hearing aid induction loops.

In the meantime, we have, from 21 January, varied licence conditions so that all new licences are issued free of charge. Anyone who has inadvertently sent money for renewals falling due after that date should apply for a refund.

Tropical Forests

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if Her Majesty's Government will take steps to encourage the protection of the irreplaceable tropical forests by limiting imports of hardwoods.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Government attach great importance to halting the erosion of tropical moist forests and to promoting sustainable management and conservation policies. This is a fundamental objective of the international tropical timber agreement; which the United Kingdom was one of the first to ratify. The International Tropical Timber Organisation has been established as the executive arm of the ITTA to co-ordinate a work programme in advance to the next ITTO meeting which is expected to take place in Yokohama next March, The United Kingdom intends to participate actively in these discussions.

The import of endangered species of hardwood is already strictly controlled under the convention of international trade on endangered species of wild flora and fauna which is implemented throughout the Community by EC regulations Nos. 3626/82 and 3418/83.

Household Bleach

Mr. Terry Fields asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if the Government will include all concentrations of household bleach in the Child Resistant Packaging (Safety) Regulations 1986; what representations he has received for the inclusion of all household bleach in these regulations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hqward: The Government considered prescribing child resistant packaging for household bleach, but were advised by leading paediatricians that it never caused serious or lasting injury to young children who ingested it; and in any case it is so unpalatable that they would be likely to spit it out straight away. Representatives of consumers have expressed the view that household bleach should be included in the scope of the regulations, but in the circumstances I cannot justify doing so.

South Africa

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list in the *Official Report* all those companies which filed returns in 1986 or the most recent period for which figures are available under the EEC code of conduct for firms operating in South Africa.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is available in the annexes of the analysis and summary of companies' reports under the EC code of conduct for companies with interests in South Africa for the period 1 July 1984 to 30 June 1985, which was placed in the Library of the House on 27 March 1986. The analysis and summary for the period 30 June 1986 will be similarly deposited in due course.

Surinam

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has been the volume and value of trade with Surinam, in each month for the last three years, up to the latest available month.

Mr. Alan Clark: Information is available only in value terms and is as follows:

United Kingdom Trade with Surinam: Value £000

Month	1984		1985		1986	
	Imports	Exports	Imports	Exports	Imports	Exports
January	915	183	2,070	621	1,556	397
February	906	539	2,089	847	1,140	1,113
March	937	960	1,189	1,072	1,032	386
April	12	511	1,102	541	1,041	2,643
May	1,290	385	1,138	1,524	1,685	195
June	5,683	452	954	871	1,262	1,186
July	1,225	472	1,730	601	1,014	585
August	1,440	903	8	713	1,254	544
September	1,124	2,566	1,334	506	932	433
October	1,495	641	1,252	836	1,264	510
November	2,025	627	822	729	890	1,130
December	1,263	1,355	1,718	536	2,485	621

Notes:
1. All figures provisional: monthly figures are not revised and may not agree with monthly cumulative or annual figures.
2. Imports are valued (cif); Exports (fob).

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prevention of Terrorism

Mr. Hayward asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will seek the renewal of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd [*pursuant to his reply*, 29 January 1987, c. 342]: Copies of my response to Lord Colville's report on the operation of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 have today been placed in the Library.

News International, Wapping

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to how many road accidents involving personal injury or fatalities caused by TNT lorries leaving or arriving at the News International plant at Wapping have occurred in the last 12 months.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis informs me that there have been three such incidents involving TNT vehicles in the Leman street division. I understand that in one of them a member of the public sustained fatal injuries.

Safety Glass

Mr. Moate asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, from the information available to him, what is the number of burglaries where access is gained by the breaking of windows; and what steps are being taken to encourage the use of safety or security glass.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Figures obtained by the Home Office standing conference on crime prevention working group on residential burglary for one police force area showed that in 1985 access was gained by the breaking of windows in 13 per cent. of burglaries or dwellings. The publication "How to Protect Your Home" advises that laminated glass will provide additional strength against outside attack. I have asked the chairman of the working group on residential burglary to discuss with representatives of the Glass and Glazing Federation the ways in which different types of glass can help prevent burglary.

Government Data Network

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what new interactive, interrogative and batch facilities will accrue to his Department from the connection to the Government data network; and what is the estimated saving to his Department from joining the network.

Mr. Hurd: No new interactive, interrogative or batch facilities will accrue to the Home Office from connection to the Government data network, as there are no plans which depend directly on the availability of that network, nor are there plans resulting from expectation of being connected to the network. The cost of the network will not be known until a contract is placed for its provision.

Satellite Broadcasting

Mr. Coleman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment Her Majesty's Government have made of the implications of transnational satellite television broadcasting for the operation of current legislation governing the presentation of political issues in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: In principle, the implications are similar to those affecting radio which has crossed frontiers for many years. Most transnational television services offer general entertainment and do not present political issues. Obviously, United Kingdom laws and the regulatory authorities cannot touch transmissions from outside our jurisdiction. Where such services are re-transmitted over cable systems in this country, the Cable Authority has certain regulatory powers concerning the impartiality of news and the presentation of views on matters of political controversy or current public policy. Discussion of a common European system for regulating trans-frontier broadcasting is continuing within the European Community and the Council of Europe.

Drink Driving

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Nottinghamshire on the effectiveness of the high visibility approach to deterring the excess alcohol offender adopted by Nottinghamshire police over the Christmas period; and if he will discuss with the

Association of Chief Police Officers the potential contribution to road safety nationally of using this approach more widely.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Within the powers provided by Parliament, the enforcement of the law on drink driving is a matter for individual chief officers of police. It is too early to draw conclusions about the results of police enforcement or the Government's publicity campaign over Christmas. Methods of enforcing the laws on drinking and driving are discussed by the Association of Chief Police Officers, with which we are in regular contact.

Rape

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received seeking amendments to the Criminal Justice Bill to establish *(a)* a right of appeal by the prosecution against sentences passed by the courts for rape and other serious offences and *(b)* the creation of a minimum sentence of 25 years and a maximum of life imprisonment, defined as the duration of natural life, in respect of offences of rape or attempted rape.

Mr. Mellor: We have received letters of support for both a prosecution right of appeal and statutory minimum sentences, not necessarily in the context of the Criminal Justice Bill.

Mr. Peter Brunivels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Leicester, East on 19 January relating to sentences for criminal offences, if he will specify the number of occasions in each of the last 10 years on which a court has recommended a minimum sentence for rape; and what was the sentence recommended and the sentence actually received in each case.

Mr. Mellor: I am not aware of any such cases.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Leicester, East on 19 January, *Official Report*, c. *360*, what representations he has received seeking the removal of all rights of remission parole or release on licence in respect of convicted rape offenders.

Mr. Mellor: We receive numerous letters suggesting that convicted rapists, and other offenders, should serve the full sentence imposed by the court. No prisoner has a right to parole and, in accordance with the policy announced by my predecessor, convicted rapists sentenced to more than five years' imprisonment are unlikely to receive parole except for very short periods towards the end of their sentences.

Removal of Vehicles

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many vehicles were towed away by the police in London *(a)* in 1986 and *(b)* so far in 1987; in how many instances its driver was not required to pay the removal charge; and why.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis has informed me that 43,942 vehicles were removed by his force in 1986, and that up to 31 January this year 2,959 vehicles were removed. The removal charge was waived or not paid in 5,326 cases in 1986, but the figure for 1987 is not available. The charge is waived where it appears, in the light of further information that no offence has been committed, or where evidence of extenuating circumstances is accepted. Charges go unpaid where the vehicle is not claimed from the pound or action to recover the charge is unsuccessful.

Detainees' Property

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidelines are issued to the police regarding the items of clothing and other belongings which they may remove from people being held in their custody; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The circumstances in which a detained person may be deprived of articles of clothing while in police detention and guidance on the conducting of searches of detained persons are contained in the code of practice for the detention, treatment and questioning of persons by police officers under section 66 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.

Infant Life (Preservation) Act

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether any advice is given by his Department to the police concerning investigation of allegations of child destruction as defined by the Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No.

Wandsworth Prison

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, in the light of the information supplied to him by the hon. Member for Tooting, he has anything to add to the reply of 3 February, *Official Report*, c. *564*, regarding land near Wandsworth prison.

Mr. Mellor: I will write to the hon. Member.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

State Security

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if the warrant sought by the special branch in relation to BBC Scotland referred to all six Secret Society programmes made by the British Broadcasting Corporation.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I have arranged for a copy of the warrant to be placed in the Library of the House and I would refer the hon. Gentleman to its terms.

Mr. Wallace asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland whether, in considering the petition for a warrant to search the premises of BBC Scotland at Queen Margaret drive, Glasgow, the Lord Advocate or the procurator fiscal were presented with any evidence which suggested or tended to suggest that offences under section 2 of the Official Secrets Act had been or were about to be committed in respect of the compilation or production of any of the five episodes of BBC Scotland's "The Secret Society" series, other than that dealing with the Zircon satellite project; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Any information communicated by the police to the procurator fiscal in the course of a criminal investigation is confidential, but for the purposes of securing a warrant, a petition narrating the grounds for the application was presented to the sheriff and was sworn to by an officer of the Metropolitan police. I am arranging for a copy of the petition which was presented to Sheriff Lockhart to be placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland what assessment the procurator fiscal made in applying, with the authority of the Lord Advocate, for a search warrant for the BBC's Glasgow offices, as to the necessity of searching for and seizing material relating to all six of the programmes in the BBC series, "The Secret Society".

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: In applying to a sheriff at Glasgow for the warrant which was sought in this case, the procurator fiscal proceeded upon the basis of information provided by an officer of the Metropolitan police, as was stated by my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate in his answer in another place on Wednesday 4 February 1987.

ENERGY

Power Stations

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the total financial sum and manpower effort invested to date by the electricity supply industry in engineering, economic and site evaluations and planning for the Sizewell B reactor.

Mr. Alastair Goodlad: I understand from the Central Electricity Generating Board that total expenditure incurred on Sizewell B to the end of January 1987 amounted to £235 million. This sum covers work undertaken by CEGB, the National Nuclear Corporation, the principal contractors and consultants. The bulk of this expenditure has been on engineering effort and the preparation of the design and safety case. It is of course without prejudice to my right hon. Friend's decision whether or not to grant consent for the construction of Sizewell B. Currently, approximately 375 people are employed in the CEGB's project management team and another 450 people are engaged on supporting design and specification work.

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Energy how soon he will be in a position to consider an application from the Central Electricity Generating Board on fast breeder reactor power stations to supply electricity to the grid.

Mr. Goodlad: I have not received an application from the Central Electricity Generating Board to build a fast reactor power station.

Mr. McGuire asked the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Makerfield on 21 January, *Official Report*, column *570*, concerning net effective cost information supplied to his Department, in which year the Central Electricity Generating Board first supplied such information in connection with a proposed new power station; if he will list the names of all power stations for which investment approval has been given in the light of such information being supplied, stating in each case what merit order positions were specified; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The current net effective cost approach was first used in the CEGB's case in support of its application to construct Sizewell B, on which my right hon. Friend's decision has not yet been made.

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the estimated savings or costs per kilowatt year for the proposed Sizewell B nuclear reactor over coal-fired power stations if the price of power station coal is *(a)* £45 per tonne, *(b)* £40 per tonne, *(c)* £35 per tonne, *(d)* £30 per tonne and *(e)* £25 per tonne.

Mr. Goodlad: My right hon. Friend is currently considering the economic case for Sizewell B in the light of Sir Frank Layfield's report. Until he has reached his decision, it would be inappropriate for me to comment on such matters.

Electricity Supply Industry

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any plans to privatise part or all of the electricity supply industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The Government have no present plans to privatise the electricity supply industry.

Sizewell B

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many staff from his Department have made visits to foreign pressurised water reactor plant or training centres to assess the likely operational characteristics of the Sizewell B reactor.

Mr. Goodlad: There have been occasional visits by both Ministers and officials to overseas power stations, including PWRs.

Electricity Generation

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will publish in the *Official Report* the percentages for electricity generation by main fuel source for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Goodlad: For United Kingdom public supply, the information, on a fuel used basis, is as follows:

per cent.[1]

Type of fuel	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Coal[2]	70·4	69·8	70·2	72·8	78·0	79·2	74·7	75·4	48·8	64·5
Oil[2 3]	15·4	15·8	16·9	14·9	9·8	7·9	9·9	7·5	33·1	15·8

Type of fuel	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Natural gas	2·3	1·5	0·9	0·5	0·2	—	—	—	0·4	0·4
Nuclear electricity	10·3	11·3	10·3	10·1	10·4	11·0	13·5	15·2	16·2	17·7
Hydro electricity	1·5	1·5	1·5	1·5	1·5	1·8	1·9	1·9	1·6	1·6

[1] The total fuel used includes also very small amounts of coke.
[2] Including quantities used in the production of steam for sale.
[3] Including oil used in gas turbine and diesel plant and for lighting up coal fired boilers.

Information for 1986 will be included in the next issue of the Department of Energy's publication "Energy Trends" to be published on 26 February.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Falkland Islands (Fisheries)

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the total annual revenue, actual or anticipated, from fishing licences and associated activities in the Falklands.

Mrs. Chalker: We and the Falkland Islands Government have assumed revenue of approximately £8 million from fishing licences, transhipping licences and harbour dues. Costs of the implementation of the Falkland Islands interim conservation and management zone have been estimated at £4 million. By 1 February, approximately £5 million had been received.

Turkey

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have recently been made to the Government of Turkey on the question of human rights; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: In recent years, Turkey has made considerable progress towards the full restoration of human rights and democracy. We take every appropriate opportunity to raise this subject with the Turkish Government and in particular to express our concern over the mass trials. My right hon. and learned Friend last raised these issues with the Turkish Minister responsible for legislative affairs during his visit to London on 18 December 1986. He assured my right hon. and learned Friend that progress would continue.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Turkish Government following the recent DISK trials.

Mrs. Chalker: The recent verdicts in the DISK trial, which were announced on 24 December, are subject to appeal and the matter is therefore still before the courts. In these circumstances it would not be appropriate to comment. We have however made clear to the Turkish authorities on several occasions our general concern about the mass trials.

Cyprus

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what action Her Majesty's Government are taking to find an equitable solution to the problems of the people of Cyprus.

Mrs. Chalker: We believe that the United Nations Secretary-General is best placed to make progress towards a solution to the problems of Cyprus. All parties involved have recently renewed their commitment to support his mission of good offices. We give active support to the Secretary-General's mission. He has publicly acknowledged the role we have played. We also lose no opportunity to speak to the parties, and urge them to be flexible and show the necessary political will to achieve a settlement.

BBC World Service

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any plans to increase funding for the British Broadcasting Corporation world service.

Mrs. Chalker: We are currently considering the next three-year funding requirements of the external services for the period 1988-89 to 1990-91 which will include an amount for the world service (approximately £17 million in 1986-87). Any increase in funding for the external services will need to be assessed against other demands on Foreign and Commonwealth Office resources, and it is likely to be some time before any decisions are taken.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Birkenhead (School Merger)

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to give final approval to the merger of the Marian high school and Bishop Challoner school in Birkenhead; and when he expects to approve the rebuilding programme budget for the school.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend expects to announce his decision on the merger shortly. The question of the rebuilding project will be considered in the light of his decision.

Class Sizes

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a table showing the numbers of classes and of pupils in classes in each local education authority with 30 and under, 31 to 35, 36 to 40 and over 40 pupils per class for primary and secondary schools in 1985 and 1986, respectively.

Mr. Dunn: The number of classes and pupils in classes in the four size bands requested in maintained primary and secondary schools for each local education authority in England for 1985 and 1986 are as follows. The analyses are in respect of classes taught by one teacher on a specified school period within the day of the census count in January of each year. The figures may not, therefore, be representative of the pattern of classes over the academic year as a whole.

Classes and pupils in primary schools—January 1985

Primary	30 and under		31 to 35		36 to 40		41 and over	
	Classes	Pupils	Classes	Pupils	Classes	Pupils	Classes	Pupils
301 Barking	527	12,308	16	513	3	116	—	—
302 Barnet	792	17,219	65	2,082	4	149	1	46
303 Bexley	476	11,486	128	4,119	3	112	1	48
304 Brent	743	15,832	36	1,192	1	36	—	—
305 Bromley	573	14,189	142	4,550	1	36	—	—
306 Croydon	761	17,180	150	4,873	9	330	—	—
307 Ealing	797	17,076	106	3,450	10	366	—	—
308 Enfield	622	14,762	140	4,568	6	220	1	48
309 Haringey	657	14,424	4	127	1	39	—	—
310 Harrow	506	11,148	116	3,792	5	180	—	—
311 Havering	602	14,820	86	2,766	1	36	1	50
312 Hillingdon	545	12,919	103	3,346	21	783	1	51
313 Hounslow	570	12,014	81	2,641	10	368	—	—
314 Kingston upon Thames	263	5,738	83	2,757	—	—	—	—
315 Merton	269	5,905	52	1,703	6	219	2	91
316 Newham	751	17,354	26	833	1	40	1	60
317 Redbridge	393	8,967	167	5,441	11	409	—	—
318 Richmond upon Thames	294	6,948	40	1,293	2	72	—	—
319 Sutton	253	5,974	99	3,258	25	912	1	42
320 Waltham Forest	549	12,551	74	2,383	2	73	1	42
427 Inner London	6,226	126,412	123	3,936	2	76	4	231
330 Birmingham	2,535	59,283	806	26,384	39	1,445	—	—
331 Coventry	674	15,339	240	7,803	21	767	2	91
332 Dudley	799	18,021	202	6,558	13	480	2	102
333 Sandwell	870	19,479	172	5,577	14	516	1	53
334 Solihull	477	11,099	140	4,603	16	583	—	—
335 Walsall	896	18,800	65	2,083	7	253	—	—
336 Wolverhampton	911	18,905	39	1,267	3	117	1	42
340 Knowsley	523	12,316	81	2,628	4	144	1	43
341 Liverpool	1,479	33,137	211	6,823	12	437	1	44
342 St. Helens	533	12,062	96	3,143	27	994	2	85
343 Sefton	699	16,774	188	6,099	11	400	—	—
344 Wirral	744	17,800	261	8,496	19	705	—	—
350 Bolton	608	14,368	203	6,609	28	1,044	12	601
351 Bury	439	9,844	96	3,110	20	735	1	44
352 Manchester	1,244	29,043	184	5,943	18	681	1	44
353 Oldham	557	12,533	176	5,767	27	1,012	3	152
354 Rochdale	538	12,544	121	3,955	13	481	—	—
355 Salford	737	16,923	64	2,057	9	343	4	193
356 Stockport	689	16,855	153	4,946	23	849	—	—
357 Tameside	553	12,865	158	5,105	22	811	1	41
358 Trafford	432	9,936	127	4,145	18	664	2	93
359 Wigan	823	18,690	151	4,896	39	1,462	1	107
370 Barnsley	698	16,281	38	1,217	1	40	—	—
371 Doncaster	922	21,083	73	2,354	6	229	1	41
372 Rotherham	792	18,684	85	2,729	4	158	—	—
373 Sheffield	1,573	34,915	84	2,689	11	418	2	84
380 Bradford	1,102	26,027	89	2,840	5	190	—	—
381 Calderdale	572	13,186	101	3,276	10	363	1	42
382 Kirklees	1,021	22,871	215	6,949	27	1,001	1	52
383 Leeds	1,396	32,376	307	9,897	41	1,545	6	305
384 Wakefield	751	17,340	104	3,334	12	460	1	41
390 Gateshead	753	16,095	18	571	1	40	—	—
391 Newcastle upon Tyne	749	16,356	53	1,699	1	38	—	—
392 North Tyneside	620	12,770	27	854	1	39	—	—
393 South Tyneside	507	11,567	26	837	4	149	—	—
394 Sunderland	940	21,821	116	3,741	1	36	1	83
420 Isles of Scilly	12	148	—	—	—	—	—	—
901 Avon	1,617	38,775	853	27,837	81	2,963	1	42
902 Bedfordshire	1,051	24,306	250	8,123	31	1,167	5	210
903 Berkshire	1,504	35,408	448	14,512	46	1,685	1	41
904 Buckinghamshire	1,467	34,882	530	17,264	96	3,550	7	344
905 Cambridgeshire	1,481	35,515	386	12,539	18	663	2	86
906 Cheshire	2,126	49,255	647	21,095	107	3,946	8	343
907 Cleveland	1,805	42,355	179	5,760	39	1,500	1	43
908 Cornwall	1,009	23,162	285	9,271	40	1,471	—	—
909 Cumbria	1,412	31,214	154	4,962	7	256	—	—

Primary	30 and under		31 to 35		36 to 40		41 and over	
	Classes	Pupils	Classes	Pupils	Classes	Pupils	Classes	Pupils
910 Derbyshire	2,239	51,235	503	16,281	86	3,180	1	47
911 Devon	1,921	44,550	544	17,818	102	3,772	1	42
912 Dorset	856	19,600	371	12,072	68	2,499	4	248
913 Durham	1,604	37,725	328	10,589	16	584	—	—
914 East Sussex	1,215	28,307	404	13,126	26	947	1	41
915 Essex	3,229	79,504	1,100	35,230	31	1,130	4	184
916 Gloucestershire	1,073	24,687	386	12,508	31	1,135	2	85
917 Hampshire	2,855	68,529	1,326	43,201	125	4,593	7	355
918 Hereford and Worcester	1,132	25,746	463	15,125	42	1,554	1	43
919 Hertfordshire	2,392	55,110	502	16,279	48	1,776	1	41
920 Humberside	2,351	52,897	257	8,268	21	788	3	146
921 Isle of Wight	181	4,476	37	1,205	5	189	—	—
922 Kent	2,780	67,579	1,208	39,255	66	2,426	1	43
923 Lancashire	2,953	69,861	991	32,432	170	6,617	12	598
924 Leicestershire	2,318	53,690	411	13,241	20	750	6	257
925 Lincolnshire	1,107	25,934	454	14,820	56	2,035	1	42
926 Norfolk	2,026	45,332	347	11,288	18	660	1	45
927 North Yorkshire	1,591	34,727	371	12,100	41	1,507	3	126
928 Northampton	1,509	34,867	235	7,594	9	327	1	135
929 Northumberland	497	10,988	206	6,750	11	404	—	—
930 Nottinghamshire	2,807	64,014	229	7,335	25	970	4	220
931 Oxfordshire	930	22,756	305	9,820	13	481	1	45
932 Shropshire	1,085	24,184	150	4,839	14	516	—	—
933 Somerset	746	18,105	378	12,279	21	767	—	—
934 Staffordshire	2,642	60,482	359	11,607	48	1,787	1	67
935 Suffolk	1,431	32,725	172	5,529	5	184	1	61
936 Surrey	2,255	52,213	506	16,469	33	1,213	4	189
937 Warwickshire	1,196	26,926	411	13,504	21	775	—	—
938 West Sussex	1,308	31,117	413	13,407	38	1,397	—	—
939 Wiltshire	1,179	28,071	334	10,790	9	328	1	56

Classes and pupils in secondary schools—January 1985

Secondary	30 and under		31 to 35		36 to 40		41 and over	
	Classes	Pupils	Classes	Pupils	Classes	Pupils	Classes	Pupils
301 Barking	461	8,890	6	191	—	—	—	—
302 Barnet	872	15,353	57	1,810	1	38	1	65
303 Bexley	703	13,937	40	1,263	—	—	1	64
304 Brent	690	11,783	11	347	—	—	—	—
305 Bromley	826	15,626	58	1,857	1	36	—	—
306 Croydon	874	17,205	58	1,842	3	108	—	—
307 Ealing	638	11,915	26	842	2	72	1	44
308 Enfield	779	13,617	89	2,869	1	38	1	74
309 Haringey	525	9,439	7	223	—	—	—	—
310 Harrow	496	9,251	18	569	—	—	2	130
311 Havering	823	15,973	52	1,644	—	—	—	—
312 Hillingdon	711	13,461	34	1,083	1	36	1	52
313 Hounslow	648	12,235	33	1,052	1	37	—	—
314 Kingston upon Thames	348	6,309	46	1,475	1	36	1	44
315 Merton	542	10,809	47	1,510	—	—	—	—
316 Newham	704	13,514	10	320	—	—	2	121
317 Redbridge	667	12,481	32	1,028	3	108	2	88
318 Richmond upon Thames	263	5,460	22	706	—	—	—	—
319 Sutton	431	8,049	65	2,081	—	—	1	47
320 Waltham Forest	698	12,392	10	323	2	72	—	—
427 Inner London	5,806	105,365	118	3,728	—	—	—	—
330 Birmingham	3,066	61,350	361	11,538	2	74	1	41
331 Coventry	993	19,580	93	2,952	3	113	1	65
332 Dudley	976	18,580	44	1,396	3	111	—	—
333 Sandwell	1,179	22,629	33	1,059	—	—	1	44
334 Solihull	750	15,064	49	1,562	3	108	—	—
335 Walsall	1,155	21,242	54	1,700	1	38	—	—
336 Wolverhampton	961	18,202	22	700	1	36	—	—
340 Knowsley	592	11,231	13	418	2	72	2	85
341 Liverpool	1,441	28,245	112	3,553	3	108	—	—
342 St. Helens	632	11,687	72	2,298	4	148	2	104
343 Sefton	959	18,990	80	2,561	3	109	—	—
344 Wirral	1,033	19,454	98	3,120	2	79	—	—
350 Bolton	879	17,137	82	2,606	1	36	1	59

Secondary	30 and under		31 to 35		36 to 40		41 and over	
	Classes	Pupils	Classes	Pupils	Classes	Pupils	Classes	Pupils
351 Bury	553	10,401	37	1,188	—	—	—	—
352 Manchester	1,433	26,821	73	2,330	3	109	—	—
353 Oldham	712	14,000	66	2,112	—	—	—	—
354 Rochdale	816	15,584	32	1,020	—	—	1	45
355 Salford	835	15,895	21	671	1	36	—	—
356 Stockport	970	18,735	68	2,157	3	108	—	—
357 Tameside	668	13,024	40	1,289	1	36	—	—
358 Trafford	630	13,013	16	504	—	—	1	42
359 Wigan	1,204	23,573	45	1,438	3	113	3	147
370 Barnsley	798	16,038	22	690	—	—	—	—
371 Doncaster	1,003	20,538	62	1,978	1	36	—	—
372 Rotherham	932	18,538	58	1,875	4	145	—	—
373 Sheffield	1,591	31,061	57	1,829	2	73	—	—
380 Bradford	1,845	36,905	145	4,694	3	108	—	—
381 Calderdale	655	12,588	56	1,767	—	—	—	—
382 Kirklees	1,309	25,342	106	3,397	3	110	1	45
383 Leeds	2,660	50,772	263	8,511	14	516	—	—
384 Wakefield	1,088	21,444	116	3,721	3	108	—	—
390 Gateshead	661	12,615	35	1,103	—	—	—	—
391 Newcastle upon Tyne	959	17,819	29	921	1	40	1	53
392 North Tyneside	824	14,817	25	791	—	—	—	—
393 South Tyneside	533	9,704	10	311	—	—	—	—
394 Sunderland	1,067	20,313	49	1,578	3	108	—	—
420 Isles of Scilly	10	137	—	—	—	—	—	—
901 Avon	2,525	50,407	237	7,567	5	183	2	141
902 Bedfordshire	1,980	40,274	141	4,487	3	110	3	180
903 Berkshire	2,205	41,490	205	6,574	6	219	1	51
904 Buckinghamshire	1,607	31,065	108	3,438	2	72	—	—
905 Cambridgeshire	1,694	34,044	153	4,870	5	188	3	169
906 Cheshire	3,037	59,327	356	11,419	10	361	1	43
907 Cleveland	2,042	40,968	75	2,390	1	39	—	—
908 Cornwall	1,332	25,955	137	4,376	5	186	4	228
909 Cumbria	1,682	32,355	76	2,406	1	36	—	—
910 Derbyshire	2,726	54,302	279	8,929	9	333	4	183
911 Devon	2,543	51,219	247	7,912	7	254	2	109
912 Dorset	1,700	33,937	155	4,986	10	365	2	86
913 Durham	1,724	34,567	153	4,905	4	147	1	43
914 East Sussex	1,501	29,262	149	4,740	3	110	—	—
915 Essex	4,589	93,226	382	12,120	8	293	6	292
916 Gloucestershire	1,523	29,378	150	4,814	6	224	1	67
917 Hampshire	4,112	84,273	317	10,087	12	440	4	190
918 Hereford and Worcester	2,198	42,658	289	9,288	10	369	3	146
919 Hertfordshire	3,403	63,131	244	7,775	1	36	2	109
920 Humberside	3,337	64,680	243	7,775	13	481	1	75
921 Isle of Wight	452	8,992	53	1,692	2	74	—	—
922 Kent	4,552	92,689	300	9,492	4	151	2	139
923 Lancashire	3,968	79,374	376	12,049	7	260	2	109
924 Leicestershire	2,773	56,359	88	2,813	4	144	1	45
925 Lincolnshire	1,637	32,612	136	4,355	8	292	3	180
926 Norfolk	1,976	39,902	96	3,061	1	36	—	—
927 North Yorkshire	1,960	38,429	202	6,466	7	255	2	87
928 Northampton	2,087	40,101	145	4,655	1	37	3	167
929 Northumberland	1,208	23,986	124	3,993	4	144	—	—
930 Nottinghamshire	3,283	63,814	154	4,931	4	144	1	45
931 Oxfordshire	1,628	31,975	128	4,095	8	302	4	191
932 Shropshire	1,368	26,153	80	2,574	4	146	2	91
933 Somerset	1,176	24,304	184	5,873	2	73	—	—
934 Staffordshire	3,523	68,980	323	10,391	6	225	1	56
935 Suffolk	2,139	43,740	107	3,398	3	110	2	119
936 Surrey	2,141	40,963	168	5,403	5	181	6	257
937 Warwickshire	1,271	25,492	107	3,446	—	—	1	96
938 West Sussex	1,766	34,783	200	6,397	13	479	—	—
939 Wiltshire	1,649	33,303	121	3,861	3	109	5	251

Classes and pupils in primary schools—January 1986

Primary	30 and under		31 to 35		36 to 40		41 and over	
	Classes	Pupils	Classes	Pupils	Classes	Pupils	Classes	Pupils
301 Barking	519	12,178	22	706	4	153	—	—
302 Barnet	753	16,962	59	1,892	9	333	—	—

Primary	30 and under		31 to 35		36 to 40		41 and over	
	Classes	Pupils	Classes	Pupils	Classes	Pupils	Classes	Pupils
303 Bexley	464	11,397	126	4,046	—	—	2	104
304 Brent	698	15,586	31	1,008	1	36	—	—
305 Bromley	561	13,904	142	4,538	3	108	—	—
306 Croydon	702	16,911	143	4,664	7	260	—	—
307 Ealing	748	16,774	100	3,243	7	255	—	—
308 Enfield	531	13,126	184	5,997	4	150	—	—
309 Haringey	638	13,989	2	63	—	—	1	46
310 Harrow	467	10,610	109	3,601	8	288	—	—
311 Havering	600	14,884	81	2,603	2	74	2	109
312 Hillingdon	516	12,382	107	3,492	9	337	1	55
313 Hounslow	480	10,738	96	3,108	11	412	—	—
314 Kingston upon Thames	244	5,433	85	2,826	—	—	—	—
315 Merton	250	5,899	48	1,581	7	237	1	46
316 Newham	722	17,060	21	685	2	78	2	148
317 Redbridge	355	8,386	190	6,241	6	221	—	—
318 Richmond upon Thames	290	6,814	39	1,271	1	36	—	—
319 Sutton	229	5,583	100	3,245	31	1,149	—	—
320 Waltham Forest	516	12,294	67	2,160	8	297	—	—
427 Inner London	5,509	120,505	111	3,554	1	36	2	147
330 Birmingham	2,299	55,773	854	27,859	23	858	—	—
331 Coventry	716	16,942	174	5,616	21	770	—	—
332 Dudley	742	17,375	195	6,262	15	553	1	62
333 Sandwell	826	19,011	166	5,391	9	343	2	125
334 Solihull	468	11,212	132	4,285	8	290	—	—
335 Walsall	838	18,389	67	2,148	2	73	1	43
336 Wolverhampton	802	17,523	62	2,014	6	228	2	85
340 Knowsley	523	12,495	69	2,245	5	182	1	42
341 Liverpool	1,515	34,275	181	5,820	11	408	2	152
342 St. Helens	481	11,532	94	3,060	16	592	2	96
343 Sefton	685	16,918	177	5,786	13	482	—	—
344 Wirral	713	17,434	248	8,042	31	1,141	3	130
350 Bolton	538	13,318	213	6,990	25	921	6	313
351 Bury	386	8,971	116	3,769	9	337	1	61
352 Manchester	1,150	27,304	187	6,044	17	635	6	234
353 Oldham	496	12,093	157	5,150	37	1,376	1	41
354 Rochdale	435	10,763	120	3,890	12	448	—	—
355 Salford	717	16,774	69	2,236	8	296	2	106
356 Stockport	686	17,104	147	4,771	12	439	1	50
357 Tameside	512	12,608	157	5,077	13	481	—	—
358 Trafford	380	8,635	155	5,071	31	1,144	2	83
359 Wigan	727	16,922	167	5,432	32	1,187	3	146
370 Barnsley	671	16,020	66	1,467	4	152	2	139
371 Doncaster	865	20,530	87	2,776	5	195	1	35
372 Rotherham	789	18,840	68	2,171	3	118	—	—
373 Sheffield	1,453	33,513	94	2,696	9	344	6	308
380 Bradford	1,000	24,526	121	3,859	11	415	—	—
381 Calderdale	567	12,881	99	2,879	9	334	—	—
382 Kirklees	908	21,190	233	7,571	22	812	1	52
383 Leeds	1,242	29,869	312	10,130	33	1,257	4	268
384 Wakefield	743	17,707	110	3,560	15	570	1	42
390 Gateshead	668	15,281	22	699	3	117	2	115
391 Newcastle upon Tyne	636	14,480	91	2,593	1	39	2	87
392 North Tyneside	655	13,332	12	386	1	36	—	—
393 South Tyneside	506	11,469	34	1,106	3	111	—	—
394 Sunderland	969	23,435	90	2,891	—	—	1	42
420 Isles of Scilly	12	148	—	—	—	—	—	—
901 Avon	1,500	37,377	835	27,195	94	3,438	2	91
902 Bedfordshire	1,030	24,093	250	8,112	29	1,098	3	128
903 Berkshire	1,404	34,344	474	15,334	36	1,324	—	—
904 Buckinghamshire	1,290	31,734	592	19,262	95	3,506	3	129
905 Cambridgeshire	1,428	34,769	399	12,921	31	1,144	5	261
906 Cheshire	2,014	48,078	678	22,128	76	2,815	6	273
907 Cleveland	1,625	39,333	201	6,485	42	1,600	2	116
908 Cornwall	975	22,487	304	9,923	39	1,429	4	166
909 Cumbria	1,325	30,227	149	4,807	6	220	1	42
910 Derbyshire	2,186	50,679	578	18,750	53	1,956	1	44
911 Devon	1,819	42,815	568	18,560	90	3,322	1	58
912 Dorset	895	20,930	329	10,837	65	2,394	3	138

Primary	30 and under		31 to 35		36 to 40		41 and over	
	Classes	Pupils	Classes	Pupils	Classes	Pupils	Classes	Pupils
913 Durham	1,532	36,924	349	11,258	15	565	1	44
914 East Sussex	1,113	26,255	435	14,105	22	801	3	171
915 Essex	3,075	77,281	1,143	36,636	21	789	2	113
916 Gloucestershire	1,028	24,122	392	12,725	22	802	2	110
917 Hampshire	2,904	69,866	1,238	40,491	106	3,885	1	63
918 Hereford and Worcester	1,230	29,062	371	12,036	36	1,321	—	—
919 Hertfordshire	2,232	53,138	518	16,749	34	1,271	2	85
920 Humberside	2,249	52,133	258	8,308	15	565	7	341
921 Isle of Wight	160	4,112	45	1,448	2	76	—	—
922 Kent	2,788	68,810	1,096	35,620	80	2,931	7	331
923 Lancashire	2,790	66,862	1,055	34,490	183	6,753	10	497
924 Leicestershire	2,235	53,633	410	13,166	18	661	6	267
925 Lincolnshire	1,028	24,390	456	14,958	68	2,511	2	119
926 Norfolk	1,858	43,338	322	10,462	26	955	—	—
927 North Yorkshire	1,536	34,586	329	10,710	54	1,978	1	41
928 Northampton	1,391	33,238	254	8,154	5	182	—	—
929 Northumberland	514	11,202	212	6,911	6	224	2	86
930 Nottinghamshire	2,635	62,724	202	6,469	43	1,662	5	218
931 Oxfordshire	1,048	25,839	232	7,487	10	375	3	141
932 Shropshire	1,000	22,839	163	5,282	16	585	—	—
933 Somerset	764	18,558	329	10,674	29	1,053	4	231
934 Staffordshire	2,397	56,842	463	14,968	50	1,858	4	168
935 Suffolk	1,375	32,303	195	6,233	1	36	1	51
936 Surrey	2,186	51,449	449	14,564	24	890	2	99
937 Warwickshire	1,057	24,725	403	13,249	27	988	2	100
938 West Sussex	1,271	30,235	443	14,394	23	841	2	85
939 Wiltshire	1,243	29,808	275	8,889	11	398	—	—

Classes and Pupils in Secondary Schools—January 1986

Secondary	30 and Under		31 to 35		36 to 40		41 and Over	
	Classes	Pupils	Classes	Pupils	Classes	Pupils	Classes	Pupils
301 Barking	430	8,542	2	62	—	—	—	—
302 Barnet	849	14,702	69	2,180	2	80	—	—
303 Bexley	627	12,449	35	1,099	1	36	—	—
304 Brent	691	11,390	12	384	1	37	—	—
305 Bromley	773	14,928	51	1,634	—	—	—	—
306 Croydon	854	16,242	45	1,430	1	36	2	89
307 Ealing	629	11,342	20	637	2	72	—	—
308 Enfield	766	14,133	59	1,898	5	184	3	201
309 Haringey	518	9,197	2	62	—	—	—	—
310 Harrow	460	8,532	17	537	1	40	2	134
311 Havering	843	15,792	36	1,158	1	37	1	41
312 Hillingdon	647	12,860	39	1,236	—	—	1	54
313 Hounslow	601	11,368	40	1,264	—	—	—	—
314 Kingston upon Thames	358	6,303	24	757	3	111	2	91
315 Merton	504	10,256	51	1,623	1	40	—	—
316 Newham	687	12,937	11	348	—	—	—	—
317 Redbridge	580	11,286	44	1,413	2	72	3	133
318 Richmond upon Thames	276	5,629	12	384	—	—	—	—
319 Sutton	421	8,173	53	1,708	—	—	1	61
320 Waltham Forest	659	12,034	8	249	—	—	1	43
427 Inner London	5,352	98,185	104	3,316	3	116	—	—
330 Birmingham	2,936	59,427	322	10,325	1	36	3	191
331 Coventry	934	18,599	65	2,058	2	73	—	—
332 Dudley	938	17,767	45	1,434	1	36	—	—
333 Sandwell	1,089	20,552	33	1,053	—	—	2	93
334 Solihull	710	14,181	49	1,576	3	110	—	—
335 Walsall	1,156	21,172	37	1,169	2	76	—	—
336 Wolverhampton	933	17,688	23	738	—	—	1	89
340 Knowsley	543	10,200	16	506	3	113	—	—
341 Liverpool	1,410	27,094	103	3,282	2	74	2	99
342 St. Helens	693	12,969	40	1,284	—	—	—	—
343 Sefton	905	18,035	80	2,570	1	36	—	—
344 Wirral	990	19,197	79	2,534	1	37	2	97
350 Bolton	894	17,379	55	1,739	1	36	1	50
351 Bury	499	9,591	41	1,300	—	—	—	—
352 Manchester	1,378	25,612	59	1,881	4	146	1	33
353 Oldham	724	14,151	47	1,498	4	147	—	—

Secondary	30 and Under Classes	30 and Under Pupils	31 to 35 Classes	31 to 35 Pupils	36 to 40 Classes	36 to 40 Pupils	41 and Over Classes	41 and Over Pupils
354 Rochdale	769	14,648	27	860	—	—	3	153
355 Salford	772	14,854	30	956	—	—	1	43
356 Stockport	909	17,509	83	2,623	3	111	1	59
357 Tameside	637	12,050	39	1,241	—	—	1	41
358 Trafford	618	12,581	29	905	—	—	—	—
359 Wigan	1,187	23,023	47	1,500	3	111	—	—
370 Barnsley	798	15,766	9	282	—	—	—	—
371 Doncaster	979	20,086	54	1,704	—	—	—	—
372 Rotherham	850	16,493	71	2,301	4	152	—	—
373 Sheffield	1,474	28,604	49	1,567	1	36	4	256
380 Bradford	1,793	35,976	102	3,255	2	74	1	52
381 Calderdale	630	12,366	48	1,518	—	—	—	—
382 Kirklees	1,335	25,778	84	2,649	3	113	—	—
383 Leeds	2,478	47,697	199	6,416	7	263	2	97
384 Wakefield	1,080	21,152	64	2,065	1	36	2	101
390 Gateshead	599	11,407	36	1,125	2	73	—	—
391 Newcastle upon Tyne	923	16,985	17	544	—	—	3	166
392 North Tyneside	754	13,343	21	668	—	—	—	—
393 South Tyneside	468	8,792	12	380	—	—	—	—
394 Sunderland	1,057	19,909	39	1,247	—	—	2	114
420 Isles of Scilly	10	130	—	—	—	—	—	—
901 Avon	2,520	51,124	175	5,587	3	108	3	145
902 Bedfordshire	1,829	38,105	151	4,823	1	36	1	46
903 Berkshire	2,196	41,330	198	6,389	4	147	1	46
904 Buckinghamshire	1,603	30,943	88	2,793	1	40	1	45
905 Cambridgeshire	1,695	33,504	158	5,023	3	103	3	130
906 Cheshire	2,928	57,803	348	11,210	14	508	2	119
907 Cleveland	1,994	39,613	65	2,060	—	—	4	300
908 Cornwall	1,347	26,155	124	4,001	9	328	1	51
909 Cumbria	1,658	31,413	61	1,929	2	74	—	—
910 Derbyshire	2,719	53,858	229	7,351	6	221	—	—
911 Devon	2,443	49,374	252	8,044	9	327	3	144
912 Dorset	1,688	33,898	106	3,396	10	377	5	207
913 Durham	1,723	34,059	157	4,994	—	—	1	48
914 East Sussex	1,495	29,606	156	4,936	5	185	4	183
915 Essex	4,438	90,038	304	9,663	5	183	4	222
916 Gloucestershire	1,492	29,267	128	4,073	5	188	4	208
917 Hampshire	4,076	83,037	255	8,150	8	291	1	43
918 Hereford and Worcester	2,170	42,725	213	6,833	6	223	2	142
919 Hertfordshire	3,120	58,087	237	7,540	1	36	3	129
920 Humberside	3,270	62,960	166	5,347	4	150	2	83
921 Isle of Wight	388	7,823	53	1,719	2	72	1	43
922 Kent	4,538	91,928	258	8,131	4	134	4	229
923 Lancashire	3,989	79,301	296	9,480	11	410	4	218
924 Leicestershire	2,791	55,877	85	2,708	2	79	4	307
925 Lincolnshire	1,639	32,577	130	4,175	1	36	4	233
926 Norfolk	2,015	40,412	78	2,501	2	75	2	98
927 North Yorkshire	1,933	38,053	163	5,206	10	375	7	403
928 Northampton	2,006	38,637	111	3,550	5	181	—	—
929 Northumberland	1,223	24,411	75	2,405	7	258	—	—
930 Nottinghamshire	3,182	60,469	133	4,244	5	183	—	—
931 Oxfordshire	1,550	30,939	134	4,321	5	186	2	116
932 Shropshire	1,336	25,620	90	2,871	1	36	1	41
933 Somerset	1,204	24,790	140	4,497	5	189	—	—
934 Staffordshire	3,295	65,264	261	8,411	13	475	5	280
935 Suffolk	2,026	41,568	97	3,083	3	113	2	142
936 Surrey	2,162	41,000	158	5,060	3	109	3	147
937 Warwickshire	1,219	24,316	111	3,535	—	—	—	—
938 West Sussex	1,818	35,267	152	4,870	12	442	1	69
939 Wiltshire	1,590	32,845	99	3,183	5	185	1	50

West Hatch School, Chigwell

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the official visit of his hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn), the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, to West Hatch school, Chigwell.

Mr. Dunn: I visited West Hatch high school, Chigwell on 28 January to see the valuable work being done there on health education. I sat in on a fifth year lesson and saw at first hand the perceptions of the pupils about the misuse of drugs. I was impressed by the lesson and the school's approach to this subject, as well as the authority's general programme of work on this topic.

School Meals

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many local education authorities are currently able to provide in full for the demands for lunchtime meals in all secondary schools.

Mr. Dunn: Most LEAs in England are now able to provide a full school meals service in secondary schools.

In a survey undertaken last autumn, some 22 authorities reported small numbers of schools with a partial, not full, service. Recruitment of school meals supervisors was the main problem and this is gradually being overcome.

Education Act 1981

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report*, the information available to him on the numbers of children with statements under the Education Act 1981 in each local education authority in England; and what is his estimate in each case of the percentage of these children who are persons to whom section 29 of the National Assistance Act 1948 applies.

Mr. Dunn: The information about children with statements, derived from returns by local education authorities, is set out in the following table. Assessments for the purposes of section 29 of the National Assistance Act 1948 are carried out by social services departments, and are a matter for my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Social Services.

Number and Proportion of Children with Statements of Special Educational Needs as at January 1986: England

Local education authority	*Number of pupils with statements*	*Percentage of school population with statements*
Avon	6,454	4·20
Barking	352	1·40
Barnet	676	1·40
Barnsley	457	1·20
Bedfordshire	1,576	1·70
Berkshire	2,252	1·80
Bexley	739	2·20
Birmingham	3,517	1·90
Bolton	632	1·50
Bradford	1,381	1·60
Brent	—	—
Bromley	794	1·40
Buckinghamshire	2,641	2·50
Bury	576	1·90
Calderdale	345	1·00
Cambridgeshire	1,928	1·90
Cheshire	3,373	2·10
Cleveland	2,276	2·10
Cornwall	1,109	1·50
Coventry	1,019	1·90
Croydon	854	1·70
Cumbria	1,235	1·50
Derbyshire	2,919	1·90
Devon	2,918	2·00
Doncaster	124	0·20
Dorset	1,681	1·60
Dudley	912	1·90
Durham	1,646	1·60
Ealing	654	1·50
East Sussex	1,747	1·60
Enfield	789	1·90
Essex	4,674	1·90
Gateshead	608	1·60
Gloucestershire	217	0·20
Hampshire	5,303	2·20
Haringey	547	1·80
Harrow	571	1·80
Havering	615	1·60
Hereford and Worcestershire	52	0·04
Hertfordshire	3,446	2·00
Hillingdon	565	1·50
Hounslow	417	1·30
Humberside	2,319	1·60
ILEA	7,241	2·20
Isle of Wight	337	1·80
Isles of Scilly	1	0·40
Kent	4,934	2·00
Kingston upon Thames	381	1·80
Kirklees	1,027	1·50
Knowsley	389	1·30
Lancashire	4,154	1·80
Leeds	1,554	1·30
Leicestershire	1,725	1·20
Lincolnshire	1,972	2·20
Liverpool	1,676	1·90
Manchester	248	0·30
Merton	58	0·20
Newcastle upon Tyne	864	1·90
Newham	738	2·00
Norfolk	1,695	1·50
North Tyneside	602	1·80
North Yorkshire	1,748	1·60
Northamptonshire	1,754	1·70
Northumberland	874	1·70
Nottinghamshire	2,531	1·50
Oldham	664	1·60
Oxfordshire	968	1·10
Redbridge	708	2·10
Richmond upon Thames	294	1·30
Rochdale	682	1·80
Rotherham	871	1·90
St. Helens	640	1·90
Salford	742	1·80
Sandwell	1,066	2.00
Sefton	641	1·20
Sheffield	1,368	1·70
Shropshire	1,145	1·60
Solihull	133	0·40
Somerset	1,319	1·80
South Tyneside	422	1·60
Staffordshire	2,628	1·50
Stockport	889	1·80
Suffolk	1,598	1·60
Sunderland	1,002	1·80
Surrey	3,355	2·00
Sutton	347	1·40
Tameside	789	2·10
Trafford	404	1·20
Wakefield	943	1·70
Walsall	734	1·40
Waltham Forest	726	2·10
Warwickshire	1,639	2·00
West Sussex	1,254	1·20
Wigan	218	0·40
Wiltshire	1,862	2·10
Wirral	1,081	1·80
Wolverhampton	758	1·60
TOTAL: England	135,303	1·7

Lancashire County Council

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will meet representatives of Lancashire county council as a matter of urgency to discuss their 1987-88 education capital allocation.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend is prepared to do so if appropriate. Officials from my Department are to meet officers from the Lancashire LEA on Tuesday 10 February to discuss the authority's capital allocation for 1987-88.

Liverpool University

Mr. Terry Fields asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if his Department was consulted regarding the sale of Liverpool royal institute by Liverpool university to John Bannister, director of Liverpool Heritage Developments Limited, formerly Dunebourne Limited; if the sale was conditional upon specific usage; what financial benefits have been accrued to date by Liverpool university; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: My Department was not consulted. Decisions on matters of this kind are for the university and the University Grants Committee.

School Accommodation

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information was received by his Department in response to the circular letter to local education authorities in mid-1986 seeking information in connection with the authorities' plans for education capital expenditure in 1987-88 on *(a)* numbers of sub-standard places in unremodelled secondary schools in which the oldest teaching accommodation was built before 1919 and in which less than one-third of total teaching accommodation is in post-1945 permanent construction and *(b)* numbers of such places considered to serve areas of educational and social disadvantage; if he will publish such information as he has available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: The information requested is set out in the table. It does not present a reliable national picture of the incidence of substandard places or of areas of educational and social disadavantage for several reasons. For example, a number of authorities failed to supply any information, or supplied only a part of what was requested. In addition, authorities themselves are asked to judge what constitutes an area of educational and social disadvantage: the information at *(b)* cannot therefore be taken as consistent or comparable.

Local Education Authority	*(a) Sub-standard places in unremodelled secondary schools*[1]	*(b) Number of such places in areas of education and social disadvantage*
Barking[2]	n/a	n/a
Barnet	1,170	nil
Bexley	nil	nil
Brent	nil	nil
Bromley	nil	nil
Croydon	nil	nil
Ealing[2]	n/a	n/a
Enfield[2]	n/a	n/a
Haringey[2]	n/a	n/a
Harrow[2]	n/a	n/a
Havering	nil	nil
Hillingdon[2]	n/a	n/a
Hounslow	nil	nil
Kingston-upon-Thames	nil	nil
Merton[2]	n/a	n/a
Newham	2,122	2,122
Redbridge[2]	n/a	n/a
Richmond-upon-Thames	nil	nil
Sutton[2]	n/a	n/a
Waltham Forest	960	960
Inner London	8,589	2,413
Birmingham	3,200	1,800
Coventry[2]	n/a	n/a
Dudley	2,750	800
Sandwell	1,396	1,396
Solihull	nil	nil
Walsall	600	n/a
Wolverhampton	750	n/a
Knowsley	nil	nil
Liverpool[2]	nil	nil
St. Helens	nil	nil
Sefton	344	nil
Wirral	540	540
Bolton[1]	nil	nil
Bury	nil	nil
Manchester	510	510
Oldham[2]	n/a	n/a
Rochdale	nil	nil
Salford[2]	n/a	n/a
Stockport	nil	nil
Tameside	2,200	2,200
Trafford	nil	nil
Wigan[2]	n/a	n/a
Barnsley	nil	nil
Doncaster[2]	n/a	n/a
Rotherham	785	nil
Sheffield	200	140
Bradford	5,515	2,570
Calderdale	2,925	845
Kirklees[2]	n/a	n/a
Leeds	2,604	528
Wakefield	677	422
Gateshead[2]	n/a	n/a
Newcastle upon Tyne[2]	n/a	n/a
North Tyneside	330	nil
South Tyneside	nil	nil
Sunderland[2]	n/a	n/a
Isles of Scilly	nil	nil
Avon	5,098	900
Bedfordshire[2]	n/a	n/a
Berkshire	1,280	nil
Buckinghamshire	nil	nil
Cambridgeshire	2,945	648
Cheshire	560	nil
Cleveland[2]	n/a	n/a
Cornwall	8,107	n/a
Cumbria	3,290	2,000
Derbyshire	4,396	4,248
Devon[2]	n/a	n/a
Dorset[2]	n/a	n/a
Durham	2,200	nil
East Sussex[2]	n/a	n/a
Essex[2]	n/a	n/a

Local Education Authority	(a) Sub-standard places in unremodelled secondary schools[1]	(b) Number of such places in areas of education and social disadvantage
Gloucestershire	1,900	nil
Hampshire	540	540
Hereford and Worcester	7,260	nil
Hertfordshire	nil	nil
Humberside	199	100
Isle of Wight	850	nil
Kent	6,745	n/a
Lancashire	2,900	720
Leicestershire	2,000	135
Lincolnshire	1,160	nil
Norfolk	nil	nil
North Yorkshire	nil	nil
Northamptonshire	355	n/a
Northumberland	750	360
Nottinghamshire	651	300
Oxfordshire[2]	n/a	n/a
Shropshire	2,330	nil
Somerset[1]	220	nil
Staffordshire	370	n/a
Suffolk	425	n/a
Surrey	910	nil
Warwickshire[2]	n/a	n/a
West Sussex	nil	nil
Wiltshire	685	nil

[1] These authorities did not supply the information requested in their response to the Department's letter of 30 June 1986; the figures given were supplied in response to the letter of 18 December 1985.

[2] These authorities did not complete the relevant section of the form in their responses either to the letter of 30 June 1986 or to that of 18 December 1985.

n/a = Not available.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Yeovil on 2 February, *Official Report*, column *470*, concerning recent information on sub-standard places in primary schools, what comparable or broadly comparable information is available from responses made by local education authorities in other years since 1979; if he will place copies in the Library of each circular letter sent by his Department in any year since 1979 requesting information of sub-standard primary places or schools; if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table similar to that given in his reply of 2 February, showing figures for the earliest year since 1979 for which such figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Petroleum Revenue Tax

Mr. Greenway asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the outcome of his consultations with the industry on the Government's proposals on petroleum revenue tax valuation and pricing announced on 18 November.

Mr. Norman Lamont: We received many helpful comments in the consultative process we initiated. These will be taken into account in putting the new valuation rules into legislative form to take effect, as announced, from 1 January 1987.

On the PRT pricing problem, we now propose to amend our approach. The legislation to be included in the 1987 Finance Bill will apply to all North sea crudes. It will hinge on a producing company nominating particular transactions to the Inland Revenue, within the specified time limits before the oil is actually delivered, if those transactions relate to oil it has produced itself. In all cases where such a nomination is made, and the deal actually transacted as nominated, the price taken for PRT will be as under the present rules. Further details are contained in a press notice which the Inland Revenue is issuing today. In addition, a detailed outline of the scheme itself is being sent to all participators in United Kingdom oilfields; and this is also available on request from the Inland Revenue head office.

The new pricing scheme will apply in respect of deliveries from 1 March 1987. The Government are considering the need for further provisions to cover certain deliveries which would, under the proposed new rules, be brought in for PRT at "market value" but where a higher price may be achieved. We will in any case monitor the operation of the proposed rule very closely, and would not hesitate to propose further legislation should this be needed.

European Community Budget

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the rate of exchange between the pound sterling and the European currency unit used in each year since 1973 to calculate the United Kingdom contribution to the European Economic Community budget; how this compares with the market rate and the rate of exchange used for agricultural purposes; and what rates are being assumed for the purposes of the 1987 budget.

Mr. Brooke: Information concerning the average annual market rate of exchange between the European currency unit and the pound sterling for the years 1973 to 1987 is given in the table. I refer the hon. Member to the reply I have given today to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) concerning the exchange rates used to calculate the United Kingdom contribution to the European Community budgets since 1973 and for the rates of exchange used for agricultural purposes.

Annual average (Market) exchange rates

	(1 ECU = £)
1973	0·50232
1974	0·50980
1975	0·56003
1976	0·62158
1977	0·65370
1978	0·66391
1979	0·64639
1980	0·59849
1981	0·55311
1982	0·56045
1983	0·58701
1984	0·59063
1985	0·58879
1986	0·62127
1987	0·62738

Note: The annual market exchange rates up to and including 1985 have been taken from table 41 of the European Commission document "European Economy", vol. 29, July 1986. For 1986 and 1987 the rate is the European Economic Community budget exchange rate.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report*

the rate of exchange between the pound sterling and the ecu used each year from 1973 to date for determining (i) the United Kingdom's contribution to the European Economic Community budget and (ii) intervention prices under the common agricultural policy; and if he will bring up to date the information on appropriations for the European Economic Community budget given in his written answer to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on 22 May 1986, *Official Report*, columns *307-8*, together with the figures for 1986 and the forecast for 1987.

Mr. Brooke: The information is set out in the tables. The budget exchange rates for the period 1973 to 1976 inclusive are not readily available (table A).

Table A ECU/£ Sterling budget exchange rates

Conversion rates for:—	*(1 ua/eua/ ecu(3) = £)*
1977	0·416667
1978	0·651186
1979	0·629926
1980	0·675084
1981	0·629350
1982	0·523058
1983	0·558500
1984	0·617584
1985	0·571710
1986	0·621268
1987	0·627379

Source: Relevant preliminary draft budget documents (Vol. 7).
Notes:
(1) Until 1979 the budget was established in units of account (u.a.). Between 1978 and 1980 it was established in European units of account (eua). Since 1981 it has been established in European currency units (ecu). For the period 1981 to 1983 the eua and the ecu had the same value.
(2) The budget exchange rate is the rate used to convert member states' estimated VAT revenue for a particular budgetary year from national currency to an amount expressed in ecu. Member states' monthly VAT contributions during the budgetary year are then paid on the basis of one twelfth of the ecu amount; the amount of the monthly payment in national currency made by the member state being determined by the rate of exchange in force on the first working day after the 15th day of the previous month.
(3) ua for 1977, eua for 1978 to 1981, ecu for 1982 to 1987.

Table B: Exchange Rates relating to intervention prices under the Common Agricultural Policy (Green Rates).

United Kingdom	*100 £ =*
1 February 1973 (Date of entry to EEC)	216·440 ua
7 October 1974	200·530 ua
3 March 1975	196·178 ua
4 August 1975	186·369 ua
27 October 1975	175·560 ua
1 May 1977 All commodities except milk. Rate applied to milk from April 1 1978	170·463 ua
16 September 1977 For milk sector only	173·013 ua
2 February 1978 Pigmeat and beef sectors only	161·940 ua
22 May 1978 For pigmeat May 17 1978	157·678 ua
9 April 1979 Introduction of EMS. Green rate devalued to 149·794 ua immediately for dairy, beef, pigmeat, sugar and isoglucose. From start of marketing year for all other commodities. Green rate adapted by formula: 149·794 ua x 1·208953 = 181·094 ECU	181·094 ECU
1 July 1979 For isoglucose only on 1 July. Start of marketing year for eggs and poultry, wine, fishery products and other products (except pigmeat) where the 1979-80 marketing years had not started on 1 July. 2 July in all other cases, including pigmeat.	172·039 ECU
1 October 1979	160·148 ECU
17 December 1979 Start of 1980-81 marketing years for cereals, eggs and poultry. 1 January 1980 for fishery products, immediately for all other products.	161·641 ECU
1 June 1980	1 ECU = (100 £ =) 0·635626 £ (161·6410) (ECU)
12 May 1986 Livestock products except pigmeat. From start of marketing year for fish, eggs and poultry.	0·635626 £
Crop products. From start of marketing year	0·654044 £
1 July 1986 Pigmeat	0·654044 £
5 January 1987 Beef	0·668197 £
5 January 1987 Sheep Meat	0·652575 £

Source: C.A.P. Monitor (Section 2-27), published by Agra Europe, (London) Ltd;

Table C Payment appropriations, European Economic Community Budgets

£ million

	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Guarantee expenditure				
Payment appropriations in the main budget	9,745	11,749	13,737	14,405
Payment appropriations in any supplementary budgets	1,083	0	0	0
Payments actually made during the year	10,825	11,614	n.a.	n.a.
Other expenditure				
Payment appropriations in the main budget	5,234	4,992	8,115	8,336
Payment appropriations in any supplementary budgets	32	0	0	0
Payments actually made during the year	5,431	4,930	n.a.	n.a.

n.a. = not applicable.
Source: Court of Auditors Report and relevant budgets.
Notes:
1. The sterling figures up to and including those for 1985 have been derived using the annual average exchange rates set out at table 41 of the European commission document "European Economy", Vol. 29, July 1986. For 1986 and for 1987 the Community budget exchange rate of 1 ecu = £0·62127 and 1 ecu = £0·62738 have been used, respectively.
2. Spain and Portugal joined the Community on 1 January 1986.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will bring up to date the information on value added tax and own resources given in his answer to the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) on 16 May 1985, *Official Report*, columns 191-92, together with an estimate for 1987.

Mr. Brooke: The information requested is given in the table. In order to provide consistent data for all years up to and including 1987 the table has been recalculated using European Commission GDP data (table 6 of the statistical annex to "Europe Economy", No. 29, July 1986). As was the case for the reply of 16 May 1985, the calculations for the United Kingdom do not take account of the offsetting effect of VAT abatements or refunds.

VAT and other own resources (OR) as percentage of GDP

	1980		1981		1982		1983		1984		1985		1986		1987	
	VAT	OR	VAT	OR	VAT	OR	VAT	OR	VAT	OR	VAT	OR	VAT	OR	VAT	OR
Belgium	0·40	0·72	0·44	0·71	0·53	0·80	0·48	0·87	0·53	0·79	0·52	0·73	0·57	0·71	0·57	0·76
Denmark	0·40	0·33	0·37	0·32	0·40	0·31	0·44	0·33	0·45	0·35	0·48	0·34	0·52	0·35	0·53	0·33
Germany	0·42	0·37	0·46	0·37	0·50	0·35	0·55	0·33	0·58	0·36	0·61	0·35	0·64	0·34	0·61	0·34
Greece	—	—	0·46	0·31	0·50	0·48	0·55	0·41	0·55	0·32	0·63	0·29	1·17	0·45	0·76	0·35
Spain	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0·79	0·41	0·64	0·51
France	0·39	0·24	0·44	0·24	0·52	0·24	0·53	0·25	0·55	0·26	0·57	0·24	0·64	0·24	0·62	0·23
Ireland	0·46	0·55	0·42	0·55	0·56	0·53	0·73	0·58	0·65	0·67	0·57	0·64	0·69	0·67	0·66	0·67
Italy	0.30	0·38	0·50	0·30	0·41	0·29	0·48	0·27	0·56	0·25	0·53	0·26	0·61	0·25	0·57	0·26
Luxembourg	0·46	0·13	0·66	0·14	0·73	0·13	1·03	0·12	1·12	0·14	0·97	0·13	1·01	0·09	0·98	0·11
Netherlands	0·38	0·66	0·39	0·62	0·46	0·58	0·48	0·57	0·50	0·61	0·54	0·62	0·59	0·63	0·59	0·63
Portugal	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0·64	0·47	0·61	0·39
United Kingdom	0·34	0·49	0·42	0·43	0·57	0·47	0·56	0·44	0·56	0·48	0·68	0·42	0·71	0·45	0·73	0·43

Notes:
(1) For value-added tax columns for the years 1980 to 1985 the calculation of the percentage of GDP used the amount contributed by member states, inclusive of the balances and adjustments of previous financial years. Figures for 1984 and 1985 include contributions to the intergovernmental agreements (IGAs) for those years. VAT figures for 1985 have also been amended to make them consistent with all other figures used for VAT.
(2) Greece joined the Community on 1 January 1981 and for the years 1981 to 1985 paid, instead of VAT, a financial contribution based on GNP.
(3) From 1979 to 1980 the European budget was established and implemented in European units of account (EUA). As from 1981, the budget was established and implemented in European currency units (ECU). For 1981, the value and composition of the ECU was the same as the EUA.
(4) GDP base figures for all member states are drawn from Table 6 of the Statistical Annex to "European Economy" (No. 29, July 1986).
(5) VAT and other own resources base figures for the years 1980 to 1985 have been taken from the Official Journal of the European Communities Court of Auditors Reports for 1984 and 1985. IGA contributions in 1984 and 1985 have been taken from Table 2 of the Statement on the 1986 Community Budget (Cmnd. 9907). Amendments to 1985 VAT are taken from the 1985 final adopted budget (p70) published on 5 August 1985. For 1986, own resources figures are drawn from the final adopted budget published on 4 August 1986. The figures for 1987 are the revenue estimates for that year.

Government Data Network

Mr. Cohen asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will list the Departments that will be connected to the Government data network on the first phase of the project, and those Departments that may be added to the network at a later stage.

Mr. Brooke: If the proposed Government data network goes ahead, it is expected that it will be used initially by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise, Home Office, Department of Health and Social Security and Inland Revenue. It is too early to consider what other Departments might use the network at a later stage.

Mr. Cohen asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what new interactive, interrogative and batch facilities will accrue to his Department from the connection to the Government data network; and what is the estimated saving to his Department from joining the network.

Mr. Brooke: There are no plans at this stage for the Treasury to use the proposed Government data network.

Capital Transfer Tax

Dr. David Clark asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if a capital transfer tax offset plan under the Finance Act 1976 was conducted in the last financial year in respect of 30,000 acres centred around Bolton Abbey in the Yorkshire Dales national park.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Under the tax confidentiality rules, I cannot comment on individual cases.

Dr. David Clark asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he is satisfied by the operation of waiving capital transfer tax for landscape schemes under the Finance Act 1976.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Yes, particularly since the amendments introduced in paragraph 2 of schedule 26 to the Finance Act 1985 strengthened the statutory requirements relating to the form of the undertakings required from owners in return for conditional exemption.

Dr. David Clark asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many schemes have been approved each year since 1976 to offset capital transfer tax in exchange for landscape scheme arrangements;

(2) what has been the cost to his Department in each year since 1976 to offset capital transfer tax for landscape schemes.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 1 December 1986 at columns *465-467* in response to his question about heritage exemption claims for outstanding scenic land.

Dr. David Clark asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what machinery he has established about publicising landscape schemes offset against capital transfer tax under the Finance Act 1976.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Publicity about public access to heritage property which has been conditionally exempted from capital tax is incorporated in the terms of the management agreement which is negotiated to give effect to the undertakings about preservation and public access that are required as a precondition of exemption. Requirements will differ from case to case but, outstanding chattels apart (for which different arrangements apply), these will normally comprise some or all of the following.

(a) Owner to inform the British Tourist Authority (the Scottish Tourist Board and the Highlands and Islands Development Board in Scotland) of the opening arrangements and subsequent changes.

(b) Owner to advertise the opening arrangements in one or more suitable publications with national circulation.

(c) Owner to display a notice outside the property giving details of the opening arrangements.

(d) Owner to agree that the advisory body or bodies (or its/or their agents), which confirmed the property's eligible quality and with whom the terms of the detailed management agreement will have been negotiated, can divulge the access arrangements to anyone who enquires about them.

(e) Owner to agree to such other publicity as the advisory body, or bodies, consider to be appropriate. This could include displaying a notice in some public place in the locality (e.g. the local post office, local library, local tourist office or town hall) or in a local preservation society's newsletter.

The management agreement would also normally provide scope for additional measures to be agreed, if appropriate, between the owner and the advisory body or bodies at a later stage.

Dr. David Clark asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many of the landscape schemes offset against capital transfer tax under the Finance Act 1976 are in national parks.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Precise information is not available, for the reasons explained to the hon. Member in the answer given on 1 December 1986 at columns *465-467* in response to his question about heritage exemption claims for outstanding scenic land. I understand that the Countryside Commission's estimate, however, is that of the order of three quarters of the landscape schemes on which its advice is sought are in either national parks or areas of outstanding natural beauty.

Small Businesses

Mr. Blair asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will list which representative groups from the small business sector he or his Treasury colleagues have met, or intend to meet, concerning Budget representations.

Mr. Brooke: Treasury Ministers have met several organisations representing the small business sector, including the CBI Small Firms Council, and the Union of Independent Companies, to discuss their Budget submissions. No further meetings between Treasury Ministers and the small business sector are at present planned. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Employment, who is responsible for the small-business sector, has also had similar meetings with most of the major small business organisations.

Energy Saving

Mr. Rost asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many applications he has received from local authorities, health authorities, and others in the public sector, for authorisation to engage private sector energy management companies for contracts on a shared-energy savings basis, where no public sector investment is involved; how many such applications have been approved; and what replies have been sent to those whose applications have not been approved.

Mr. MacGregor: Responsibility for the possible engagement of private sector energy management companies lies in the first instance with the appropriate public sector authority, in pursuit of its policies for the efficient use of energy conservation management, so information in the form requested is not available. However, I am aware that schemes are being considered in this area. I would encourage private sector involvement provided it represents the most cost-effective approach.

Covenants (Tax Relief)

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of young people aged over 18 years who had covenants made by their parents and the cost of such tax relief in terms of revenue forgone in 1985-86 and the estimated figures and costs for 1986-87;

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of children under 18 years who are beneficiaries of covenants made by their grandparents and the cost of the tax relief in terms of revenue figures of the Exchequer in 1985-86, and the estimate for 1986-87.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Higher Rate Taxpayers

Mr. Marlow asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the number of higher rate taxpayers as a proportion of the population for each county in England and Wales.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

VAT

Sir Fergus Montgomery asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many representations were received from *(a)* business organisations and *(b)* individuals, regarding the present value-added tax regulations for mail order firms in each of the years 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985 and 1986;

(2) what assessment has been made by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise of the cost to retail business of compliance with the proposed new requirements in the consultation paper, "VAT: Small Business Review";

(3) what assessment has been made by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise of the cost to retail traders providing self-financed credit facilities of compliance with the proposed new requirements in the consultation paper, "VAT: Small Business Review";

(4) what is his estimate of the benefits to the United Kingdom economy as a whole of implementing the changes outlined in the consultation paper, "VAT: Small Business Review", in respect of the mail order industry;

(5) what consultations took place with the mail order industry before the consultation paper, "VAT: Small Business Review" was published;

(6) what compliance cost assessment of the costs and benefits to the mail order industry of the changes proposed in the consultation paper, "VAT: Small Business Review", was carried out by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise in accordance with the provision of paragraph 3.12 of "Building Businesses . . . Not Barriers" (Cmnd. 9794) and if he will publish the findings.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let my hon. Friend have replies as soon as possible.

Disabled People

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if it is his intention to allocate funds in the current year for the implementation of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: I have nothing to add to the reply given by the Minister for the Disabled to the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) on 26 November 1986 at column 289.

EC (Own Resources)

Mr. Nicholas Baker asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the recent judgment by the European Court of Justice concerning advance payments of traditional own resources to the European Community.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 December 1986, c. *746*]: I regret that my previous reply incorrectly stated that the amount drawn on class III, vote 1, budget of the European Communities, to pay advances of non-VAT own resources in 1986 was £431 million. This amount is in fact the unspent provision on the vote. The amount drawn was £499 million.

Stamp Duty

Mr. Latham asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will set out in tabular form (i) the estimated cost to public funds and (ii) the estimated number of properties exempted if stamp duty on house purchase were to become payable only on houses costing *(a)* £35,000, *(b)* £40,000, *(c)* £50,000 and *(d)* up to £100,000 in steps of £10,000 at a time after £50,000.

Mr. Ian Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 February 1987]: The stamp duty threshold applies to all property other than stock or marketable securities. For 1987-88, the estimated cost of raising the threshold to the amounts shown, and the further numbers of properties exempted, would be as follows:

Threshold (£)	*Estimated Cost (£ million)*	*Numbers of Properties ('000)*
35,000	115	350
40,000	195	580
50,000	315	840
60,000	395	990
70,000	450	1,070
80,000	495	1,130
90,000	525	1,170
100,000	555	1,200

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Rural Economy

Mr. Cash asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures will be taken to sustain the rural economy.

Mr. Jopling [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 January 1987, c. *721*]: With the European Community now producing surpluses in many of the main agricultural commodities, a new balance of policies has to be struck, with less support for expanding production, more attention to the demands of the market, more encouragement for alternative uses of land, more response to the claims of the environment, and more diversity on farms and in the rural economy.

The Government are therefore taking a number of new policy initiatives to assist the process of change. A scheme will be introduced to encourage the development of farm woodlands to take land out of agricultural production. This will build on the existing forestry grant schemes, but will also provide for annual payments to cover the gap between planting and the likely first income from most types of timber. The payments will vary by area in recognition of the fact that the agricultural income foregone from planting trees on farms will be higher in some areas than in others, but the maximum rate of aid will be £125 a year per hectare. The aim is to plant up to 36,000 hectares over the first three years of the scheme, at the end of which the scheme will be reviewed. The detailed arrangements will be the subject of consultation with interested parties prior to the introduction of appropriate legislation, but the scheme will incorporate provisions for the protection and enhancement of the environment, including special encouragement for broadleaved trees.

The Government also propose an expansion of the forestry programme, with particular emphasis on the private sector and with due regard to environmental considerations. The planting of a higher proportion of trees on low ground of better quality than hitherto will be

encouraged by the release to forestry of better quality land; the Forestry Commission will keep in mind the need to encourage planting on this land in their regular reviews of grant rates. We shall continue to encourage broadleaved planting by higher rates of grant, as now. The aim is new planting of 33,000 hectares a year, compared with a current planting target of 30,000 hectares.

The designation of environmentally sensitive areas under section 18 of the Agriculture Act 1986, the first of which are due to come into force next month, will be extended early in 1988. In doing this the Government will build on the lists proposed by the Countryside Commissions, the Nature Conservancy Council and their equivalent in Northern Ireland. There will be consultations on the detailed arrangements.

Diversification of enterprise on farms will be encouraged by the introduction of a scheme under section 22 of the Agriculture Act 1986, providing for the grant-aiding of ancillary businesses on or adjacent to farms. This will include activities such as value-added food processing and the provision of recreational and amenity facilities. There will also be extra help for marketing of the products of diversified businesses. In working up these schemes it will be necessary to ensure that they are complementary to the activities of the existing agencies working in this field, particularly the Development Commission, COSIRA, the small firms service, local enterprise agencies and tourist boards.

Within my budget for research, development and advice I shall be placing more emphasis on the possibilities for novel crops and livestock which have a prospect of being realistic alternatives to commodities in surplus, and on the socio-economic and environmental implications of the changing farming scene.

Finally, my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Wales are today putting out for consultation a draft circular containing guidance on the future planning regime for agricultural land. It will include more encouragement to local authorities to take a positive attitude to diversification and to be helpful about the conversion of redundant farm buildings.

These new initiatives are expected to cost about £25 million a year when they are fully operational. This comprises an estimated £10 million on farm woodlands, £3 million on traditional forestry, £7 million on ESAs—doubling the existing provision — and £5 million on diversification and marketing. The alternative use of land will lead to compensating savings in CAP expenditure. This does not imply any change in the overall public expenditure totals.

In addition, I and my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland, for Wales and for Northern Ireland, plan to publish next month a document setting out how the Government see the changes affecting farmers, emphasising that it is for individual farmers to decide how to run their own businesses, but describing how the Government's policies towards farming are being adjusted to reflect the changing scene and potential in the rural economy as a whole. The Government's overall objective is to facilitate the conditions which encourage a healthy rural economy based on enterprise, adaptability and fair competition.

Sheep Farmers

Mr. Wigley asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much compensation has been paid to sheep farmers in *(a)* England, *(b)* Wales and *(c)* Scotland following the losses endured as a result of the effects of the Chernobyl nuclear accident; and how much was paid in each area under the the categories of *(a)* fat lambs, *(b)* store lambs and *(c)* breeding lambs.

Mr. Jopling: Information on payments authorised under the sheep compensation scheme 1986 is not available in the categories requested. The payments authorised for each leg of the scheme are indicated by area in the table below. The qualifying criteria for compensation were the same in each area, and so the figures reflect the extent to which the different areas have suffered disruption to their normal marketing patterns.

Payments authorised under the sheep compensation scheme 1986 up to 30 January 1987

	Leg 1[1] £	*Leg 2*[2] £	*Leg 3*[3] £	*Total* £
Cumbria	13,424	50,950	170,772	235,146
North Wales	23,976	782,699	1,652,192	2,458,867
Scotland	68,624	287,491	991,067	1,347,182
TOTAL	106,024	1,121,140	2,814,031	4,041,195

[1] Leg 1: compensation to producers for losses on finished lambs rejected for variable premium on grounds of overfatness after their areas have been released from restrictions.

[2] Leg 2 (which is still open): compensation for market losses on sheep sold, marked and subject to slaughter restrictions, at store and fatstock markets.

[3] Leg 3: compensation for certain direct costs/losses which resulted from the impact of the restrictions on the affected sheep enterprises.

Grey Seals

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) whether his Department accepts the conclusions of the Natural Environment Research Council report, "Interactions between Grey Seals and United Nations Fisheries", published in 1984; what research is currently being carried out on interactions between grey seals and fisheries by his Department; and if he will make a statement;

(2) by whom, and where, research projects funded by his Department on *(a)* the ecology of the grey seal or *(b)* interactions between grey seals and commercial fisheries, are being carried out; and over what period of time in each case.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Bees (Varroasis)

Mr. Speller asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to prevent the spread into the United Kingdom of the disease varroasis of bees.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Imports of bees into the United Kingdom are strictly controlled by licence. Licences are issued only for queen bees, with attendant workers, from countries with a high bee health status. They are not issued for imports coming from countries where varroasis is known to exist. It is a condition of the licence that the consignment must be accompanied by a certificate of health from the country of origin and that the attendant workers must be sent to my Department's bee unit at Luddington for post mortem examination.

Mr. Speller asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if the varroasis of bees posters issued by his Department are displayed at all ports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Department has circulated to port authorities a poster headed "Foreign Bees Keep Out". This poster publicises the dangers of the bee disease varroasis. Port authorities were asked to display it in places where it will be seen by port workers, seamen and lorry drivers.

The prominence which ports give to these posters is a matter for them in the light of other priorities but my Department does remind them from time to time of the importance of keeping out varroasis.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances

Mr. McQuarrie asked th Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any proposals to raise the ceiling of the hill livestock compensatory allowances; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: The arrangements for the hill livestock compensatory allowances to apply this year were announced in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North (Mr. Speller) on 17 December 1986. My right hon. Friends and I have no proposals to raise the financial ceilings this year.

Green Pound

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he proposes to request the European Economic Community for a further reduction in the green pound at an early date; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will indicate the percentage gap in the green pound in comparison between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Beef

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, if he has any plans to make adjustments on the exports of cull beef which could assist the farming industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Pork

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, what is the imbalance of imports of pork in cash terms from the Dutch producers as against the price which can be obtained in the market by United Kingdom producers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Suckler Cow Premium

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Devon North (Mr. Speller) *Official Report*, 29 January, column *338*, if he is now in a position to announce the rate at which the suckler cow premium will be paid; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

EEC Food Exports

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will raise at the next meeting of the Agriculture Council the approval by the authorities in Bavaria to export to the third world 5,000 tons of milk powder with radioactivity levels 10 times as high as permitted for consumption within the European Economic Community; and if, in particular, he will seek to clarify whether export rebates funded from European Economic Community finances will be repayable in respect of this export.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 February 1987]: No.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, what was the total amount of export rebate paid by the EEC in respect of exports of food to the Republic of Libya in the year 1985.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 February 1987]: I regret that statistics on export refunds are not available by country of destination.

TRANSPORT

Motorways (Warning Systems)

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of motorways in England have illuminated advance warning systems.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: All of the motorways in England have advance warning systems: 90 per cent. take the form of an illuminated matrix signal, giving the recommended action drivers should take; the remainder, which are flashing amber lights, give warning of a hazard ahead.

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether his Department is satisfied with the operation of illuminated advance warning systems on motorways.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The operation of warning systems is a matter for individual police forces.

The Department continually seeks to improve the operation of its warning systems and on 50 miles of the M1

is enhancing them to detect slow moving or stationary traffic, alert the police control centres and automatically switch on more closely spaced matrix signals.

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether his Department proposes to extend the provision of illuminated advance warning systems on motorways in England.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes. The Department proposes to extend the matrix type of warning signal, displaying the recommended action that drivers should take, to all motorways in England.

A1-M1 Link Road

Sir Anthony Grant asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to make a decision on the inspector's report on the M1-A1 link road; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Transport hope to announce their joint decision within the next few weeks.

Motorway Service Areas

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list any proposals for additional motorway service areas currently under consideration for the existing motorway network in England, not including the M25.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Motorway service areas currently planned for the existing motorway network, excluding the M25, are as follows:

(a) M4: Reading area (precise site not yet chosen).
(b) M11: Birchanger, near Stansted.
(c) M20: i. West Kingsdown near Brands Hatch;
ii. Westhanger, at junction 11.
(d) M27: Meon, near Fareham.
(e) M40: Stokenchurch, near High Wycombe.
(f) M42: i. Northern section in the Tamworth/north Warwickshire area;
ii. South-eastern section.
(g) M54: Telford.
(h) M56: Hapsford.

PSV Tests

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Gower on 3 February, *Official Report*, column *525*, if he will place in the Library a copy of the proposed changes in comfort and convenience checks for public service vehicles carrying more than eight passengers undertaking the annual test.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A copy of the Department's consultation letter of 14 October 1986, reference VSE 4075/42, was placed in the Library at the time. The changes in checks on public service vehicles are listed in annexes A and B to that document. I have sent a copy to the hon. Member.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish in the *Official Report* for each private operator in Wales in 1985-86 the number and percentage of vehicles which failed the annual PSV test both initially and after minor modifications had been carried out.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This information is not available.

Motorways (Facilities)

Sir Raymond Gower asked the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made in providing parking areas and facilities along existing motorways in England; and what plans he has for the next five years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There are 40 motorway service areas open in England. Within the last two years, new service areas were opened at Ferrybridge, at the junction of the M62 and A1, and on the southbound side of the M5 at Sedgemoor. The northbound side of Sedgemoor will open at Easter.

For the future, the main aim is to get new service areas at strategic locations roughly 30 miles apart both on the existing motorways where there is a gap in provision and on new ones. Proposals have been made for 14 sites, including four to serve the M25. These are at various stages. In addition, four other locations are under consideration. The sites and locations are as follows:

(a) M25: South Mimms (under construction); Thurrock (developer/operator selected); Clacket lane, near Westerham (subject to public inquiry); and Iver
(b) M4: Reading area
(c) M11: Birchanger, near Stansted (developer/operator selected)
(d) M20: West Kingsdown, near Brands Hatch (subject to public inquiry); Hollingbourne, east of Maidstone; and Westhanger, at junction 11
(e) M27: Meon, near Fareham
(f) M40: Stokenchurch, near High Wycombe; Ardley, at junction with A43; and Barn hill where the motorway crosses the Fosse way
(g) M42: Northern section, in the Tamworth/north Warwickshire area, and on the south-eastern section
(h) M54: Telford
(i) M56: Hapsford, at junction with A5117
(j) Birmingham northern relief road: potential site being investigated

As this programme proceeds, I shall review the possible need for additional sites in particular areas.

M3 (Barend to Chilworth)

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to be able to announce his determination of the public inquiry held in Eastleigh in the summer of 1985 into the extension of the M3 motorway from Barend to Chilworth.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I hope to be able to make an announcement in the spring.

Heavy Lorries

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many overseas lorries were found to be overweight in 1986.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Figures for 1986 are not yet available. In the 12 months ending 30 June 1986, 11,489 foreign vehicles were weighed by the Department's traffic examiners and local authority trading standards staff and 3,280 vehicles were found to be overloaded.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many weighbridges there are in the west midlands; how many tests were carried out in 1986; and how many lorries were found overweight, giving figures for the United Kingdom and overseas lorries.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department has provided five weighbridges in the west midlands traffic area. A

further site is under construction. In the 12 months ending 30 June 1986, 5,974 United Kingdom registered vehicles were weighed by west midlands traffic examiners and some local authority trading standards staff. Of these, 934 vehicles were overloaded. Of 348 foreign vehicles weighed, 25 were overloaded.

Motor Vehicles (Child Restraints)

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any proposals to make the use of child restraints in motor vehicles compulsory; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Not at present. All new cars registered from 1 April this year must be fitted with rear seat belts and/or child restraints. That should encourage more parents to use child restraints. Our aim is to increase the voluntary use of restraints and voluntary fitting in cars which do not already have them.

We will continue to press home to parents the message that the use of restraints saves children's lives. Parents can obtain advice and a copy of the Department's leaflet, "Protect Your Child in the Car" by ringing our road safety hotline (0800 234888).

A38(M) Birmingham

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what recent investigations have been made into the safety of parapet rails on the A38(M) Aston expressway, Birmingham; by whom; at what cost; with what results; what are the existing rails constructed from; and when they were fitted, by whom, and at what cost;

(2) on what date work is due to start on replacing parapet rails on the A38(M) Aston expressway, Birmingham, how long the work is due to take; and on what date a press notice concerning interruption to traffic flow was issued;

(3) for what reason a contract to replace parapet rails on A38(M) Aston expressway, Birmingham; was negotiated with R. M. Douglas rather than the work being put out to tender; and at what price the contract was settled;

(4) from what materials replacement parapet rails are to be constructed for use on the A38(M) Aston expressway, Birmingham; and how many of such rails are estimated to need replacing;

(5) whether he will estimate the number of metre traffic cones to be used in connection with the replacement of parapet safety rails on the A38(M) Aston expressway, Birmingham;

(6) whether he will give the number of accidents, involving vehicles crashing through the parapet rails on the A38(M) Aston expressway, Birmingham, since its opening and where vehicles have fallen through the rails.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The A38(M) Aston expressway, Birmingham, is a local road for which Birmingham city council is the responsible highway authority. I have no detailed information about the council's investigations into the parapet rails or the work which it intends to carry out.

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with West Midlands police about traffic management at junction 6, north and south on the M6, while parapet rails are replaced on the A38(M) Aston expressway; and whether there are plans to close motorway exits during this work.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: None. Birmingham city council is the responsible highway authority for the A38(M) and is the Department's agent for the M6 junction 6. It has made the necessary traffic management arrangements. There are no plans to close the motorway exits from M6 because of the council's work.

Fishing Industry (Light Dues)

Mr. Randall asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what discussions he had with representatives of the fishing industry about the new Government measure to introduce light dues for the fishing industry; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what estimates he has made of the cost to the British fishing industry of the Government's proposals for extending light dues to that industry; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what length fishing vessels will be affected by the Government's proposals for introducing light dues for the fishing industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: We will be putting proposals to representatives of the industry shortly. The Government will make an announcement in due course.

Mr. Randall asked the Secretary of State for Transport what estimates he has made of the impact of the Government's increases in light dues on the port of Hull; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The total amount of light dues that may be collected in a port over 12 months depends upon so many unpredictable factors that no estimates can usefully be made of the local effects of proposed changes in the dues tariff. But if the shipping traffic in Hull in 1987-88 is identical in all respects with that of 1986-87, and if the other variables are identical in both years, the total increase in light dues collected will be 13·85 per cent., that is the increase in the dues tariff.

BREL (Crewe)

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he next meets the chairman of British Rail, he will raise with him the future of British Rail Engineering Limited, Crewe, in relation to the possible mothballing of rolling stock; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: British Rail's rolling stock requirements are a management matter for the board.

Trains (Punctuality)

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will seek to place a statutory duty on British Rail to provide information on train punctuality and complaints to the Central Transport Consultative Committee and to the local committees.

Mr. David Mitchell: I see no reason to do so. British Rail and the Central Transport Consultative Committee reached an agreement about the supply of information towards the end of last year. The new arrangements should be given a chance to work.

Trunk Roads

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has concerning the total level of expenditure upon trunk roads in *(a)* the north-west region and *(b)* the south-east region in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Here is the information for the last five years:

	DTp Administrative Region	
	North-west £ million	South-east £ million
1982-83	103	98
1983-84	89	151
1984-85	74	167
1985-86	63	141
†1986-87	86	100

† Planned.

It is possible to provide this information for earlier years only at disproportionate cost.

Car Ownership

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has concerning the level of domestic car ownership in *(a)* the north-west region and *(b)* the south-east region; and how that level compares with the figure for 10 years previously.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The proportion of households with cars in 1984-85 was *(a)* 54 per cent. in the north-west region and *(b)* 69 per cent. in the south-east region. The corresponding figures in 1974-75 were *(a)* 50 per cent. and *(b)* 59 per cent.

British Airways

Mr. Watts asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will make a further statement about the privatisation of British Airways.

Mr. Moore: Over a million applications for shares were received in the United Kingdom public offer which closed on 6 February. Applications for up to 100,000 shares amounted to 2·9 billion shares in total, and 5,000 applications at higher levels amounted to a further 4·9 billion shares. Clawback was triggered and accordingly the number of shares to satisfy public and employee applications was 341·4 million. I have decided that the basis of allocation will be as follows:

Shares applied for	Allocation
400–1,500	200
2,000–5,000	250
6,000–10,000	300
15,000–35,000	350
40,000–100,000	1 per cent. of amount applied for
Above 100,000	Nil

The public directly will gain the biggest benefits from this sale. Over a million private investors will be able to add British Airways to their portfolios. The overwhelming majority of British Airways employees have also applied for shares. As a result, private investors and employees will hold 47 per cent. of the shares. The public will also benefit through institutions such as pension funds and insurance companies which will hold 36 per cent. Overseas investors will receive 17 per cent.

I am delighted that the public has placed such faith in this great British company, and that British Airways can look forward to the future with the support of a broad base of shareholders.

EMPLOYMENT

Hotels and Guest Houses (Insurance)

Mr. Greenway asked the Paymaster General if he has any plans to introduce legislation to provide for a higher level of insurance of residents' goods insured by hoteliers and guest houses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The Government have no plans to introduce such legislation.

Jobcentres (Staffing)

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General whether there are any plans to cut staffing levels at jobcentres in *(a)* Bury, *(b)* Ramsbottom, *(c)* Prestwich and *(d)* Radcliffe employment office; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Final plans for staffing levels of individual jobcentres in 1987-88 have not yet been made. Nationally, there will be an increase of over 400 staff, employed mainly in jobcentres, on programmes which cover the principal jobcentre activities, including helping long-term unemployed people through job clubs and the restart programme, between March 1987 and March 1988.

This national total has yet to be allocated to regions. When they receive their allocation, regional management will decide on the distribution of the staff within their regions.

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General (1) if he will give details of the numbers by which jobcentre staff are to be cut in each region of the United Kingdom;

(2) on what basis the planned cuts in jobcentre staff have been decided; and how they have been allocated between regions;

(3) when the proposed cuts in jobcentre staff will take effect.

Mr. Lee: Plans for the allocation of staff at national and regional level are prepared by programme rather than location.

Between March 1987 and March 1988, there will be an increase of over 400 staff employed mainly in jobcentres, on programmes which cover the principal jobcentre activities, including helping long-term unemployed people through job clubs and the restart programme. The national total has yet to be allocated to regions.

Job Clubs

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General whether there are any plans to allow job clubs to function on a full-time basis.

Mr. Lee: No. Job clubs usually run four half days per week. Occasionally the job club resource centre is available to members all day. There are also a number of "double" job clubs using the same premises mornings and afternoons, with separate groups of members.

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General what percentage of the increased numbers of job clubs currently planned will be run by jobcentres and by other organisations.

Mr. Lee: Of the planned 1,000 job clubs by 31 March 1987, it is proposed that 535 should be run by jobcentre staff and 465 by other organisations. Any further expansion beyond 1,000 would be through other organisations.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Cohen asked the Paymaster General if he will give a detailed breakdown by ward of the latest unemployment figures for *(a)* Kensington and *(b)* Leyton; and what percentage the figures in each ward and the totals represent of the total population in each constituency.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. The only source of information on the population in Parliamentary constituencies is the decennial census of population. The 1981 census identified populations of 68,097 and 78,430 respectively, present on census night in the Kensington and Leyton constituencies. Estimates of the current population are not available. The table shows the numbers of unemployed claimants on 11 December 1986 in each of the electoral wards in the Kensington and Leyton constituencies, together with the percentages and figures present of the total population resident in 1981 in each constituency.

Kensington constituency Electoral wards	*Number of unemployed claimants*	*Percentage of population in 1981*
Avondale	747	1·1
Campden	239	0·4
Colville	934	1·4
Golborne	885	1·3
Holland	448	0·7
Kelfield	454	0·7
Norland	209	0·3
Pembridge	521	0·8
Queen's Gate	377	0·6
St. Charles	582	0·9
TOTAL	5,396	7·9

Leyton constituency Electoral wards	*Number of unemployed claimants*	*Percentage of population in 1981*
Cann Hall	692	0·9
Cathall	985	1·3
Forest	711	0·9
Grove Green	635	0·8
Lea Bridge	594	0·8
Leyton	947	1·2
Leytonstone	815	1·0
TOTAL	5,379	6·9

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Paymaster General what information he has concerning the numbers of people unemployed in *(a)* the north-west region and *(b)* the south-east region in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available; and what percentage of the total work force in each of those regions these figures represent in each of those years.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. The table gives annual averages of the numbers of unemployed claimants excluding school leavers, adjusted for discontinuities, together with the corresponding unemployment rates calculated as a percentage of the working population for the south-east and north-west regions for each year since 1976.

	South East Region		*North West Region*	
	Number of claimants	*Unemployment percentage rate*	*Number of claimants*	*Unemployment percentage rate*
1976	277,300	3·4	169,900	5·6
1977	291,800	3·5	176,600	5·8
1978	265,600	3·2	174,400	5·7
1979	226,600	2·7	165,600	5·4
1980	284,100	3·3	214,900	7·0
1981	492,500	5·7	324,800	10·7
1982	598,200	7·0	374,800	12·5
1983	646,800	7·7	408,000	13·6
1984	710,500	8·0	422,100	13·9
1985	747,500	8·2	430,800	13·9
1986	768,200	8·5	432,900	14·0

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Paymaster General what information he has concerning the numbers and percentages of the work force in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available who have been employed in *(a)* manufacturing industry and *(b)* service industries in (i) the north-west region and (ii) the south-east region.

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Paymaster General how many people have been employed in total in the north-west region in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available; what percentage of the total work force in that region this figure represents; and how it compares with the figures in the south-east region in each of those years.

Mr. Lee: The tables give, for north-west region and south-east region, the civilian employed labour force (which is the sum of employees in employment and the self-employed), and the numbers of employees in employment in the industries specified at June each year from 1976 to 1986. These figures are also expressed as a percentage of the civilian working population (which is the sum of the civilian employed labour force and the unemployed) in each region. Estimates of the total numbers employed, broken down by industry within region, are not available as the self-employed statistics are not analysed in this way.

Table 1 Employment in North-West Region

Thousand

	Civilian employed labour force	of which: Employees in employment	
June each year	*Total*	*Manufacturing industries*	*Service industries*
1976	2,847	999	1,421
1977	2,850	990	1,431
1978	2,860	991	1,444
1979	2,890	971	1,487
1980	2,860	931	1,493
1981	2,683	810	1,451
1982	2,592	744	1,434
1983	2,526	694	1,421
1984	2,547	669	1,436
1985	2,531	656	1,448
1986	2,542	634	1,454

Table 2 Employment in North-West Region

	Civilian employed labour force as a percentage of the civilian working population	of which: Employees in employment as a percentage of the civilian working population	
June each year	*per cent.*	*Manufacturing industries per cent.*	*Service industries per cent.*
1976	94	33	47
1977	94	33	47
1978	94	32	47
1979	94	32	48
1980	93	30	48
1981	89	27	48
1982	87	25	48
1983	86	24	48
1984	86	23	48
1985	85	22	48
1986	85	21	49

Table 3 Employment in South-East Region

Thousand

	Civilian employed labour force	of which: Employees in employment	
June each year	*Total*	*Manufacturing industries*	*Service industries*
1976	7,878	1,855	4,836
1977	7,841	1,860	4,828
1978	7,945	1,864	4,907
1979	8,124	1,871	5,043
1980	8,166	1,820	5,102
1981	7,963	1,684	5,038
1982	7,861	1,604	5,027
1983	7,812	1,533	5,053
1984	8,040	1,483	5,211
1985	8,187	1,448	5,360
1986	8,297	1,395	5,488

Table 4 Employment in South-East Region

	Civilian employed labour force as a percentage of the civilian working population	of which: Employees in employment as a percentage of the civilian working population	
June each year	*per cent.*	*Manufacturing industries per cent.*	*Service industries per cent.*
1976	96	23	59
1977	96	23	59
1978	97	23	60
1979	97	22	60
1980	97	22	60
1981	94	20	59
1982	93	19	59
1983	92	18	59
1984	92	17	60
1985	92	16	60
1986	91	15	61

Skill Shortages

Mr. Craigen asked the Paymaster General in which employment regions of the United Kingdom skill shortages have emerged; if he will quantify the number of unfilled vacancies arising from skill shortages; and in which industries.

Mr. Lee: Difficulties in recruiting skilled labour have been reported in all regions, particularly the south-east. There are no comprehensive figures available on the number of unfilled vacancies in the economy arising from skill shortages. A survey of vacancies held by jobcentres in April 1986 estimated that 5,535, or 3·3 per cent. of them, had remained unfilled for two months or more due to a lack of people with the relevant skills or expertise. Jobcentres are believed to handle about one third of vacancies.

Special Employment Programmes

Mr. Craigen asked the Paymaster General what is the number of people on special employment programmes in each of the employment regions of the United Kingdom; and what percentage of places relate to those regions.

Mr. Lee: The numbers of people participating in the community programme, the voluntary projects programme, community industry, and the enterprise allowance scheme in each region of the United Kingdom are:

Region	*Participants*	*Percentage of total*
South-East	25,591	7
London	28,356	8
South West	25,668	8
West Midlands	36,011	11
East Midlands	28,655	8
Yorkshire and Humberside	39,260	11
North-West	55,739	16
North-East	34,270	10
Wales	29,246	9
Scotland	42,075	12

In addition, 60,869 people are part participating in the job release scheme, the new workers scheme, the young workers scheme and the job-splitting scheme. This figure is not included in the table because regional information for these measures is not collected on the same basis.

Community Programme

Mr. Craigen asked the Paymaster General what is the number of 18 to 25-year-olds in each of the employment regions of the United Kingdom presently on the community programme; and what percentage of places relate to each of those regions.

Mr. Lee: It is not possible to give a breakdown of places in the form requested. However, during the 12 months ending the 12 December 1986, the latest date for which statistics are available, the total number of entrants to the community programme, together with the number and percentage of those aged 18 to 24 years in each of the Manpower Services Commission's regions are as shown in the table below.

	18 to 24 years	*Percentage of Total*	*Total*
South East	11,820	58·1	20,310
London	14,754	58·8	25,091
South West	13,251	60·5	21,092
West Midlands	22,412	65·0	34,480
East Midlands	15,011	61·2	24,527
Yorkshire and Humberside	22,136	64·5	34,320
North West	31,272	63·9	48,939
Northern	20,518	64·8	31,663
Wales	16,933	62·6	27,050
Scotland	24,608	63·9	39,123

Liverpool Royal Institute

Mr. Terry Fields asked the Paymaster General what information he has as to the conditions relating to use by community project schemes attached to the sale of Liverpool royal institute to Liverpool Heritage Developments Ltd., formerly Dunebourne Ltd.

Mr. Lee: I understand that the building in question was sold by Liverpool university to Liverpool Heritage Developments Ltd., and that the deed of sale contains a requirement that the building will be used for community purposes.

Liverpool Heritage Developments Ltd.

Mr. Terry Fields asked the Paymaster General what is the value of past and current contracts between *(a)* the Manpower Services Commission, and *(b)* the Merseyside Task Force and Liverpool Heritage Developments Ltd., formerly Dunebourne Ltd.

Mr. Lee: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Manpower Services Commission Schemes

Mr. Hicks asked the Paymaster General (1) what is the cost of each Manpower Services Commission scheme and the numbers involved in *(a)* the south-west region and *(b)* Cornwall, respectively, in 1985-86 and 1986-87;

(2) for the Manpower Services Commission, YTS, adult training and community programmes, what is the total numbers involved since their inception for *(a)* England, *(b)* the south-west region and *(c)* Cornwall; and what are the available proportions who found permanent positions after taking part in these schemes.

Mr. Lee: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Sizewell Public Inquiry

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Paymaster General, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey on 30 January, *Official Report*, column *422*, concerning the report on the Sizewell public inquiry, if he will make it his policy to ensure that relevant information on resources and workload implications for the Health and Safety Executive is made available to hon. and right hon. Members before the report is debated in the House; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I have nothing further to add to my previous reply to the hon. Member on 30 January at column *432*.

Manufacturing Jobs

Mrs. Peacock asked the Paymaster General what was the net loss in manufacturing jobs in Yorkshire and Humberside in the years 1974 to 1986.

Mr. Lee: Between June 1974 and June 1986, there was a net decrease of 307,000 employees in employment in manufacturing industries in the Yorkshire and Humberside region.

Some of the decrease in the figures will be the result of the reclassification of jobs such as industrial cleaning, catering, computer services, and road haulage, previously done by manufacturers' own employees and now done by subcontractors. This developing feature of our economy has the effect of exaggerating the extent of the move from manufacturing to service sector employment.

Average Incomes

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Paymaster General what information he has concerning the level of average incomes in *(a)* the north-west region and *(b)* the south-east region in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available.

Mr. Lee: The information available relates to average gross weekly income of households as shown in the family expenditure surveys and is as follows:

	North West £	*South East* £
1976	76·53	90·98
1977	86·82	105·09
1978	98·59	118·33
1979	116·67	134·06
1980	139·10	171·37
1981	170·08	194·45
1982	169·53	198·83
1983[1] *(a)*	178·95	223·14
1983 *(b)*	176·63	221·86
1984	178·92	239·59
1985	187·31	255·86

[1] Under the housing benefit scheme introduced in stages from November 1982, some cash transactions were eliminated leading to a reduction in the level of cash income. For 1983 figures are given *(a)* covering the same transactions as in the earlier years and *(b)* on a cash transactions basis consistent with the years 1984 and 1985.

Note.—Gross income as defined in the family expenditure survey comprises cash income (eg from employment, investments, pensions and cash social security benefits) together with selected other benefits such as the imputed value of owner occupied accommodation and the value of luncheon vouchers. It does not cover most non-cash benefits such as free prescriptions or benefits in kind (eg free coal, company cars). Gross income will not reflect rent and rates rebates, except in so far as described in note 1 above.

Training

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Paymaster General if he will publish in the *Official Report* details of the divergence between predicted and actual expenditure in 1986 on each Manpower Services Commission programme area within the vocational educational and training group and the employment and enterprise group.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 5 February 1987, c. *761*]: The Manpower Services Commission keeps records on the basis of the standard financial year for accounting for Government expenditure. The year runs from 1 April to 31 March.

The latest available figures cover the year ended 31 March 1986. In that year divergences on programmes were as follows:

	£ million
Vocational educational and training group	
Youth Training Scheme	+17·1
Technical Vocation Educational Initiative	+0·6
Adult and Occupational Training	−15·4
Non-Advanced Further Education	−1·3
Employment and enterprise group	
Employment Rehabilitation Centres	−1·9
Geographical Mobility Scheme	−1·2
Disabled Persons	−0·8
Enterprise Allowance Scheme	−7·2
Voluntary Project Programme	−1·1
Long-term Unemployed	−0·5

Overall, Manpower Services Commission cash expenditure in the year ended 31 March 1986 came to within £1 million of the cash limit of £1,562 million.

In addition the following divergencies occurred on agency programmes administered by the Manpower Services Commission on behalf of the Department of Employment:

	£ million
Sheltered Employment	−1·7
Community Industry	−0·9
Community Programme	−41·6

Small Firms

Mr. John Browne asked the Paymaster General what measures Her Majesty's Government have introduced since 1979 which directly assist the small firms sector.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 January 1987, c. 655-8]: I regret that my previous reply to my hon. Friend requires correction. Item 23 of the reply relates to a proposal that has not yet been implemented. There were a number of other inaccuracies that have been corrected. The correct text in full is as follows:

Our measures have concentrated on tackling the particular disadvantages faced by people setting up a new business or expanding an existing small firm.

Finance

The availability of finance to small firms has been improved by:

The loan guarantee scheme started in 1981, which aims to provide finance to viable businesses which fail to get commercial financial backing. Individual term loans up to £75,000 are made available for between two and seven years, with a Government guarantee on 70 per cent. of each loan. Small businesses in most sectors are eligible. The 1986 Budget extended the scheme for a further three years and reduced the cost to borrowers by halving the premium on loans.

The business expansion scheme, started in 1983, provides income tax relief on new equity investment in unquoted companies. The scheme was extended in the 1986 Budget and targeted better towards genuinely risky enterprises.

The venture capital scheme encourages the provision of finance by enabling individuals and investment companies to claim income or corporation tax relief on losses incurred on disposal of new shares issued by unquoted trading companies.

The enterprise allowance scheme, started in 1982, encourages unemployed people to start their own businesses. It pays an allowance of £40 per week for up to a year. More than 200,000 people have already started up businesses with the help of the scheme. There is now greater emphasis on business advice, counselling and training for people in EAS.

Premises

The small workshops scheme was designed to stimulate private sector investment in small industrial premises. From March 1980 to March 1983, a 100 per cent. initial building allowance was given for capital expenditure on the construction of workshops not exceeding 2,500 sq. ft. The scheme was extended for a further two years for premises not exceeding 1,250 sq. ft., and ended, as planned, in March 1985. Research indicates that the scheme led to a substantial increase in premises for small businesses.

English Industrial Estates Corporation has concentrated on providing premises for small businesses (up to 2,500 sq. ft.). Special rental and tenancy agreements have been devised to meet the needs of small businesses and entrepreneurs. EIEC works with a number of public sector agencies—the Department of Trade and Industry, the Development Commission, and universities. Similar programmes are undertaken by the Scottish and Welsh Development Agencies.

Training

The Manpower Services Commission has provided training courses for the self-employed and small businessmen since 1977, but since 1984 the volume and range of provision has greatly increased to give over 50,000 training places in 1986-87. For business start-ups there are the business enterprise and new enterprise programmes; for established business projects there are the private enterprise and management extension programmes; and for graduates there are the graduate enterprise programme, and the graduate gateway programme.

Government purchasing

The Government have improved small firms' access to information about purchasing departments, their procedures, requirements and points of contact. A Department of Employment booklet on "Tendering for Government Contracts" has been supplemented by some individual departments' own publications and information published on Prestel. Tendering and approval procedures have been simplified by exempting suppliers to most Government Departments from normal approval

procedures for contracts under £10,000, allowing non-approved firms to tender for non-urgent contracts subject to subsequent approval, and regular reviews by Departments of tender lists to encourage new suppliers.

The Ministry of Defence launched in 1986 a small firms initiative to increase competitive opportunities for small firms. This includes the creation of the small firms advice division in the Procurement Executive to supervise the initiative, provide a focal point for developing MOD policy towards small firms, and provide advice and assistance to small firms; a small firms research initiative to enable small firms able to generate innovative products and processes cost effectively to obtain a larger share of MOD research funds; appointment of small firms representatives to the boards of MOD research and development establishments; steps to ensure all local MOD purchasing officers are keenly aware of the initiative; and plans to hold a conference or regional seminars to explain the initiative to small firms.

Innovation

The small firms merit award for research and technology — SMART — started in 1986, aims to encourage small firms and potential entrepreneurs to bring forward highly innovative ideas that cannot attract existing sources of funding. This competitive scheme is being run by the Department of Trade and Industry on a one-year trial basis in biotechnology and instrumentation.

Taxation

The ability of individuals to start businesses and develop them has been improved by a wide range of tax changes. Capital gains tax exemption limits have been increased to £6,300. Retirement reliefs have been extended to cover retirement at 60, retirement through ill health and disposal of shares in family holding companies of trading groups. Indexation has been improved and extended as have rollover reliefs. Reliefs have also been introduced to facilitate the incorporation of businesses, and losses on loans made for business purposes can now be offset against capital gains tax.

Significant changes to capital transfer tax were introduced between 1979 and 1985 to increase thresholds from £25,000 to £67,000 and increase rate bands. From 1981, only transfers within the preceding ten years were taken into account in assessing cumulative total CTT liability. In 1986, the charge on lifetime gifts was abolished and the tax renamed inheritance tax with the threshold increased to £71,000 with further increases in rate bands. These changes will further facilitate the transfer of a business from one generation to the next without the need to dilute assets to meet the consequent tax liability.

Income tax relief is available on personal borrowings raised to make investments in partnerships, close companies, co-operatives and employee buy-outs. Relief is also available for interest on loans to partners buying plant and machinery for use in their partnership business.

Losses incurred in any of the first four years of trading by a new business carried on by an individual can qualify for special income tax relief. This can be obtained against earnings during a three-year period before the new trade started.

Expenses incurred in the process of setting up a new business are now deductible from subsequent trading profits so long as the expenditure is undertaken in the three years prior to the start up.

Deregulation

Two White Papers "Building Businesses . . . Not Barriers" (Cmnd. 9794) and its predecessor "Lifting the Burden" (Cmnd. 9571) included detailed proposals for improvements in areas such as planning, VAT collection and employment law, and have generally aimed to simplify business dealings with Government. The enterprise and deregulation unit at the Department of Employment is co-ordinating action, for example in reviewing licensing and local legislative procedures, and a new system monitors the compliance costs of new regulations to business.

Planning authorities have been urged, through Department of Environment circulars, to approve applications for small business development, unless there are strong and specific objections. For example, Department of Environment circular 14/85 on development and employment reaffirmed the principle of presumption in favour of development, and urged planning authorities to have special regard to the needs of small firms and the self-employed.

Simpler and more flexible building regulations came into force in England and Wales in November 1985. Small detached buildings with floor area less than 30 square metres and with no sleeping accommodation are now exempt from control.

Measures have been introduced to ease the burden of employment protection legislation on employers, particularly small employers. A longer qualifying period is now required for unfair dismissal complaints.

Industrial tribunals are now required to take account of the size and administrative resources of a firm in deciding on the fairness or unfairness of a dismissal.

Changes to the maternity reinstatement provisions have included relieving firms with five or fewer employees from the obligation to reinstate an employee where it is not reasonably practical.

Redundancy rebates have been retained for firms employing fewer than 10 employees.

A number of changes have been made to health and safety regulations and procedures to ease burdens on small employers:

Giving specific training to Inspectors to increase awareness of small firms' interests.

Designating one of the Health and Safety Commission commissioners to represent small firms' interests.

A small firms working group sub-committee has been set up to consider new leaflets geared to small firms, ways of seeking out unregistered small firms, and the training of local authority health inspectors in the problems of small firms.

Information required from small companies has been reduced:

Under the Companies (Accounts) Regulations 1979 particulars of turnover are no longer required to be included where annual turnover is less than £1 million.

The Companies Act 1981 further reduces the amount of detailed financial information that small companies must file with the Registrar of Companies and simplifies the arrangements for approval of company names.

The Government have announced their intention of relaxing the rules governing the amount of information small companies are required to disclose in their accounts within the constraints of EC law and Inland Revenue

needs. They also intend to extend the Companies Act definition of a small company to the maximum allowed under EC rules.

Advice

The small firms service has been greatly expanded and improved since 1979. The service provides advice and information to small firms. Particular developments have included more small firms centres and counselling teams, a factsheet system, and a computerised database. Since 1985, the service has concentrated on specialist counselling skills and supplementing the work of local enterprise agencies.

Encouragement has been given to the growth of local enterprise agencies, independent private sector-led organisations which provide help and advice to small firms. Full relief from corporation tax is given for business contributions (in cash or kind) to LEAs in the United Kingdom approved by the Government. A major five-year scheme of financial assistance started in 1986 aims to establish a network of viable self supporting agencies. Similar financial assistance has also been made available to LEAs in Scotland and Wales through, respectively, the Scottish Development Agency and the Welsh Development Agency.

The Council for Small Industries in Rural Areas provides rural small businesses with advice through 33 offices on local opportunities and conditions, business management, marketing and technical advice, skill training and financial services.

Outside consultancy advice is subsidised in the business and technical advisory services run by the Department of Trade and Industry which provides subsidised consultancy to small and medium-sized firms on productivity, design and quality assurance. BTAS was extended to include marketing from September 1986.

The business improvement services package of schemes, run by the Department of Trade and Industry, aims to help small firms in areas affected by job losses in particular industries—steel, textiles, shipbuilding, deep sea fisheries and tin-mining areas. Grants are available for consultancy advice on marketing, financial management, the application of computers and licensing in of products and processes, as well as for common services for groups of small firms and for investment projects.

Support in particular sectors

The Government sponsor the Co-operative Development Agency. Sponsorship of the CDA was extended in 1981 and 1984. The Co-operative Development Agency and Industrial Development Act 1984 provided additional funding, effectively extending the Agency's mandate for a further six years, and gave it limited additional powers.

The small engineering firms investment scheme operated in two phases to help small engineering firms to invest in certain types of advanced capital equipment. The scheme cost about £130 million.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Opposition Parties (Financial Assistance)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will set out in tabular form the amount of money paid to each political party in each year since 1979, under the terms of the resolution of the House relating to financial assistance to opposition parties.

Mr. Biffen: The total sums paid to qualifying Opposition parties by way of financial assistance for each calendar year since 1979 are as follows:

Financial assistance to Opposition parties

	1979 £	*1980* £	*1981* £	*1982* £	*1983* £	*1984* £	*1985* £	*1986* £
Labour Party	139,698·00	227,500·00	290,000·00	290,000·00	296,496·98	317,055·60	440,355·00	440,355·00
Liberal Party	29,457·08	40,941·84	52,107·80	52,107·80	57,149·74	63,820·00	88,641·00	88,641·00
Social Democratic Party	—	—	—	—	25,299·04	45,044·64	62,562·00	62,562·00
Scottish National Party	5,402·92	5,325·50	6,777·92	6,777·92	5,997·04	5,743·44	7,977·00	7,977·00
Plaid Cymru	1,893·53	2,513·75	3,199·35	3,199·35	3,280·69	3,512·16	4,878·00	4,878·00
Ulster Unionist Party	2,750·00	5,704·00	7,260·00	7,260·00	11,217·03	14,685·84	19,889·00	20,397·00
Ulster Democratic Unionist Party	1,352·15	2,804·18	3,568·92	3,568·92	4,204·58	4,888·08	6,789·00	6,788·75
Conservative Party	55,585·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Social Democratic Labour Party	371·25	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
United Ulster Unionist Council	1,400·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Table Office (Computerisation)

Mr. White asked the Lord Privy Seal what steps are being taken to purchase a computer to assist with the processing of early-day motions and questions in the Table Office; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: A user requirement for a system to handle both early day motions and the "ration" of oral parliamentary questions in the Table Office has been drawn up, and investigations as to the most appropriate link to the Library's POLIS (parliamentary on-line information system) are currently in progress. A detailed timetable for implementation will be drawn up as soon as these are complete.

THE ARTS

British Rail Pension Fund

Mr. Fisher asked the Minister for the Arts whether he has met the trustees of the British Rail pension fund to discuss the future availability for public exhibition of its art collection.

Mr. Luce: No. Items from the British Rail pension fund are already on long term loan for exhibition to public collections, including the Fitzwilliam museum, Cambridge, the Castle museum, Norwich, the Kelvingrove museum and art gallery, Glasgow, and several others.

SCOTLAND

Mental Patients

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will make a statement on Government policy on the care of mentally handicapped patients in hospitals and in the community in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Moray (Mr. Pollock) on 22 January at column *663*.

Chiropodists

Mr. MacKenzie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will introduce legislation to make the registration of chropodists obligatory.

Mr. Rifkind: No. Discussion with the various bodies representing the chiropody profession failed to produce any clear consensus of opinion and, as my right hon. Friend the Minister for Health indicated in his reply of 15 May 1985 at column *161*, the Government do not propose to introduce any legislation regarding the profession.

National Health Service Property (Sales)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all surplus National Health Service property sold since 1979 in excess of £50,000, the price obtained and the date of sales by region and district.

Mr. John MacKay: I refer the hon. Member to the answers given to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) on 5 and 11 June 1986 (Vol. 98, at column *603* and Vol. 99, at column *204*, respectively).

Receipts from sales in 1979-80 and 1980-81 amounted to £55,798 and £529,627 respectively.

Receipts for 1986-87 to date amount to £3,053,052.

Information about the selling price in individual cases is subject to the normal confidentiality between purchaser and seller in land transactions in Scotland.

Properties disposed of in 1986-87 to date are as follows:

1986-87

Area	*Property sold*
Ayrshire and Arran	Kilmarnock infirmary
Argyll and Clyde	Finnartmore hospital, Kilmun
Borders	Land at Knoll hospital, Duns
Fife	Glenlomond hospital farm, Mawcarse Land at Northern hospital, Dunfermline Northern hospital, Dunfermline (part payment)
Grampian	62 Queen's Road, Aberdeen
Greater Glasgow	Ear, Nose and Throat hospital, St. Vincent Street, Glasgow Hillfoot Clinic, Bearsden, Glasgow Killearn hospital, Stirling (part payment)
Highland	Land at County hospital, Invergordon Land at Hilton Clinic site, Inverness Ness House, Inverness (part payment)
Lothian	Clinic at Bog Road, Whitburn Muirfield House, Gullane Land at Dunbar health centre, Dunbar 64 Canaan Lane, Edinburgh
Tayside	Farmland at Sunnyside Royal hospital, Montrose
Western Isles	Newton House, Stornoway
70 Staff houses	Various
9 Small plots of land	Various

NHS Property (Closures)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all closures of National Health Service property district by district since 1979.

Mr. John MacKay: The following list details all hospitals in Scotland which have been closed in full since 1979. Records on partial closures of hospitals and of closures of other NHS property are not held centrally.

	Year of Closure
Argyll and Clyde Health Board	
Broadstone Hospital, Port Glasgow	1979
Duncan McPherson Hospital, Gourock	1979
Gateside Hospital, Greenock	1979
Greenock Eye Infirmary	1979
Greenock Royal Infirmary	1979
Finnartmore Auxiliary Hospital, Kilmun	1984
Caldwell House Hospital, Uplawmoor	1985
Broadfield Hospital, Port Glasgow	1986
Royal Alexandra Infirmary, Paisley	1986
Royal Alexandra Infirmary Annex, Paisley	1986
Royal Victoria Eye, Infirmary, Paisley	1986
Thorn Hospital, Johnstone	1986
Ayrshire and Arran Health Board	
Kilmarnock Infirmary	1982
Torrance House, Kilmarnock	1982
Buckreddan Maternity Hospital, Kilwinning	1984
Borders Health Board	
Peebles County Hospital	1983
Peebles War Memorial Hospital	1983
Fife Health Board	
Northern Hospital, Denfermline	1985
Grampian Health Board	
County Hospital, Dufftown	1984
Greater Glasgow Health Board	
Carnbooth Children's Home, Glasgow	1981
Homoepathic Hospital for Children, Glasgow	1981
Ear, Nose and Throat Hospital, Glasgow	1983
Centre for Rheumatic Diseases, Glasgow	1985
Schaw Hospital, Bearsden	1986
Highland Health Board	

	Year of Closure
Bignold Hospital, Wick	1986
Lanarkshire Health Board	
Shotts Hospital	1980
Hozier House	1986
Lothian Health Board	
Dunbar Cottage Hospital	1979
Shetland Health Board	
Brevik Hospital, Lerwick	1983
Old Gilbert Bain Hospital, Lerwick	1984
Tayside Health Board	
Kings Cross (West) Hospital, Dundee	1979
Charleton Maternity Home, Montrose	1980
Sidlaw Hospital, Auchterhouse	1980
Burghmuir Hospital, Perth	1981
Strathmore Hospital, Blairgowrie	1982

NHS (Job Losses)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total job losses by category of worker since 1979 in the National Health Service by region and district.

Mr. John MacKay: Information in this form is not held centrally. The numbers of staff in post in each of the main NHS staff categories are included in Scottish Health Statistics for 1979 to 1985, copies of which are available in the Library.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list district by district the number of beds in 1979 and the latest available year indicating the percentage increase or decrease.

Mr. John MacKay: I refer my reply to the hon. Member's question on the same subject on 4 February, Vol. 109, c. *710* which included the information now requested.

Accommodation Assistance

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to assist local authorities to provide accommodation for homeless and poorly housed single people below pensionable age.

Mr. Ancram: The Scottish Development Department has issued guidance to local authorities, in part 7 of the Scottish Housing Handbook, on design standards for hostels and other forms of housing for single people; and the 12·5 per cent. increase which we have authorised in capital investment on the housing revenue account block for 1987-88 will enable authorities which have this as a problem to do more for single people. I hope that local authorities will also look to the contribution which other providers in their areas, such as housing associations, can make to meeting the needs of single people.

Cervical Cancer

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the screening arrangements for the early detection of cervical cancer in each of the health board areas of Scotland and as to what consideration has been given to adopting the new cancer test developed by the charity Quest For A Test For Cancer.

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. and learned Friend has received and is presently considering the report of a Scottish Health Service planning council working group which has been reviewing the cervical cytology service in Scotland.

We have no information about the test to which the hon. Member refers.

Disabled Children

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the information available to him on the numbers of children under the age of 16 years in each local authority in Scotland who are disabled persons to whom section 12 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 applies;

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the information available to him on the numbers of children with records of their special educational needs in each education authority in Scotland; and what is his estimate, in each case, of the percentage of these children who are disabled persons to whom section 12 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 applies.

Mr. John MacKay: The following table shows the latest available information of the numbers of children recorded as having special educational needs in each education authority as at 31 December 1985.

Numbers of recorded pupils as at 31 December 1985

Education Authority	*Number*
Borders	131
Central	107
Dumfries and Galloway	66
Fife	124
Grampian	248
Highland	150
Lothian	244
Strathclyde	1,897
Tayside	89
Orkney	7
Shetland	7
Western Isles	25
TOTAL	3,095

While local authorities have a duty under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 to inform themselves of the numbers of chronically sick and disabled persons within their areas, they are not required to keep registers for the purpose. Information about the number of disabled children to whom section 12 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 applies is not held centrally.

Grey Seals

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether his Department accepts the conclusions of the Natural Environment Research Council report, "Interactions Between Grey Seals and United Kingdom Fisheries," published in 1984; what research is currently being carried out on interactions between grey seals and fisheries by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: The report itself suggests that the findings should be interpreted with caution because of the complex nature of the questions addressed, with consequent difficulty in arriving at firm conclusions. The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland regards the report as contributing usefully to the fund of knowledge in this area. Research work now being undertaken by the Department includes studies into the diet of seals and the effectiveness of scaring devices.

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland by whom, and where, research projects funded by his Department on *(a)* the ecology of the grey seal or *(b)* interactions between grey seals and commercial fisheries, are being carried out; and over what period of time in each case.

Mr. John MacKay: The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland is not currently funding research projects on the ecology of the grey seal.

The Department's scientists are carrying out a programme of research into the interaction between grey seals and commercial fisheries. In addition the Department is funding two research projects: a three-year contract with the university of Aberdeen, and a one year contract with the marine resources assessment group of the Imperial College of Science and Technology.

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the levels of expenditure for each of the last five years, including the current financial year, allocated by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland for research into *(a)* the ecology of the grey seal and *(b)* interactions between the grey seal with commercial fisheries.

Mr. John MacKay: The levels of expenditure allocated by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland for research into the interaction between grey seals and commercial fisheries for each of the last five years are as follows:

	£
1982-83	73,894
1983-84	1,755
1984-85	9,817
1985-86	34,260
[1]1986-87	78,250

[1] Estimated.

The Department has allocated no funds over the last five years for research specifically on the ecology of the grey seal.

Drug Misuser Groups

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what new arrangements he has made for the funding of voluntary injecting drug misuser groups; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: Health boards will assume responsibility with effect from 1 April 1987 for the support of local drug projects currently funded by the Scottish Home and Health Department. The detailed arrangements will be set out in a circular to be issued shortly.

Light Dues

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from Scottish fishing organisations about the implications for the fishing fleet of the proposed extension to larger fishing vessels of liability to light dues.

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. and learned Friend has received no representations on this matter. Any such proposals are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

Farmers (Bank Borrowings)

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will indicate the percentage increase in bank borrowings by Scottish farmers in the years 1979 to 1986 showing each year separately; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: Estimates of bank borrowings by Scottish farmers are based upon a survey of the major clearing banks undertaken by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland in May each year. It is thought that a small part of the rise between 1983 and 1984 was the result of a change in classification procedure. The percentage changes are as follows:

	Percentage
1979	+40·5
1980	+34·9
1981	+20·2
1982	+6·4
1983	+11·5
1984	+11·7
1985	+6·6
1986	+9·9

Despite the disastrous weather conditions of 1985, the rise in borrowings recorded at May 1986 was lower than that seen in 1983 or 1984 and well below that for the years 1979 to 1982. This is partly due to the fact that the rate of inflation has been brought down to a much lower level. It is expected that the improved harvest of 1986 will result in a lower rate of increase in borrowings at May 1987. The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland will continue to monitor these trends closely.

Disabled People

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he has taken any steps to prepare a list of authorised representatives as defined in section 1 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what discussions he has had with interested parties on the need for laying orders to bring into force the provisions contained in the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he plans to implement in Scotland the provisions of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986; and if he will make a statement;

(4) if he has had any discussions with interested bodies with a view to securing names of persons with a specialised knowledge of the needs of disabled persons who can be co-opted to committees as defined in section 10 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: As indicated in my reply to the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) on 4 December 1986 at column *793*, my right hon. and learned

Friend has proposed to implement certain provisions in the Act with relatively slight resource implications in the course of 1987-88. These are at present the subject of consultation with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities. Depending on the outcome I hope that the necessary commencement order can be laid in the near future.

Early implementation of sections 1 and 2 is not proposed at present and it is not, in any case, for my right hon. and learned Friend to draw up lists of representatives for this purpose.

On appointments to bodies covered by section 10 of the Act, it is intended to hold discussions with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and other relevant interests at an early date.

Teacher Training

Mrs. McCurley asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has reached decisions on the arrangements for intake to teacher training courses at Scottish colleges of education in session 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: Provisional arrangements suggested in a discussion paper issued by the Scottish Education Department have been the subject of consultation with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, the General Teaching Council for Scotland and the Joint Committee of Colleges of Education in Scotland. In the light of views expressed by these bodies, comments from individual colleges of education and other organisations, and education authorities' estimates of their future secondary school staffing requirements, my right hon. and learned Friend has decided that the total numbers of students to be admitted to pre-service teacher training courses in session 1987-88 should be 650 to the primary BEd degree course, 300 to the primary postgraduate course, 185 to secondary specialist BEd degree courses and 405 to secondary postgraduate courses (on the basis that this last figure may be exceeded, if necessary, in order to admit any additional suitable applicants in mathematics, physics and technological education).

My right hon. and learned Friend is seeking the comments of the governing body of each college on the following proposed quotas within the overall levels mentioned:

College	*Primary Intake*		*Secondary Intake*	
	Proposed quotas		*Proposed quotas*	
	Proposed BEd degree course quotas	*Proposed post-graduate course quotas*	*BEd degree (Specialist) courses*[3]	*Postgraduate courses*
Aberdeen/Dundee[1]	157	85	15	98
Craigie	76	28	—	—
Jordanhill	162	72	45	172
Moray House/Dunfermline[2]	130	65	110	71
St. Andrew's	125	50	15	64
TOTAL	650	300	185	405

[1] College to be formed by merger of Aberdeen and Dundee Colleges of Education.
[2] College to be formed by merger of Moray House College of Education with Dunfermline College of Physical Education.
[3] Secondary specialist BEd Degree courses in physical education, technological education and music.

In regard to secondary intake, my right hon. and learned Friend is advising the colleges to give priority in session 1987-88 to students applying for admission to courses leading to a teaching qualification (secondary education) in mathematics, physics, business studies, chemistry, computing, technological education and religious education.

Neo-natal Deaths

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number and rate per 1,000 live births of post neo-natal deaths by month of occurrence *(a)* from sudden infant death syndrome, *(b)* respiratory diseases, *(c)* congenital abnormality, *(d)* others and *(e)* total for Scotland (i) nationally and (ii) by health board for each month 1981 to the most recent available date.

Mr. John MacKay [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 February 1987]: Following are the figures readily available. A copy will be placed in the Library of the House.

Postneonatal deaths, Scotland, 1981

Health board area	*Sudden infant death syndrome (ICD[1] 798·0)*	*Respiratory diseases (ICD[1] 460 to 519 769 to 770)*	*Congenital abnormality (ICD[1] 740 to 759)*	*Other (Remainder ICD[1] 001 to 999)*	*Total*
Borders	6	1	—	—	7
Central	—	8	6	5	19
Dumfries and Galloway	3	1	1	1	6
Fife	10	3	1	4	18
Grampian	21	2	3	6	32
Highland	5	1	3	4	13
Lothian	30	1	7	7	45
Tayside	4	—	7	6	17
Orkney	1	—	—	1	2
Shetland	1	—	—	—	1
Western Isles	1	—	—	—	1
Argyll and Clyde	12	5	3	5	25
Ayrshire and Arran	4	1	4	2	11
Greater Glasgow	39	4	11	12	66
Lanarkshire	10	6	9	18	43
TOTAL SCOTLAND	147	33	55	71	306

Postneonatal deaths, Scotland, 1982

Health board area	*Sudden infant death syndrome (ICD[1] 798·0)*	*Respiratory diseases (ICD[1] 460 to 519 769 to 770)*	*Congenital abnormality (ICD[1] 740 to 759)*	*Other (Remainder ICD[1] 001 to 999)*	*Total*
Borders	2	—	—	1	3
Central	2	4	1	4	11
Dumfries and Galloway	7	1	3	3	14
Fife	11	1	2	6	20
Grampian	12	—	2	5	19
Highland	7	—	2	—	9
Lothian	29	—	8	4	41
Tayside	4	6	3	7	20
Orkney	1	—	1	—	2
Shetland	—	1	—	1	2
Western Isles	—	—	—	—	—
Argyll and Clyde	11	4	4	6	25
Ayrshire and Arran	7	—	6	2	15
Greater Glasgow	32	5	11	16	64
Lanarkshire	6	7	11	12	36
TOTAL SCOTLAND	131	29	54	67	281

Postneonatal deaths, Scotland 1983

Health board area	*Sudden infant death syndrome (ICD[1] 798.0)*	*Respiratory diseases (ICD[1] 460-519 769-770)*	*Congenital abnormality (ICD[1] 740-759)*	*Other (Remainder ICD[1] 001-999)*	*Total*
Borders	7	—	—	1	8
Central	—	4	2	3	9
Dumfries and Galloway	2	1	3	4	10
Fife	11	—	4	4	19
Grampian	13	1	5	5	24
Highland	8	—	3	1	12
Lothian	22	5	6	7	40
Tayside	1	5	2	3	11
Orkney	—	—	—	—	—
Shetland	—	—	3	1	4
Western Isles	—	—	—	1	1
Argyll and Clyde	15	4	5	9	33
Ayrshire and Arran	8	4	1	5	18

Health board area	Sudden infant death syndrome (ICD[1] 798.0)	Respiratory diseases (ICD[1] 460-519 769-770)	Congenital abnormality (ICD[1] 740-759)	Other (Remainder ICD[1] 001-999)	Total
Greater Glasgow	24	4	19	8	55
Lanarkshire	6	6	5	6	23
TOTAL SCOTLAND	117	34	58	58	267

Postneonatal deaths, Scotland 1984

Health board area	Sudden infant death syndrome (ICD[1] 798.0)	Respiratory diseases (ICD[1] 460-519 769-770)	Congenital abnormality (ICD[1] 740-759)	Other (Remainder ICD[1] 001-999)	Total
Borders	3	—	—	—	3
Central	7	4	2	5	18
Dumfries and Galloway	5	—	3	1	9
Fife	10	3	2	4	19
Grampian	26	1	3	6	36
Highland	8	1	—	1	10
Lothian	14	1	5	3	23
Tayside	3	6	1	5	15
Orkney	1	—	—	—	1
Shetland	—	—	—	1	1
Western Isles	1	—	—	—	1
Argyll and Clyde	9	4	4	4	21
Ayrshire and Arran	6	1	2	4	13
Greater Glasgow	15	8	17	11	51
Lanarkshire	11	7	7	10	35
TOTAL SCOTLAND	119	36	46	55	256

Postneonatal deaths, Scotland, 1985

Health board area	Sudden infant death syndrome (ICD[1] 798.0)	Respratory diseases (ICD[1] 460-519 769-770)	Congenital abnormality (ICD[1] 740-759)	Other (Remainder ICD[1] 001-999)	Total
Borders	3	—	—	2	5
Central	1	1	7	4	13
Dumfries and Galloway	4	1	3	1	9
Fife	9	1	2	5	17
Grampian	13	—	4	6	23
Highland	11	—	3	2	16
Lothian	21	1	9	4	35
Tayside	5	2	1	4	12
Orkney	2	—	—	—	2
Shetland	1	—	1	—	2
Western Isles	—	—	—	—	—
Argyll and Clyde	14	1	1	4	20
Ayrshire and Arran	11	2	1	4	18
Greater Glasgow	29	4	9	18	60
Lanarkshire	9	4	4	11	28
TOTAL SCOTLAND	133	17	45	65	260

Postneonatal deaths per 1,000 live births, Scotland, 1981

Health board area	Sudden infant death syndrome (ICD[1] 798.0)	Respratory diseases (ICD[1] 460-519 769-770)	Congenital abnormality (ICD[1] 740-759)	Other (Remainder ICD[1] 001-999)	Total
Borders	5·1	0·9	—	—	6·0
Central	—	2·3	1·7	1·4	5·4
Dumfries and Galloway	1·7	0·6	0·6	0·6	3·3
Fife	2·1	0·6	0·2	0·8	3·8
Grampian	3·3	0·3	0·5	0·9	5·0
Highland	1·7	0·3	1·0	1·4	4·5
Lothian	3·3	0·1	0·8	0·8	4·9
Tayside	0·8	—	1·4	1·2	3·4
Orkney	4·0	—	—	4·0	7·9
Shetland	3·0	—	—	—	3·0
Western Isles	2·5	—	—	—	2·5
Argyll and Clyde	1·9	0·8	0·5	0·8	4·0
Ayrshire and Arran	0·8	0·2	0·8	0·4	2·1

Health board area	Sudden infant death syndrome (ICD[1] 798.0)	Respratory diseases (ICD[1] 460-519 769-770)	Congenital abnormality (ICD[1] 740-759)	Other (Remainder ICD[1] 001-999)	Total
Greater Glasgow	2·9	0·3	0·8	0·9	4·9
Lanarkshire	1·2	0·7	1·1	2·1	5·0
TOTAL SCOTLAND	2·1	0·5	0·8	1·0	4·4

Postneonatal deaths per 1,000 live births, Scotland 1982

Health board area	Sudden infant death syndrome (ICD[1] 798.0)	Respiratory diseases (ICD[1] 460-519 769-770)	Congenital abnormality (ICD[1] 740-759)	Other (remainder ICD[1] 001-999)	Total
Borders	1·9	—	—	0·9	2·8
Central	0·6	1·2	0·3	1·2	3·2
Dumfries and Galloway	4·1	0·6	1·7	1·7	8·2
Fife	2·4	0·2	0·4	1·3	4·4
Grampian	1·9	—	0·3	0·8	2·9
Highland	2·7	—	0·8	—	3·4
Lothian	3·2	—	0·9	0·4	4·5
Tayside	0·8	1·3	0·6	1·5	4·2
Orkney	4·3	—	4·3	—	8·5
Shetland	—	2·9	—	2·9	5·8
Western Isles	—	—	—	—	—
Argyll and Clyde	1·8	0·7	0·7	1·0	4·1
Ayrshire and Arran	1·4	—	1·2	0·4	3·1
Greater Glasgow	2·5	0·4	0·9	1·2	5·0
Lanarkshire	0·8	0·9	1·4	1·5	4·5
TOTAL SCOTLAND	2·0	0·4	0·8	1·0	4·2

Postneonatal deaths per 1,000 live births, Scotland 1983

Health board area	Sudden infant death syndrome (ICD[1] 798.0)	Respiratory diseases (ICD[1] 460-519 769-770)	Congenital abnormality (ICD[1] 740-759)	Other (remainder ICD[1] 001-999)	Total
Borders	6·3	—	—	0·9	7·2
Central	—	1·2	0·6	0·9	2·7
Dumfries and Galloway	1·2	0·6	1·8	2·4	6·0
Fife	2·5	—	0·9	0·9	4·3
Grampian	2·0	0·2	0·8	0·8	3·7
Highland	3·1	—	1·2	0·4	4·6
Lothian	2·5	0·6	0·7	0·8	4·6
Tayside	0·2	1·1	0·4	0·6	2·3
Orkney	—	—	—	—	—
Shetland	—	—	9·5	3·2	12·7
Western Isles	—	—	—	2·8	2·8
Argyll and Clyde	2·5	0·7	0·8	1·5	5·6
Ayrshire and Arran	1·7	0·8	0·2	1·0	3·7
Greater Glasgow	1·9	0·3	1·5	0·6	4·4
Lanarkshire	0·8	0·8	0·6	0·8	3·0
TOTAL SCOTLAND	1·8	0·5	0·9	0·9	4·1

Postneonatal deaths per 1,000 live births, Scotland 1984

Health Board area	Sudden infant death syndrome (ICD[1] 798.0)	Respiratory diseases (ICD[1] 460 to 519, 769 to 770)	Congenital abnormality (ICD[1] 740 to 759)	Other (Remainder ICD[1] 001 to 999)	Total
Borders	2·8	—	—	—	2·8
Central	2·1	1·2	0·6	1·5	5·5
Dumfries and Galloway	2·8	—	1·7	0·6	5·1
Fife	2·3	0·7	0·5	0·9	4·3
Grampian	4·1	0·2	0·5	1·0	5·7
Highland	3·0	0·4	—	0·4	3·8
Lothian	1·6	0·1	0·6	0·3	2·5
Tayside	0·6	1·2	0·2	1·0	3·1
Orkney	4·2	—	—	—	4·2
Shetland	—	—	—	3·2	3·2
Western Isles	2·9	—	—	—	2·9
Argyll and Clyde	1·6	0·7	0·7	0·7	3·6
Ayrshire and Arran	1·2	0·2	0·4	0·8	2·7
Greater Glasgow	1·2	0·6	1·3	0·9	4·0
Lanarkshire	1·4	0·9	0·9	1·3	4·6
TOTAL SCOTLAND	1·8	0·6	0·7	0·8	3·9

Postneonatal deaths per 1,000 live births, Scotland 1985

Health Board area	*Sudden infant death syndrome (ICD[1] 798.0)*	*Respiratory diseases (ICD[1] 460 to 519, 769 to 770)*	*Congenital abnormality (ICD[1] 740 to 759)*	*Other (Remainder ICD[1] 001 to 999)*	*Total*
Borders	2·6	—	—	1·7	4·3
Central	0·3	0·3	2·0	1·2	3·8
Dumfries and Galloway	2·3	0·6	1·7	0·6	5·1
Fife	2·0	0·2	0·4	1·1	3·7
Grampian	2·0	—	0·6	0·9	3·5
Highland	4·2	—	1·2	0·8	6·1
Lothian	2·2	0·1	1·0	0·4	3·7
Tayside	1·0	0·4	0·2	0·8	2·5
Orkney	8·6	—	—	—	8·6
Shetland	3·3	—	3·3	—	6·5
Western Isles	—	—	—	—	—
Argyll and Clyde	2·3	0·2	0·2	0·7	3·3
Ayrshire and Arran	2·3	0·4	0·2	0·8	3·7
Greater Glasgow	2·2	0·3	0·7	1·4	4·6
Lanarkshire	1·2	0·5	0·5	1·4	3·7
TOTAL SCOTLAND	2·0	0·3	0·7	1·0	3·9

[1] International Classification of Diseases.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Rates (Non-payment)

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many summonses he issued for non-payment of rates during the periods 1 January to 31 December 1985 and 1 January to 31 December 1986.

Mr. Needham: The Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland issued processes for the non-payment of rates as follows:

	Number
1985	43,000
1986	63,300

National Health Service Hospitals

Mr. Rogers asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many National Health Service hospitals have been opened in Northern Ireland; and what is the bed gain as a result of these openings, for each year since 1979.

Mr. Needham: Two Health Service hospitals have been opened in Northern Ireland since 1979, one in 1981 and one in 1985. There has been no bed gain as a result of the openings.

Mr. Rogers asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the numbers of staff employed by the National Health Service in Northern Ireland expressed as whole-time equivalents as well as actual full-time and part-time numbers.

Mr. Needham: At 31 December 1986, 47,870 whole-time equivalent staff were employed by the health and personal social services in Northern Ireland. The actual numbers of full-time and part-time staff were 36,570 and 27,766 respectively.

Mr. Rogers asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many National Health Service hospitals have been closed in Northern Ireland; and what is the total bed loss as a result of the closures, for each year since 1979.

Mr. Needham: The available information is as follows:

Number of Health Service hospitals closed

Year	*Number*
1979	Nil
1980	Nil
1981	2
1982	2
1983	1
1984	Nil
1985	1
1986	7

The services formerly provided at these hospitals have either transferred to new purpose-built accommodation or moved to more modern facilities on existing hospital sites. In 1979 the average total number of available hospital beds in Northern Ireland was 17,124 as compared with 16,595 in 1985—a bed reduction of 529.

Mr. Rogers asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the numbers of available beds in National Health Service hospitals in Northern Ireland for each year since 1979 expressed as totals and by specialty.

Mr. Needham: The information is as follows:

Average available beds in hospitals administered by the Health and Social Services Boards in Northern Ireland

Specialty	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
General Medicine	1,555	1,564	1,628	..	1,589	1,615	1,621
Chest Medicine	291	240	258	216	214	209	194
Neurology	120	118	140	..	140	141	139
Sexually Transmitted Diseases	5	5	5	5	5	3	3
Rheumatology	67	68	68	68	68	67	68
Infectious Diseases	215	203	197	194	194	186	185
Dermatology	138	138	124	..	119	121	120

Specialty	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Cardiology	161	163	179	..	176	174	174
Nephrology			19	..	27	34	36
General Surgery	1,773	1,799	1,799	..	1,775	1,731	1,784
Cardiac Surgery			20	21	21	21	21
Plastic Surgery	86	93	93	93	93	88	92
Thoracic Surgery	48	47	46	45	45	44	45
Neurosurgery	45	45	45	49	51	50	43
Trau and Orth Surgery	519	519	523	..	530	531	530
ENT	319	309	320	..	329	323	323
Ophthalmology	140	133	138	..	124	124	123
Dentistry	12	12	14	..	15	13	16
Radiotherapy	107	108	97	96	96	96	96
Gynaecology	506	528	532	..	535	527	536
Obstetrics (ante and post natal)	724	732	741	..	735	740	737
Sick Babies (including premature)	195	194	198	..	208	218	218
GP Maternity	185	185	190	176	157	142	156
GP Other	134	139	144	138	140	106	108
Paediatric Medicine	374	381	307	..	356	344	353
Child Psychiatry	20	20	20	21	20	20	20
Mental illness	4,869	4,757	4,732	..	4,704	4,571	4,449
Mental Handicap	1,538	1,533	1,535	..	1,501	1,490	1,472
Elderly Mentally Infirm			8	8	8	8	9
Young Chronic Sick	2,481	2,528	71	71	73	73	72
Geriatric Medicine			2,509	..	2,604	2,592	2,575
Convalescent	72	72	47	47	43	42	47
Rehabilitation	6	6	6	6	6	5	6
Staff Wards	23	31	31	..	31	25	7
Accident and Emergency	40	41	44	..	36	36	35
Unclassified	90	87	67	..	83	81	62
Other Specialist Units	164	164	129	131	125	124	120
Amenity Beds[1]	102	102					
TOTAL	17,124	17,062	17,023	..	16,976	16,715	16,595

[1]From 1981 amenity beds are included under the appropriate specialty.
.. Data not available due to industrial action.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

Mr. Flannery asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what discussions he has had with the leaders of political parties in the Irish Republic about the future of the Anglo-Irish agreement.

Mr. Tom King: I have regular discussions about the Anglo-Irish agreement with the Government of the Irish Republic within the framework of the intergovernmental conference. I have not met the leaders of the other political parties in the Republic.

Housing

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the housing waiting list in the Province at the latest date.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but I understand from the Executive that the total number on the Housing Executive's waiting list at 31 January 1987 was 23,429.

Appointments (Disabled People)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to the reply to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe, on 21 January, *Official Report*, column *585*, if he is satisfied that each of the bodies listed has appointed a person with knowledge of disability; if people so appointed are made known to organisations of and for people with disabilities in Northern Ireland; what is his estimate of the cost of informing himself as to whether these bodies are complying with the law; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: I am satisfied that all the appointments to the public bodies listed in the answer that my hon. Friend gave on 21 January have had due regard to the provisions of section 9 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons (NI) Act 1978. While there is no requirement that such appointments should be made known to organisations representing the disabled, information about the overall composition of the individual bodies is available. No detailed estimate of the cost has been made but I am satisfied that it would be disproportionate.

Special Educational Needs

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the information available to him on the numbers of children with special educational needs in each education authority in Northern Ireland; and what is his estimate, in each case, of the percentage of these children who are persons to whom the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons (Northern Ireland) Act 1978 applies.

Dr. Mawhinney: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Handicapped Children

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the information available to him on the numbers of children under the age of 16 years who are registered as handicapped in each health board in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: The information is not available in the form requested as there is no statutory requirement for health and social services boards to maintain "registers" of handicapped persons.

However, estimated figures for 1985[1] show the number of physically and mentally handicapped children under the age of 16, known to or in contact with the boards, as follows:

Physically Handicapped

Board	*General Classes*	*Blind*	*Partially Sighted*	*Hearing Impaired*	*Mentally Handicapped*
Eastern	522	35	38	152	408
Northern	178	17	13	43	261
Southern	214	6	10	33	218
Western	186	11	17	64	253
Northern Ireland	1,100	69	78	292	1,140

[1] As at 31 December 1985.

Education Expenditure

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals he has for capital expenditure programmes in the education budget of his Department in 1987-88.

Dr. Mawhinney: A total of £46 million will be available for capital expenditure next year. This will provide for increased expenditure on minor works and equipment, especially in schools, and for the commencement of 28 major new capital projects with a total estimated cost of £26 million.

Cash Limits

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the cash limits for the Northern Ireland Office and for Northern Ireland Departmental Services for 1986-87.

Mr. Scott: Subject to parliamentary approval to the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for the Northern Ireland Office — class XVIII, vote 1 — for 1986-87 is being increased by £7,151,000 from £474,626,000 to £481,777,000 to cover increased requirements for expenditure on law, order, protective and miscellaneous services. The increase is mainly due to higher than previously anticipated levels of police and prison officers' overtime working, partly offset by savings arising from a slippage in the prisons capital works programme and a reduction in the average value of criminal injury and damage compensation claim settlements. Supplementary provision to cover the announced carry-forward allowed under the end-year flexibility scheme is not being sought by the Northern Ireland Office and so this enhancement to the cash limit is net of that amount. This increase is being offset fully by a decrease in the cash limit for Northern Ireland Departmental services NID 1 from £2,300·1 million to £2,293·0 million and does not therefore add to the total of public expenditure.

WALES

Improvement and Repair Grants

13. **Mr. Grist** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the number and value of improvement and repair grants in *(a)* Wales and *(b)* Cardiff since 1979-80.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Between April 1979 and September 1986, 45,059 improvement grants and 60,020 repair grants were paid in Wales, with a total value of some £153·5 million and £151·9 million respectively.

In Cardiff, there were 2,783 improvement grants and 7,234 repair grants, whose total values were £9 million and £19·9 million respectively.

Rhondda Valley

15. **Mr. Rogers** asked the Secretary of State for Wales when he next intends to visit the Rhondda valley.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I have, at present, no firm plans to do so. My hon. Friends and I have made a number of visits to the Rhondda valley in recent years, and I was pleased to be able to be present at the launch of the Rhondda review last week.

Housing Starts

16. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many housing starts were made in the Rhymney Valley, Mid-Glamorgan and Wales, respectively, in 1986.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The provisional figure for 1986 is 8,408 housing starts in Wales, of which there were 204 in the Rhymney valley and 1,125 in Mid Glamorgan.

Home Education

17. **Mr. Terlezki** asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many children are being educated out of school and in the home in South Glamorgan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave him on 2 February.

Welsh Language

18. **Mr. Best** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about the future of the Welsh language and the progress he has made with a Welsh language development committee.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Agreement with the WJEC on the setting up of the committee, which was announced on 21 January, is an important step forward in our support for the Welsh language.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he intends to publish in full all the responses he receives from

his consultations with specified organisations in Wales concerning a new Welsh Language Act after the consultation period has ended on 31 March.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I shall decide how best to make public the results of the consultation exercise in the light of the number and quality of responses received.

Cardiodiagnostic and Cardiac Surgery Unit

19. **Dr. Roger Thomas** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received and from whom with regard to the setting up of a paediatric cardiodiagnostic and cardiac surgery unit in Wales.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Representations for the development of the existing paediatric cardiology and cardiac surgery facilities in Wales centred in Cardiff have been received from hon. Members, clinicians and members of the public. Funds have already been made available to South Glamorgan health authority for the appointment of a consultant paediatric cardiologist. Detailed planning of an enlarged cardiac regional service is under way, including as the first phase a paediatric cardiac unit.

YTS

20. **Mr. Jones** asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many young people at the latest available date have obtained places on the YTS; and what is the latest available percentage rate for those who succeed in subsequently obtaining jobs.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: At the end of December 1986, 21,735 young people were undergoing YTS training in Wales. Fifty five per cent. of YTS leavers between April and July 1986 went into jobs, the highest proportion since the current surveys began in July 1985.

Rural Economy

21. **Mr. Geraint Howells** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the present state of the rural economy in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The rural economy in Wales faces problems and challenges arising out of the urgent need to stem the costly production of surplus food. The Government are actively responding with a range of measures including the rural enterprise initiative which I launched last March and which intensified the scale and the range of support available. Further measures to encourage the alternative uses of agricultural land are being announced today by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Machynlleth (Hospitals)

22. **Mr. Alex Carlile** asked the Secretary of State for Wales when he will announce his decision upon the future of the Machynlleth chest hospital, and the Machynlleth and Corris district hospital, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The one-month period in which individuals or organisations may appeal to my right hon. Friend against the proposals of Powys health authority for future hospitals provision in Machynlleth expires on 28 February. Following that date careful consideration will be given to all of the views expressed, including those of the hon. Member. My right hon. Friend's decision will be announced as soon after that date as is possible.

NHS (Corporate Programme)

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on progress in developing a corporate programme for the National Health Service in Wales, following the publication of his Department's document "Policies and Priorities for Health Services in Wales".

Mr. Mark Robinson: Preparatory work on "A Corporate Management Programme for the Health Service in Wales" has been completed and a consultation document is to be issued today. The main aim of the programme is to detail the work which must be undertaken on an all-Wales basis, to improve the management of the NHS in the Principality to the benefit of patient care and to help authorities deal positively with the problems they face in common.

This is the first time that a planning document of this kind has been prepared for Wales. I believe it will have a very constructive influence on the way in which the NHS develops in the years to come. A copy of the consultation document is available in the Library of the House.

Water and Sewerage Facilities

Mr. Gwilym Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he is satisfied with the arrangements involving the Welsh water authority, local planning authorities and developers covering any potential damage to existing water supplies and sewage facilities arising from building developments on green field sites; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The statutory provisions and other consultation arrangements under which the Welsh water authority, the local planning authorities and developers negotiate planning consents provide a satisfactory framework for the general avoidance of damage to existing water supply and sewerage facilities. I am advised that generally the Welsh water authority has no difficulty in recovering the cost of repairing any damage caused by developers.

NHS Hospitals

Mr. Rogers asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many National Health Service hospitals have been closed in Wales: and what is the total bed loss as result of the closures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Nineteen NHS hospitals have been closed in Wales since 1979. It is not meaningful to compute changes in totals of bed numbers from hospital closures alone since the net overall change is a combination of hospital closures, new hospital openings and changes in existing hospital provision. However, the totals of the bed complements for the hospitals closed were:

	Numbers
1979	66
1980	176
1981	201

	Numbers
1982	Nil
1983	76
1984	262
1985	162
1986	293

NHS Property

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all closures of National Health Service property district by district since 1979.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Information on closures of all types of National Health Service property in Wales is not kept centrally. Records are kept of closures of NHS hospitals in Wales, of which the following have occurred since 1979:

Clwyd
- Prince Edward War Memorial
- Llangwfan
- Colwyn Bay Maternity
- Wrexham War Memorial

East Dyfed
- Cilmaenllwyd

Gwent
- Snatchwood
- Cefn Mably

Gwynedd
- Gors Maternity
- Minffordd
- Caernarvonshire and Anglesey
- Galltysil

Mid Glamorgan
- Glyncarnel
- St Tydfils
- Blackmill
- Bridgend and District
- Cefn Hirgoed

West Glamorgan
- Llwyderw
- Dymma Hall

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all surplus National Health Service property sold since 1979 in excess of £50,000, the price obtained and the date of sale; and if he will list these figures by region and district.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information is given in the following table:

Property	Sale price £	Date of sale
Clwyd Health Authority		
Strathalyn, Rossett	100,000	December 1982
Llangwyfan Hospital Estate	551,197	December 1982
Dolawen, East Parade, Rhyl	84,138	August 1983
Prince Edward War Memorial Hospital	69,419	August 1983
East Dyfed Health Authority		
Cilymaenllwyd Hospital, Llanelli	174,035	August 1985
Gorseland, North Road, Aberystwyth	64,550	September 1985
Gwent Health Authority		
Chepstow and District Hospital	50,000	October 1979
Lydia Beynon Hospital	290,000	September 1980
Land at Llanfrechfa Grange Hospital	69,530	April 1983
Woolmer House, Newport	109,236	February 1986
Gwynedd Health Authority		
C & A General Hospital	951,000	March 1986
Mid Glamorgan Health Authority		
Land at Hensol Hospital	315,233	February 1983
Gwaunfarren Hospital, Merthyr	57,250	May 1983
32 Cathedral Road, Cardiff	221,677	March 1985
Bridgend and District Hospital	262,107	January 1986
Land at Penyfai Hospital	166,261	February 1986
Redbrook House, Caerphilly	187,769	April 1986
Angleton Billa, Glanrhyd, Bridgend	53,043	July 1986
Pembrokeshire Health Authority		
Kensington Hospital	150,000	June 1981
Powys Health Authority		
Land at Brynhyfryd Health Laboratory	74,250	July 1982
South Glamorgan Health Authority		
42 Cathedral Road, Cardiff	62,500	October 1984
West Glamorgan Health Authority		
Llwynderw Annexe	87,168	December 1980
Swansea General Hospital	230,000	November 1984
137 and 138 St. Helens Road, Swansea	122,467	January 1985
Drymma Hall Hospital	187,795	November 1986

NHS Staff

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the total of job losses by category of worker since 1979 in the National Health Service by region and district.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Such information as is held centrally relates to staff-in-post whole-time equivalents and is as set out in the following table:—

National Health Service staff in post in Wales on 30 September (WTE)

	Clwyd	Dyfed including Pembs.	Gwent	Gwynedd	Mid Glam.	Powys	South Glam.	West Glam.	WHCSA	Wales
Medical and Dental[1]										
September 1979	246	216	318	133	343	34	604	288	—	2,181
September 1985	286	264	340	164	384	35	675	317	—	2,465
Percentage variation[1]	+16·3	+22·2	+6·9	+23·3	+11·9	+2·9	+11·7	+10·1	—	+13·0
Nurse and Midwifery[2]										
September 1979	2,991	2,350	3,663	1,710	4,438	963	4,211	2,705	—	23,031

	Clwyd	Dyfed including Pembs.	Gwent	Gwynedd	Mid Glam.	Powys	South Glam.	West Glam.	WHCSA	Wales
September 1986	3,442	3,036	4,082	1,904	4,838	1,035	4,309	3,211	—	25,857
Percentage variation	+15·1	+29·2	+11·4	+11·3	+9·0	+7·5	+2·3	+18·7	—	+12·3
Professional and Technical										
September 1979	377	334	508	210	559	74	1,123	436	—	3,621
September 1986	535	448	684	367	686	117	1,341	590	3	4,771
Percentage variation	+41·9	+34·1	+34·6	+74·8	+22·7	+58·1	+19·4	+35·3	—	+31·8
Works and Maintenance										
September 1979	212	195	303	106	402	92	387	197	163	2,051
September 1986	221	198	300	161	404	91	400	271	166	2,212
Percentage variation	+4·2	+1·5	−1·0	+51·9	+0·5	−1·1	+3·4	+37·6	+1·8	+7·8
Administrative and Clerical[3]										
September 1979	636	603	846	472	995	169	1,410	651	439	6,221
September 1986	779	683	947	560	1,067	171	1,424	798	495	6,924
Percentage variation	+22·5	+13·3	+11·9	+18·6	+7·2	+1·2	+1·0	+22·6	+12·8	+11·3
Ambulance										
September 1979	167	164	230	161	245	69	166	134	—	1,336
September 1986	187	187	256	185	283	114	193	157	—	1,562
Percentage variation	+12·0	+14·0	+11·3	+14·9	+15·5	+65·2	+16·3	+17·2	—	+16·9
Ancillary										
September 1979	1,324	1,239	2 013	796	2,253	421	2,370	1,444	19	11,879
September 1986	1,221	999	1,562	812	1,978	372	1,859	1,395	12	10,210
Percentage variation	−7·8	−19·4	−22·4	+2·0	−12·2	−11·6	−21·6	−3·4	−36·8	−14·1
Total[1 2 3]										
September 1979	5,953	5,101	7,881	3,588	9,235	1,822	10,271	5,855	621	50,320
September 1986	6,671	5,815	8,171	4,153	9,640	1,935	10,201	6,739	676	54,001
Percentage variation	+12·1	+14·0	+3·7	+15·7	+4·4	+6·2	−0·7	+15·1	+8·9	+7·3

[1] Medical and dental figures for September 1986 are not yet available
[2] Adjusted to allow for reduction in nurses' working hours in 1980
[3] Includes FPC staff

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many people, or whole-time equivalents, are directly employed by the National Health Service in Wales in each district health authority area in each of the following categories *(a)* medical and dental, *(b)* nursing and midwifery, *(c)* professional and technical, *(d)* works professional, *(e)* maintenance, *(f)* administrative and clerical, *(g)* ambulance and *(h)* ancillary; and what are the corresponding figures for each year since 1977.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The required information is given in the following table:

NHS Staff in Wales by area and category: Whole-time equivalents as at 30 September

	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	[1]1986
Clwyd:										
Medical and Dental	244	245	246	258	268	273	283	277	286	..
Nursing and Midwifery[2]	2,840	2,966	2,991	3,231	3,427	3,503	3,498	3,528	3,618	3,671
Professional and Technical	338	357	377	401	416	439	441	467	504	535
Works (Prof)	203	212	25	27	29	30	27	31	32	34
Maintenance			187	192	199	192	188	187	182	187
Administrative and Clerical	606	633	636	664	705	708	651	704	740	779
Ambulance	164	164	167	166	176	177	180	183	181	187
Ancillary	1,246	1,289	1,324	1,412	1,383	1,383	1,350	1,289	1,261	1,221
East Dyfed[3]*:*										
Medical and Dental	186	199	216	222	225	173	179	186	191	..
Nursing and Midwifery[2]	2,253	2,252	2,350	2,478	2,507	1,966	2,042	2,106	2,081	2,170
Professional and Technical	284	313	334	330	343	265	281	304	307	333
Works (Prof)	169	199	24	28	28	24	22	23	22	23
Maintenance			171	173	182	141	140	138	137	136
Administrative and Clerical	575	600	603	601	603	470	489	501	501	517
Ambulance	158	154	164	167	166	127	124	130	143	141
Ancillary	1,140	1,222	1,239	1,200	1,176	917	919	849	813	795

	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Gwent:										
Medical and Dental	287	298	318	321	330	338	342	340	340	..
Nursing and Midwifery[2]	3,460	3,550	3,663	3,964	4,061	4,141	4,221	4,312	4,351	4,354
Professional and Technical	475	490	508	529	550	571	619	649	673	684
Works (Prof)	289	303	40	43	44	45	45	46	45	50
Maintenance			263	264	265	269	267	265	258	250
Administrative and Clerical	823	812	846	863	872	887	900	936	941	947
Ambulance	233	233	230	236	239	249	245	242	243	256
Ancillary	1,913	1,948	2,013	2,072	2,019	1,978	1,927	1,790	1,703	1,562
Gwynedd:										
Medical and Dental	133	123	133	139	147	152	151	164	164	..
Nursing and Midwifery[2]	1,632	1,594	1,710	1,809	1,918	1,890	1,862	1,946	2,092	2,031
Professional and Technical	174	191	210	227	247	270	278	335	350	367
Works (Prof)	93	101	17	19	30	29	30	32	30	30
Maintenance			89	91	111	105	115	131	131	131
Administrative and Clerical	395	415	472	443	450	465	469	516	540	560
Ambulance	136	162	161	161	182	182	186	191	191	185
Ancillary	759	781	796	807	795	794	775	823	835	812
Mid Glamorgan:										
Medical and Dental	299	324	343	368	373	379	379	392	384	..
Nursing and Midwifery[2]	4,279	4,347	4,438	4,604	4,834	4,918	4,904	5,032	5,127	5,160
Professional and Technical	476	522	559	573	574	577	595	644	678	686
Works (Prof)	353	377	52	56	55	55	55	55	56	55
Maintenance			350	341	346	351	336	337	351	349
Administrative and Clerical	918	972	995	999	1,007	1,012	1,014	1,035	1,047	1,067
Ambulance	233	241	245	245	247	240	248	251	250	283
Ancillary	2,041	2,176	2,253	2,262	2,255	2,272	2,241	2,147	2,088	1,978
Powys:										
Medical and Dental	33	34	34	35	34	33	35	34	35	..
Nursing and Midwifery[2]	799	888	963	1,041	1,014	1,092	1,149	1,121	1,127	1,104
Professional and Technical	53	59	74	79	81	96	98	111	109	117
Works (Prof)	82	88	15	12	12	12	13	13	13	13
Maintenance			77	78	79	80	79	77	80	78
Administrative and Clerical	154	160	169	174	172	169	178	172	171	171
Ambulance	61	67	69	73	76	90	90	89	90	114
Ancillary	411	424	421	417	412	410	418	395	373	372
South Glamorgan										
Medical and Dental	580	588	604	599	634	644	660	653	675	..
Nursing and Midwifery[2]	4,053	4,161	4,211	4,387	4,523	4,607	4,490	4,565	4,640	4,596
Professional and Technical	1,050	1,091	1,123	1,142	1,166	1,210	1,244	1,321	1,345	1,341
Works (Prof)	375	389	44	45	45	46	45	50	51	48
Maintenance			343	353	347	349	343	346	349	352
Administrative and Clerical	1,354	1,391	1,410	1,405	1,429	1,447	1,469	1,443	1,474	1,424
Ambulance	166	172	166	163	168	173	172	184	180	193
Ancillary	2,444	2,468	2,370	2,323	2,285	2,266	2,224	2,076	2,035	1,859
West Glamorgan:										
Medical and Dental	267	283	288	292	297	301	304	308	317	..
Nursing and Midwifery[2]	2,546	2,628	2,705	2,852	3,078	3,161	3,200	3,198	3,317	3,425
Professional and Technical	399	428	436	456	472	499	505	527	569	590
Works (Prof)	184	190	32	32	32	33	34	32	39	43
Maintenance			165	156	154	168	162	180	194	228
Administrative and Clerical	643	654	651	670	681	689	702	710	760	798
Ambulance	135	137	134	136	142	136	137	144	148	157
Ancillary	1,436	1,427	1,444	1,477	1,496	1,486	1,444	1,351	1,432	1,395
Pembrokeshire:										
Medical and Dental	—	—	—	—	—	60	71	66	73	..
Nursing and Midwifery[2]	—	—	—	—	—	631	615	640	661	676
Professional and Technical	—	—	—	—	—	91	100	108	114	115

	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	[1]1986
Works (Prof)	—	—	—	—	—	3	3	4	4	4
Maintenance	—	—	—	—	—	45	44	37	37	35
Administrative and Clerical	—	—	—	—	—	124	145	156	166	166
Ambulance	—	—	—	—	—	42	46	46	46	46
Ancillary	—	—	—	—	—	259	243	232	205	204

[1] Figures for medical and dental staff are not yet available for 1986.
[2] No adjustment has been made to take account of the change in nurses and midwives working week in 1980.
[3] Including figures for Pembrokeshire for 1977-1981, when a single health authority served the whole of Dyfed.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list district by district the number of beds in 1979 and for the latest available year indicating the percentage increase or decrease.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Information on the average daily number of available beds is given in the following table:

	1979	1985	Percentage change
Clwyd	3,052·5	2,811·6	−7·9
Dyfed[1]	2,564·6	2,237·4	−12·8
Gwent	3,882·6	3,619·4	−6·8
Gwynedd	1,569·5	1,610·5	+2·6
Mid Glamorgan	4,943·4	4,644·2	−6·1
Powys	1,265·5	1,057·3	−16·5
South Glamorgan	3,583·6	3,546·4	−1·0
West Glamorgan	2,594·3	2,603·2	+0·3
Wales	23,456·1	22,130·1	−5·7

[1] Including beds available in Pembrokeshire, which did not exist as a separate health authority in 1979.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many National Health Service hospital beds per 1,000 of the population there are in *(a)* Wales and *(b)* each health authority area in Wales; and what are the corresponding figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The required information is given in the following table:

Average daily number of available beds per 1,000 population

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Clwyd	7·9	7·8	7·6	7·4	7·5	7·3	7·1
East Dyfed[1]	7·9	7·8	7·4	8·7	8·2	8·0	7·8
Pembrokeshire	n/a	n/a	n/a	4·4	4·4	4·3	4·3
Gwent	8·9	9·0	8·7	8·4	8·4	8·4	8·2
Gwynedd	6·9	6·9	6·7	6·6	6·5	6·6	6·9
Mid Glamorgan	9·2	9·0	8·9	8·8	8·8	8·9	8·7
Powys	11·8	11·0	10·5	10·3	9·8	9·8	9·5
South Glamorgan	9·2	9·0	9·0	9·0	9·1	9·0	9·0
West Glamorgan	7·1	7·1	7·0	7·1	7·1	7·0	7·1
Wales	8·5	8·4	8·2	8·1	8·0	7·9	7·9

[1] Including figures for Pembrokeshire for 1979-81, when a single health authority served the whole of Dyfed.

Long-Stay Mental Patients

Mr. Robin Cook asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the number of long-stay patients currently in residence in each mental hospital.

Mr. Mark Robinson: A census of the residents of psychiatric hospitals and units is undertaken every other year. The latest available information relates to 5 April 1985, and is give in the following table:

	Number of patients resident 12 months or more
Mental Illness Hospital/Unit	
North Wales, Denbigh	251
Gwynfa Residential Clinic	—
Maelor General	—
Bronglais	—
West Wales General	2
St. David's Carmarthen	307
Bryntirion	—
Pen-y-Fal	335
St. Woolo's	21
St. Cadoc's	148
Ysbyty Gwynedd	—
Morganwg-Glanrhyd/Penyfai	209
Morganwg-Parc	461
East Glamorgan General	1
Tyntyla	11
Mid Wales, Talgarth	197
University Hospital	—
Royal Hamadryad	17
Whitchurch	242
Sully	17
Lansdowne	26
Cefn Coed	140
Garngoch	—
Tonna	—
Broughton	29
Coed Du Hall	42
West Wales General	15

	Number of patients resident 12 months or more
Allt-y-Mynydd	33
County, Griffithstown	28
Llanfrechfa Grange	344
Bryn-y-Neuadd	224
Llwyn View	30
Garth Angharad	2
Cefn Hirgoed	9
Hensol	399
Ystrad Mynach	17
South Pembrokeshire	19
Bronllys	57
Brynhyfryd	65
Llys Maldwyn	58
Ely	360
Llwyneryr	32
Gorseinon	21
Drymma Hall	33

Legislation

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many separate items of subordinate legislation affecting Wales were created in each parliamentary Session since 1979; of these, how many were made by his Department, and how many were made jointly with other Departments; and if he will list the items, indicating those which were debated on the Floor of the House or in Committee.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Handicapped Children

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* the information available to him on the numbers of children under the age of 16 years who are registered as handicapped in each local authority in Wales.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The required information is not available centrally.

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* the information available to him on the numbers of children with statements under the Education Act 1981 in each local education authority in Wales; and what is his estimate in each case of the percentage of these children who are persons to whom section 29 of the National Assistance Act 1948 applies.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The number of children with statements is as follows:—

Children with Statements as at January 1986

Local Education Authority	Number
Clwyd	1,227
Dyfed	408
Gwent	780
Gwynedd	692
Mid Glamorgan	3,401
Powys	180
South Glamorgan	1,200
West Glamorgan	1,858
WALES	9,746

It is not possible to estimate the percentage of these children who are persons to whom section 29 of the National Assistance Act 1948 applies.

Doctors

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is *(a)* the number of general practitioners and *(b)* the number of general practitioners per 1,000 of the population in each Welsh health authority area; and what are the corresponding figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Information relating to unrestricted principal general practitioners at 1 October each year is given in the following table:—

	Family Practitioner Area							
	Clwyd	Dyfed	Gwent	Gwynedd	Mid Glamorgan	Powys	South Glamorgan	West Glamorgan
1979								
Number	164	166	198	130	240	69	203	169
Number per 1,000 population	0·4	0·5	0·5	0·6	0·4	0·6	0·5	0·5
1980								
Number	172	169	201	133	253	69	203	172
Number per 1,000 population	0·4	0·5	0·5	0·6	0·5	0·6	0·5	0·5
1981								
Number	179	172	206	132	260	69	203	176
Number per 1,000 population	0·5	0·5	0·5	0·6	0·5	0·6	0·5	0·5
1982								
Number	191	180	212	134	264	67	208	175
Number per 1,000 population	0·5	0·5	0·5	0·6	0·5	0·6	0·5	0·5
1983								
Number	194	182	222	137	271	70	211	178
Number per 1,000 population	0·5	0·5	0·5	0·6	0·5	0·6	0·5	0·5
1984								
Number	197	188	226	139	274	72	216	180
Number per 1,000 population	0·5	0·6	0·5	0·6	0·5	0·7	0·5	0·5

	Family Practitioner Area							
	Clwyd	*Dyfed*	*Gwent*	*Gwynedd*	*Mid Glamorgan*	*Powys*	*South Glamorgan*	*West Glamorgan*
1985								
Number	200	194	237	139	276	72	219	186
Number per 1,000 population	0·5	0·6	0·5	0·6	0·5	0·6	0·6	0·5
1986								
Number[1]	210	196	236	139	280	76	222	188
Number per 1,000[2] population	0·5	0·6	0·5	0·6	0·5	0·7	0·6	0·5

[1] Figures for 1986 are provisional.
[2] Based on 1985 population estimates.

Dentists

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many dental practitioners there are in each Welsh health authority area; and what are the corresponding figures for each year since 1979;

(2) how many dental practitioners there are per 1,000 of the population in each Welsh health authority area; and what are the corresponding figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Information relating to principal dental practitioners as at 30 September, each year, is given in the following table:

Family Practitioner Area	*Clwyd*	*Dyfed*	*Gwent*	*Gwynedd*	*Mid Glamorgan*	*Powys*	*South Glamorgan*	*West Glamorgan*
1979								
Number	70	69	92	52	96	19	103	104
Number per 1,000 population	0·18	0·21	0·21	0·23	0·18	0·18	0·26	0·28
1980								
Number	71	70	88	55	98	21	107	105
Number per 1,000 population	0·18	0·21	0·20	0·24	0·18	0·20	0·27	0·29
1981								
Number	70	69	96	53	99	25	112	107
Number per 1,000 population	0·18	0·21	0·22	0·23	0·18	0·23	0·29	0·29
1982								
Number	77	73	101	57	101	29	117	115
Number per 1,000 population	0·20	0·22	0·23	0·25	0·19	0·26	0·30	0·31
1983								
Number	79	80	106	59	105	28	120	117
Number per 1,000 population	0·20	0·24	0·24	0·25	0·20	0·25	0·31	0·32
1984								
Number	84	77	107	61	117	25	120	114
Number per 1,000 population	0·21	0·23	0·24	0·26	0·22	0·23	0·30	0·31
1985								
Number	87	80	109	63	118	30	124	121
Number per 1,000 population	0·22	0·24	0·25	0·27	0·22	0·27	0·31	0·33
1986								
Number	87	83	107	63	120	32	121	118
Number per 1,000[1] population	0·22	0·25	0·24	0·27	0·22	0·29	0·31	0·32

[1] Based on 1985 population estimates.

Dentistry (Cost)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what was the average cost of a course of dental treatment in each of the Welsh health authority areas in the last year for which figures are available; and what are the corresponding figures for each year since 1979 at current and outturn prices.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The required information is given in the following table:—

Average cost[1] of a course of dental treatment (£)

Family Practitioner Committee	1979 Outturn prices	1979 1985[2] prices	1980 Outturn prices	1980 1985[2] prices	1981 Outturn prices	1981 1985[2] prices
Clwyd	9·91	16·51	12·24	17·01	13·96	17·42
Dyfed	10·45	17·41	12·54	17·43	14·12	17·61
Gwent	11·32	18·86	13·88	19·29	15·75	19·65
Gwynedd	10·48	17·46	12·44	17·29	13·80	17·22
Mid Glamorgan	11·49	19·14	14·09	19·59	15·53	19·37
Powys	10·55	17·58	14·26	19·82	17·65	22·02
South Glamorgan	11·95	19·91	14·91	20·72	17·53	21·87
West Glamorgan	10·85	18·08	13·48	18·74	15·37	19·17

Family Practitioner Committee	1982 Outturn prices	1982 1985[2] prices	1983 Outturn prices	1983 1985[2] prices	1984 Outturn prices	1984 1985[2] prices	1985 Outturn prices
Clwyd	14·65	16·97	15·98	17·61	17·24	18·25	17·57
Dyfed	15·48	17·93	16·48	18·16	17·05	18·05	17·46
Gwent	17·51	20·28	18·40	20·28	19·13	20·25	19·76
Gwynedd	14·78	17·12	15·76	17·37	16·68	17·66	17·17
Mid Glamorgan	16·77	19·42	18·28	20·15	20·02	21·19	20·33
Powys	18·56	21·50	19·21	21·17	19·95	21·12	21·55
South Glamorgan	18·62	21·57	19·32	21·29	20·52	21·72	21·49
West Glamorgan	16·62	19·25	17·73	19·54	18·37	19·45	18·51

[1] Including cost to NHS and cost to patient.
[2] Based on GDP expenditure deflator.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many courses of dental treatment under the National Health Service were undertaken in each Welsh health authority area per 1,000 of the population in the last year for which figures are available; and what are the corresponding figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The required information is given in the following table:

Courses of dental treatment per 1,000 population

Family Practitioner Committee	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Clwyd	471·3	504·1	485·2	525·9	523·0	542·3	552·5
Dyfed	472·2	497·9	491·6	528·6	549·4	574·5	578·9
Gwent	466·9	503·5	502·7	527·7	543·0	565·5	565·8
Gwynedd	546·7	567·9	544·7	582·0	594·7	607·0	606·9
Mid Glamorgan	414·9	440·0	442·2	446·3	454·8	473·4	488·2
Powys	378·0	415·2	436·0	482·2	513·7	520·1	529·8
South Glamorgan	601·2	631·4	637·9	655·2	667·6	687·1	697·2
West Glamorgan	579·5	613·3	613·9	657·1	685·6	710·1	729·9

Hospital Patients

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average length of stay in National Health Service hospitals in each health authority area in Wales; and what are the corresponding figures for 1979.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The required information is given in the following table:

Health Authority	Average length of stay (days) 1979	1985
Clwyd	17·1	13·8
East Dyfed	[1]18·6	17·1
Gwent	21·6	16·8
Gwynedd	16·2	13·5
Mid Glamorgan	22·5	16·9
Powys	65·5	46·7
South Glamorgan	15·9	12·6
West Glamorgan	15·0	11·5
Pembrokeshire	—	10·5

[1] Including Pembrokeshire which did not exist as a separate health authority in 1979.

Health Care

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what preparation of public expenditure in Wales has been devoted to health care in each year since 1979.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Expenditure on health services as a percentage of the total expenditure is given in the following table:

	Percentage
1979-80	26·3
1980-81	28·5
1981-82	30·8
1982-83	31·4
1983-84	30·6
1984-85	32·7
1985-86	33·1
1986-87	32·7

NHS Expenditure

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the expenditure per head of the population on the National Health Service in Wales in each year since 1979 at current and outturn prices.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information is set out in the following table:

	Adjusted to 1986-87 prices by GDP deflator £	*Cash* £
1979-80	165·79	276·22
1980-81	212·76	298·81
1981-82	242·72	310·40
1982-83	267·58	319·07
1983-84	283·92	324·10
1984-85	307·07	335·99
1985-86	327·44	337·26

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the planned change of resource input into the National Health Service in Wales in real terms between 1986-87 and 1987-88, 1988-89 and 1989-90 both as a whole and in terms of *(a)* hospital services, *(b)* general practitioner services, *(c)* general dental services, *(d)* ophthalmic services and *(e)* pharmaceutical services.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The available information is as follows:

Percentage increase between 1986-87 and 1987-88 in real terms[1]

	Percentage
National Health Service	4·3
Hospital and Community Health Services	4·0
General Practitioner Services	5·2
General Dental Services	4·4
Ophthalmic Services	4·6
Pharmaceutical Services	4·9

[1] The 1987-88 provisions, which are subject to parliamentary approval, have been revalued to 1986-87 prices using the GDP deflator.

No decisions have yet been taken about the distribution of resources for the years beyond 1987-88.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give figures for expenditure on the NHS in each health authority area in Wales in current and outturn prices for each year since 1979, showing the amount allocated to *(a)* hospital care, *(b)* general practitioner care and *(c)* other forms of expenditure.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I will write to the hon. Gentleman.

Spectacles

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many pairs of glasses were prescribed per 1,000 of the population in each Welsh health authority area in Wales during the last year for which figures are available; and what are the corresponding figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The required information is given in the following table:

Persons supplied with lenses per 1,000 population

Family practitioner committee	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*[1]
Clwyd	77·6	81·5	79·6	81·2	82·7	81·5	58·5
Dyfed	96·2	95·5	94·2	95·8	98·6	103·0	66·0
Gwent	103·0	109·2	108·8	110·7	107·8	117·1	77·3
Gwynedd	98·7	99·0	97·9	94·9	95·9	95·1	59·8
Mid Glamorgan	115·7	114·0	114·2	116·3	113·9	120·0	80·4
Powys	76·8	71·9	68·5	75·5	77·4	83·0	52·8
South Glamorgan	118·7	113·3	116·3	114·3	123·4	115·8	72·9
West Glamorgan	111·0	109·0	110·1	114·5	108·1	123·4	80·7

[1] Due to legislative changes in April 1985 subsidised NHS lenses were no longer available to adults in higher income groups.

Prescriptions

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many prescription items per person were prescribed in each Welsh health authority area during the last year for which figures are available; and what are the corresponding figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The number of prescriptions issued per person on NHS prescribing and dispensing lists is given in the following table:

Family practitioner committee	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Clwyd	8·4	8·3	8·1	8·5	8·5	8·6	8·6
Dyfed	8·2	8·1	8·1	8·2	8·3	8·3	8·2
Gwent	8·6	8·8	8·7	8·9	9·2	9·4	9·3
Gwynedd	9·6	9·4	9·2	9·3	9·3	9·3	9·1
Mid Glamorgan	9·4	9·5	9·5	9·7	10·1	10·4	10·2
Powys	7·9	7·8	7·6	7·8	7·8	7·9	7·7
South Glamorgan	7·7	7·8	7·6	7·7	8·0	8·0	7·9
West Glamorgan	9·5	9·3	9·3	9·5	9·7	9·8	9·7

Doctors

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many general practitioner consultations there were per person in each of the Welsh health authority areas during the last year for which figures are available; and what are the corresponding figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Mark Robinson: This information is not available centrally.

Patient Costs

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what was the average cost of treatment for each patient in each Welsh health authority area, and in Wales in general, in the last full year for which figures are available; and what are the corresponding figures for each year since 1979 at current and outturn prices;

(2) what has been the percentage change in the average cost of a course of hospital treatment under the National Health Service in Wales since 1979.

Mr. Mark Robinson: To average patient costs in the form requested does not allow for meaningful comparisons to be made. I would, however, refer the hon. Gentleman to the publications "Welsh Costing Returns" and "Key Statistical Indicators for NHS Management in Wales", copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

Drugs

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the expenditure on drugs by each health authority in Wales in *(a)* the hospital service, *(b)* the general practitioner service and *(c)* other services, both at current and outturn prices since 1979.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information is not available in the form requested. The following tables show *(a)* expenditure by health authorities on drugs for all purposes including hospital services and community health services and *(b)* payments made by family practitioner committees to pharmacists, general medical practitioners and general dental practitioners for the supply and dispensing of drugs.

b. Expenditure on the supply and dispensing of drugs by pharmacists, general medical practitioners and general dental practitioners. Services provided by Family Practitioner Committees

(i) Outturn prices (£000)

	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86
Clwyd	8,210	9,976	11,107	13,478	14,243	15,615	16,556
Dyfed	7,047	8,434	9,576	10,911	11,753	12,795	13,299
Gwent	9,978	12,095	13,470	15,398	16,843	18,236	18,403
Gwynedd	5,377	6,501	7,231	8,225	8,985	9,680	10,106
Mid Glamorgan	12,658	15,107	16,959	20,329	22,052	23,728	24,792
Powys	2,247	2,686	3,001	3,476	3,723	4,036	4,136
South Glamorgan	7,436	9,688	10,873	12,553	13,810	14,904	15,765
West Glamorgan	8,631	10,239	11,777	13,115	14,222	15,264	15,939
Wales	61,584	74,726	83,994	97,485	105,631	114,258	118,996

(ii) Adjusted to 1985-86 prices by GDP deflator (£000)

	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86
Clwyd	13,253	13,574	13,756	15,567	15,744	16,552	16,556
Dyfed	11,375	11,476	11,860	12,602	12,992	13,563	13,299
Gwent	16,106	16,458	16,683	17,784	18,618	19,330	18,403
Gwynedd	8,680	8,846	8,955	9,500	9,932	10,261	10,106
Mid Glamorgan	20,433	20,556	21,004	23,480	24,376	25,151	24,792
Powys	3,627	3,655	3,717	4,015	4,116	4,278	4,136
South Glamorgan	12,003	13,183	13,466	14,499	15,266	15,798	15,765
West Glamorgan	13,932	13,932	14,586	15,148	15,721	16,180	15,939
Wales	99,409	101,680	104,027	112,595	116,765	121,113	118,996

Source: The annual accounts of health authorities and family practitioner committees.

Notes:

1. Figures for 1985-86 are, at this stage, provisional.
2. Prior to 1982-83 the Dyfed area health authority covered the whole county.
3. From 1982-83 to 1984-85 the East Dyfed health authority was responsible for the Dyfed Family Practitioner Committee which covered the whole county.
4. From 1 April 1985 the responsibility for family practitioner services was transferred from health authorities to independent family practitioner committees.

Expenditure on Drugs Services provided by Health Authorities
(i) Outturn prices (£000)

	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86
Clwyd	993	1,273	1,536	1,712	1,828	1,783	1,788
East Dyfed	735	875	1,000	864	970	1,012	1,016
Pembrokeshire	—	—	—	358	341	406	456
Gwent	1,394	1,735	2,248	2,386	2,872	2,743	2,750
Gwynedd	474	587	675	819	942	1,026	1,086

	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86
Mid Glamorgan	1,409	1,499	1,788	2,117	2,373	2,532	2,899
Powys	175	149	184	221	241	249	240
South Glamorgan	2,661	3,062	3,644	4,148	4,427	4,647	5,588
West Glamorgan	865	1,085	1,317	1,488	1,697	1,710	1,935
Wales	8,706	10,265	12,392	14,113	15,691	16,108	17,758

(ii) Adjusted to 1985-86 prices by GDP deflator (£000)

	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86
Clwyd	1,603	1,732	1,902	1,977	2,021	1,890	1,788
East Dyfed	1,187	1,191	1,239	998	1,072	1,073	1,016
Pembrokeshire	—	—	—	414	377	430	456
Gwent	2,250	2,361	2,784	2,756	3,175	2,907	2,750
Gwynedd	765	799	836	946	1,041	1,087	1,086
Mid Glamorgan	2,274	2,040	2,214	2,445	2,623	2,684	2,899
Powys	283	203	228	255	266	264	240
South Glamorgan	4,295	4,166	4,513	4,791	4,894	4,926	5,588
West Glamorgan	1,396	1,476	1,631	1,719	1,976	1,813	1,935
Wales	14,053	13,968	15,347	16,301	17,345	17,074	17,758

Hospital Budget

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the increase, in percentage terms, of the total hospital budget of the National Health Service in Wales since 1979.

Mr. Mark Robinson: There is no centrally prescribed budget for hospital services in Wales, but the expenditure incurred by Welsh health authorities on such services between 1979-80 and 1985-86 increased by 89·1 per cent. at outturn prices.

DEFENCE

Precision Guided Munition System

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the United Kingdom's participation in plans for a precision guided munition system.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: United Kingdom participation in the 155 mm autonomous precision guided munition project is currently under consideration.

Phoenix Project

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects the Phoenix project to come into service.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Phoenix is expected to enter service at the end of the decade.

Air Defence Systems

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about future air defence systems and expected in service dates.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As I made clear in the RAF debate on 22 January at columns 1050-51, the RAF's air defence capability will greatly increase in three key areas during the next few years. One hundred and sixty-two of the air defence variant of the Tornado have been ordered, of which 39 have been delivered so far. Installation of the improved UKADGE system is continuing well and will be gradually brought into operation during the next few years. Six new transportable radars have now been delivered and preparation of new command and control systems is under way. We are buying the Boeing E-3A aircraft to provide the RAF with a modern and effective airborne early warning capability from the early 1990s.

DROPS

Sir Ian Gilmour asked the Secretary of State for Defence if, when the Multilift chainlift system procured by his Department in 1975 was trialled at the central ordnance depot at COD Bicester, it was invariably able to pick up its load on the parade ground there; and if he will make a statement

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Department has no record of how the Multilift equipment performed when it was demonstrated at a materials handling exhibition held at COD Bicester in 1975.

Sir Ian Gilmour asked the Secretary of State for Defence what specific trials objectives were set for the Multilift chainlift system procured in 1975; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The purpose of trials was to try out the chainlift system as part of the Army Department's examination of demountable body systems for the movement of bulk loads.

Sir Ian Gilmour asked the Secretary of State for Defence if his Department procured any other DROPS equipment from Multilift prior to the procurement of the Multilift chainlift equipment in 1975; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No bulk load lifting equipment was purchased from Multilift by the Army Department before 1975.

Sir Ian Gilmour asked the Secretary of State for Defence what was the relationship between the Multilift chainlift trials in 1975 and the study undertaken by the fighting vehicles research and development establishment in 1969; what subsequent studies, concept papers or other documents were produced on this subject; on what dates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The trials of the Multilift chainlift equipment in 1975 were carried out as part of the Army Department's study of the possible military application of demountable body systems for the movement of bulkloads which had been recommended by the fighting vehicles research and development establishment's study report in 1969. The Department's study of logistics requirements, concepts of operating and load handling methods continued during the subsequent period, leading to the emergence of the DROPS concept in 1979-80 and the formulation of the general staff target in 1982. Papers were produced for the relevant departmental committees during that period as and when decisions were required.

Sir Ian Gilmour asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the Multilift chainlift system purchased for trials in 1975 was expected to be capable of operating in rough terrain; whether Multilift represented the equipment as having such rough terrain capability; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

Sir Ian Gilmour asked the Secretary of State for Defence what was the purpose for which Multilift trials equipment was purchased in 1975; if the handling requirement was solely to pick up loads on hard and level ground; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The equipment was purchased to enable the Army Department to try out the chainlift system as part of its examination of demountable body systems for the movement of bulk loads. Its use for picking up loads on other than hard and level ground was not then envisaged.

Sir Ian Gilmour asked the Secretary of State for Defence what follow up there was to the fighting vehicles research and development establishment study in 1969 which initiated the DROPS concept; how long the gaps in development were; what were the reasons for such gaps; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The study by the fighting vehicles research and development establishment in 1969 did not initiate the DROPS concept as such. It recommended further study of the possible military application of demountable body systems for the movement of bulk loads. This further study, involving the consideration of logistics requirements, concepts of operating and load handling methods, was a continuing process during the 1970s leading to the emergence of the DROPS concept in 1979-80 and the formulation of the general staff target in 1982.

Sir Ian Gilmour asked the Secretary of State for Defence for which of the situations in which the Army would need to use a rough terrain demountable body system in the field the Multilift chainlift system trialled in 1975 was suitable and for which it was not suitable; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Multilift chainlift system tried out in 1975 would have been suitable for handling loads on level and firm ground in the field, but not on rough terrain. However, at that stage the use of such a system on rough terrain was not envisaged.

Sir Ian Gilmour asked the Secretary of State for Defence what lessons were learned from the trials of the Multilift chainlift system in 1975; how these lessons were reflected in the choice of the next generation of trials and trials equipment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The trials provided practical experience of the chainlift method of lifting bulk loads and thereby contributed to the development of the Army Department's thinking on the use of demountable body systems. The purpose of the next series of trials was to provide practical experience of the hooklift method.

Sir Ian Gilmour asked the Secretary of State for Defence what were the lessons learned from the 1975 trials of a Multilift chainlift system in relation to the suitability of such a system for DROPS use; what DROPS concept papers were produced as a result of those trials; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The trials provided practical experience of the chainlift method of lifting bulk loads and thereby contributed to the development of the Army Department's thinking on the use of demountable body systems. No DROPS concept papers were produced as a result of those trials.

Sir Ian Gilmour asked the Secretary of State for Defence how long precisely the trials of the 1975 Multilift chainlift equipment lasted; what were the dates and main conclusions of any trials reports produced; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Information on the precise duration of the trials is not now available, but they are thought to have lasted about seven months. No report was produced specifically on the trials of that equipment.

Sir Ian Gilmour asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will state the cost of the 1975 DROPS trials including the cost of the Multilift chainlift equipment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Information on the cost of the trials of the chainlift equipment purchased from Multilift in 1975 is not available. It would be contrary to normal practice to disclose the cost of the equipment.

Sir Ian Gilmour asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will state the total cost of the 1984-85 DROPS trials, including the cost of procuring the equipment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The total procurement costs of the trials equipment was some £4·6 million: intramural costs of the field and detailed engineering trials undertaken in BAOR and RARDE Chertsey respectively were part of the total activity costs of the establishments concerned.

Sir Ian Gilmour asked the Secretary of State for Defence by what administrative or management process his Department's DROPS programme was funded, authorised and carried out between the date identified as the start of the programme in 1969 and the date given for the first formal tasking in 1982; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The DROPS procurement programme started formally in 1982 with the establishment of the staff requirement. The exploratory and conceptual work undertaken by the Army's logistic and scientific staffs prior to this date was funded in the normal way from resources available to them for these purposes generally.

Cash Limits

Mrs. McCurley asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he proposes to make any changes to current defence cash limits for 1986-87.

Mr. Younger: Yes. The following changes are being made, subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary spring supplementary estimate.

£000s

Class 1	Current cash limit	Increase/ decrease	Revised cash limit
I. 1	7,082,974	[1] −6,009	7,076,965
I. 4	1,473,831	[2] +15,000	1,488,831
I. 5	430,345	[3] −15,000	415,345

[1] Reduced provision.
[2] Transferred from I. 5.
[3] Transferred from I. 4.

The decrease in provision mainly reflects savings in Falklands costs. Other changes allow for transfers within the Ministry of Defence cash limit block to reflect the expected pattern of expenditure and for a number of small inter-departmental transfers. The net effect of all these changes is a reduction in public expenditure of £7 million.

"Keeping the Peace"

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Defence how much it cost his Department to produce the film "Keeping the Peace"; where and to whom it will be shown; if he will place a transcript in the Library; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: The production costs of the new public information film "Keeping the Peace" were approximately £130,000. In addition, some £51,000 will be spent on marketing and distribution. The film is designed to meet the ever-increasing needs of interested groups, including schools, for information on defence. It is available to anyone who wishes to borrow it. I have placed a copy of the transcript in the Library.

Defence Projects

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the answer of 4 February about notification of defence projects, if the National Audit Office was informed before 7 October 1986 of each defence project since 1983 which would have been included in the major project statement to the Public Accounts Committee but for consideration of national security where *(a)* the project definition exceeded £10 million or *(b)* the project cost has exceeded £250 million.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Yes.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is his practice about advising the Comptroller and Auditor General as to whether details of projects should be given to the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee where his Department has informed the National Audit Office of defence projects which would have been included in the major project statement to the Public Accounts Committee but for considerations of national security.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not for my right hon. Friend to advise the Comptroller and Auditor General, who has complete discretion in the discharge of his functions.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the answer of 4 February, if he is able, without disproportionate effort, to give the number of projects whose expenditure falls within each band of £50 million, from £100 million to £250 million and in respect of which details have not been published on grounds of national security; and if he will name the projects where possible.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No. Details of projects, particularly those at the early stages of development, quite often constitute classified information and may not therefore be published, although this may change as the project progresses. It is not possible without disproportionate effort to establish the number of projects where details have not been published on grounds of national security.

Boeing AWACS

Mr. Wilkinson asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the final installation and check out of the Boeing E-3A airborne early warning and control system aircraft for entry into service with the Royal Air Force will be conducted in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is for the company to decide where the Boeing E-3A installation and check-out work will be done, but in making that decision they will no doubt give careful consideration to the fact that carrying out the work in the United Kingdom will have advantages not only for the Royal Air Force but also for themselves in meeting their commitment to offset 130 per cent. of the value of the E-3A contract through work in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Wilkinson asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is his latest estimate of the value of work to be awarded to British companies involved in the introduction to service of the Boeing E-3A airborne early warning and control system aircraft.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The ultimate value of this work won by British companies subcontracting to Boeing will not be known for some years. However, my Department will be monitoring the value of the contracts as they are let.

Orbital Slots

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all orbital slots filed by his Department at the International Telecommunications Union.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

PRIME MINISTER

Alcohol

Mr. Colvin asked the Prime Minister what estimate can be made of annual consumer expenditure on alcoholic drink in the United Kingdom broken down by off-licences and on-licences.

The Prime Minister: Consumers' expenditure on alcoholic drink in the United Kingdom in 1985 was estimated to be £4,117 million through "off-licences" and £11,666 million through "on-licences". These estimates are published in the Central Statistical Office blue book, United Kingdom national accounts.

Nurses

Mr. Dobson asked the Prime Minister if she will set out in the *Official Report* details of the pension entitlements of nurses working in the National Health Service and the armed forces, respectively.

The Prime Minister: All nurses working full time in the National Health Service, and those part-timers working more than half time who opt to do so, contribute 6 per cent. of their remuneration for their pensions. These pensions depend on length of service, superannuable earnings and a variety of other factors which can be precisely determined only in relation to individual circumstances. In general, the main benefit is a pension payable on retirement at a minimum age of 55 for women nurses, and 60 for men, although it may be paid earlier following ill health retirement. The pension is generally $\frac{1}{80}$th of final pay for each year of service in the National Health Service, final pay being defined as the best year's pay out of the last three before retirement.

The armed forces' pension scheme is non-contributory. However, the relative value of the scheme benefits is taken into account by the armed forces pay review body in determining recommended rates of pay for the armed forces, and an appropriate deduction made from comparator earnings. That deduction is currently 10 per cent. Under the armed forces' pension scheme, retirement benefits, payable immediately on retirement, are awarded after 16 years service from age 21 for officers and 22 years service from age 18 for other ranks. The annual rate of pension is calculated from a representative rate of pay, for each rank, applicable at the date of retirement. The level of award increases with the number of years served up to a maximum of 34 years for officers and 37 years for other ranks, providing for a full career pension equivalent to half the corresponding rate of pay to be achieved at age 55.

Both the National Health Service superannuation scheme and the armed forces' pension scheme provide for the payment of a lump sum of up to three years' pension on retirement, dependants' pensions to widows and children, and gratuities following death in service.

Mr. Dobson asked the Prime Minister what is the average salary of each grade of nurse, including those without qualifications, in the National Health Service and the armed forces, respectively.

The Prime Minister: The information is as follows:

1. National Health Service—87 per cent. of NHS nursing and midwifery staff (excluding agency staff) are paid on the following salary scales:

Basic Salary Scales as from 1 July 1986

Grades	*Minimum*	*Maximum*
Nursing Sister II	8,070	10,800
Staff Nurse/Senior Enrolled Nurse	6,475	7,750
Enrolled Nurse	5,700	7,020
Nursing Auxiliary/Assistant —aged 18 and over (Unqualified Nurse)	4,265	5,525
Student Nurse	[1]4,325	[2]4,875

[1] First year.
[2] Third year.

Note: The above scales are exclusive of special duty payments, overtime and other allowances and for nurses employed in London, London weighting.

2. Armed Forces—The basic pay rates for military nurses as from 1 July 1986 are:

Rank[1] *(QARNNS)*	*SEN*		*SRN*	
	Daily £	*Annual*[2] *£*	*Daily £*	*Annual*[2] *£*
OR1—Probationer Naval Nurse	13·82	5,044	13·82	5,044
OR2—Naval Nurse (unqualified)	15·03-18·57	5,486-6,778	17·38-20·92	6,344-7,636
OR2—Naval Nurse (qualified)	17·38-20·92	6,344-7,636	19·89-23·43	7,260-8,552
OR4—Senior Naval Nurse	24·44-26·02	8,921-9,497	26·95-28·53	9,837-10,413
OR6—Assistant Head Naval Nurse	28·22-28·78	10,300-10,505	31·00-31·56	11,315-11,519
OR7—Head Naval Nurse	30·38-31·04	11,089-11,330	36·16-36·82	13,198-13,439
OR9—Fleet Chief Naval Nurse	—	—	39·96	14,585

[1] The rates given apply to equivalent ranks in all Nursing Services.
[2] Annual figures are based on daily rates and rounded to nearest pound.

Mr. Dobson asked the Prime Minister what information is available to her as to *(a)* the current nurse-patient ratio and *(b)* the ratio between qualified and unqualified nurses in (i) the National Health Service and (ii) the armed forces.

The Prime Minister: Manpower statistics covering staff working in hospitals (and also, for the National Health Service, in the community services) do not differentiate between types of activities within the hospital. Overall ratios of staff to patients would not take into account factors such as age of patients and types or complexity of treatment given. The information presented in the tables therefore is in terms of staff employed and patients treated; ratios have not been calculated.

NHS Nursing and Midwifery Staff
30 September 1985

	England
Total Nursing and Midwifery Staff[1] (excluding agency staff)	397,000 WTEs
Ratio of qualified nurses to unqualified nursing staff[2]	1·4 to 1

Source: DHSS annual census of NHS non-medical manpower.
[1] Figures are rounded to the nearest one hundred whole-time equivalents.
[2] Ratio calculated on unrounded whole-time equivalent figures.

NHS Hospital Activity—All Specialties
Calendar Year 1985

	England
In-patient discharges and deaths	6,354
Day cases	963

	England
Out-patients	
New	8,682
Total attendances	37,440
Accident and Emergency patients	
New	10,403
Total attendances	13,804

Source: DHSS SH3 hospital activity returns.

Nursing Staff in the Armed Forces
1 April 1985

	United Kingdom and Overseas
Total Nursing Staff[1]	2,900
Ratio of qualified nurses to unqualified nursing staff[2]	1·8 to 1

Source: MOD Defence Estimates.

[1] Figures are rounded to the nearest one hundred. Headcount figures are given, since there are no part-time staff. Comprises trained personnel and persons undertaking on-the-job training and held against established posts.

[2] Ratio calculated on unrounded figures.

Hospital Activity in the Armed Forces
United Kingdom and Overseas
Calendar Year 1985

	Thousands
In-patient cases	117
Out-patient cases	603

Source MOD Defence Estimates.

General Notes to Tables:

The following factors should be borne in mind if comparisons are to be drawn between the information supplied for the NHS and the Armed Forces:

1. Differences in normal working week of nursing staff: 37·5 hours per week in the NHS, but 40 hours per week in the armed forces.
2. Differences in types of patients treated: NHS hospitals treat patients from the acute, geriatric, mental illness, mental handicap and maternity sectors; whereas Service hospitals cover acute and maternity patients.
3. Differences in staffing policies; armed forces hospitals are necessarily staffed in order to meet their war role requirements.

Pay Increases

Mr. Dobson asked the Prime Minister if she will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the average respective pay increases, deflated by the retail price index, for each year since 1979 for *(a)* nurses, *(b)* fire-fighters, *(c)* policemen/policewomen and *(d)* teachers; and if she will give the accumulative increase for each group over that period.

The Prime Minister: The information requested is set out in the table.

Increase in pay rates 1979-86

Pay round year (1 August to 31 July)	Nurses percentage increases		Firemen percentage increases		Police percentage increases		Teachers percentage increases	
	cash	real	cash	real	cash	real	cash	real
1979-80	37·9	18·0	20·0	2·7	13·5	(2·9)	20·95	3·5
1980-81	6·0	(4·4)	18·8	7·1	21·3	9·4	19·7	7·9
1981-82	—	—	10·1	1·3	13·2	4·1	6·0	(2·5)
1982-83	[1]12·3	(0·9)	7·5	3·2	10·3	5·9	4·98	0·7
1983-84	7·5	2·9	7·8	3·2	8·4	3·7	5·1	0·6
1984-85	8·6	1·6	7·2	0·3	5·13	(1·7)	8·5	1·5
1985-86	7·8	5·3	7·2	4·7	7·5	5·0	5·73	3·3
Cumulative	106·6	23·0	109·0	24·5	110·6	25·4	94·2	15·7

Notes:

1. Figures reflect increases in pay rates, not changes in average earnings.
2. Percentage cash increase for each group reflects full year effect of increases agreed within the pay round year (1 August to 31 July).
3. Percentage real increase for each group reflects the percentage cash increase for the pay round year deflated by the increase in the retail price index throughout the pay round year i.e. in the 12 months to July.
4. Figures in brackets indicate real reductions.
5. The figures above exclude pay changes subsequent to 31 July 1986. Police pay rates were increased by 7·5 per cent. with effect from 1 September 1986; firefighters' pay by 7 per cent. from 7 November 1986. The Government has also announced changes in school teachers pay which would increase their pay by 8·2 per cent. from 1 January 1987 and a further 8·2 per cent. from 1 October 1987.

[1] Two-year award paid wholly in 1982-83 pay round year. (Comprising 7·5 per cent. from 1 April 1982 and 4·5 per cent. from 1 April 1983).

Accommodation (Public Servants)

Mr. Dobson asked the Prime Minister how many units of accommodation are provided for *(a)* firefighters, *(b)* policemen-policewomen and *(c)* nurses both in absolute terms and relative to the number of employees in each group; what types of accommodation are provided for each of the three groups; and what is the average annual monthly cost and rent per unit of accommodation provided to each group expressed both in absolute terms and relative to the average monthly salary for each group.

The Prime Minister: The total stock of police quarters in England and Wales at the end of 1986 was 16,573 and the total number of police officers at the end of November 1986 was 121,132, so police accommodation was available for nearly 14 per cent. of officers. Information is not held centrally about the types, or the average monthly cost, of the accommodation provided.

Information is not held centrally about the amount, types and average monthly cost of accommodation provided to firefighters by fire authorities.

Information about the number of nurses provided with accommodation is not collected centrally. However, a study in 1983 suggested that 64,000 or about 14 per cent. of all nurses in England then lived in health authority accommodation. Lodging charges which are set nationally

each year reflect the full economic cost of accommodation and services provided. Student and pupil nurses occupying the simplest type of accommodation receive an automatic abatement of 40 per cent.

Draught-Proofing

Dr. David Clark asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the division of responsibilities between the Department of Health and Social Security, the Department of the Environment and the Department of Energy on Government policy towards the replacement of single payments for draught-proofing.

The Prime Minister: The present system of single payments for draught-proofing is the responsibility of the Department of Health and Social Security. The Department of the Environment and the Department of Energy, as well as other Departments, have related interests in measures to improve energy efficiency in the home. Future arrangements for financial assistance with draught-proofing measures are under consideration within Government at present.

Children's Play

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Prime Minister whether she has established any joint initiatives between the Department of the Environment and *(a)* the Department of Education and Science or *(b)* the Department of Health and Social Security on children's play; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Following consultation between the Departments of Environment, Health and Social Security, Education and Science, the Welsh Office, Scottish Office and Northern Ireland Office, the Government in 1983 supported the establishment of Play Board for the promotion and development of children's play. Since then Play Board has received £700,000 each year from the Department of the Environment, £50,000 each year since 1984 from the Welsh Office, and £33,000 each year since 1985 from Northern Ireland Office, to support its work.

Last year the Department of the Environment, in consultation with other interested Departments, reviewed Play Board's operation. As a result the Government have proposed that Play Board's role and functions should be merged with those of the Sports Council so as to use the mechanism of that major established body, and its expertise, i.e. raising private sector funds, for the more effective promotion and development of children's play. Negotiations between the two bodies concerned to effect the merger are under way.

ENVIRONMENT

Canary Wharf

Mr. Mikardo asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will call in the planning application for the section of the Canary Wharf scheme outside the Isle of Dogs enterprise zone.

Mr. Waldegrave: No. My right hon. Friend issued his decision not to call in the planning application on 26 January.

Town and Country Planning

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to publish his recommendations regarding the Town and Country Planning Use Classes Order.

Mr. Waldegrave: We are considering the responses to the consultation paper which we published in June last year setting out our proposals to modernise the order. We are not yet ready to make any announcement.

Photochemical Oxidants Review Group

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the findings of the photochemical oxidants review group.

Mr. Waldegrave: I expect to publish the first report of the photochemical oxidants review group shortly.

Atmospheric Effects Review Group

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the findings of the atmospheric effects review group.

Mr. Waldegrave: I expect to publish the first report of the atmospheric effects review group shortly.

Acid Rain and Tree Damage

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to ensure funding for the Institute for Terrestrial Ecology's early diagnosis project on acid rain and tree damage in the light of the Ecology Commission's decision to offer only 25 per cent. funding.

Mr. Waldegrave: My officials, along with those from the Natural Environment Research Council, are investigating the decision by the Commission of the European Communities on funding for the second phase of the early diagnosis of forest decline project under the fourth environment action research programme. When the implications of the decision have been fully analysed, the Secretary of State for Education and Science and I will consider what further action may be necessary.

Water Pollution

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received concerning pollution in the north west *(a)* in rivers, *(b)* in canals and *(c)* on beaches.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am aware of pollution problems in the north-west and have received a number of representations. Large reductions in the quality of rivers and canals were reported in the 1985 river quality survey and my Department will be discussing with the north-west water authority measures to bring about improvements. However, through the Mersey basin campaign, the biggest initiative of its kind in western Europe, work is already under way to improve some of the most polluted rivers in the north-west—at a cost of £2·5 billion over 25 years.

In regard to beaches, I announced on 3 February that 362 more waters are to be included within the scope of the bathing water directive. Thirty of these are within the north-west water authority's area. Our aim is for all these waters to meet the directive's standards although inevitably this will take a number of years.

Less Prosperous Regions

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he intends to take to seek to amend the planning process so as to encourage investment in development in the less prosperous regions of Britain.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government has taken a range of measures to improve the efficiency of the planning system and to facilitate development in areas where it is needed. These are summarised in the White Paper "Building Businesses . . . not Barriers" (Cmnd 9794) published in May 1986. Action since then includes legislation to set up simplified planning zones, and the decision to set up four new urban development corporations, in Greater Manchester, in the black country, on Teeside and in Tyne and Wear. In the 1987-88 allocations of derelict land grant 92 per cent. is for expenditure in the northern and midland regions.

Animal Snares

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy towards a total ban on animal snares; what research has been carried into humane alternatives to snares as a method of pest control; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government have no plans at present to prohibit the use of snares. When used correctly they can be an effective means of keeping the populations of certain species in check. Research to date has not revealed any practicable alternatives.

Anti-Apartheid Group

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment on what basis permission for a demonstration in Trafalgar square by the City of London Anti-Apartheid Group on 14 March 1987 has been refused by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Permission has been refused because it is not appropriate on public safety grounds for such demonstrations to take place while Nelson's column is being cleaned.

Park Vista, Greenwich

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from English Heritage concerning the development of the site at Park Vista, Greenwich; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: None. However, the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission (English Heritage), who are the Secretary of State's advisers on listed building matters, are to be consulted about the listed building consent application that has been submitted by the London borough of Greenwich in connection with the listed walls around the site. The application is currently before my right hon. Friend for decision, and in these circumstances it would not be appropriate for me to make a statement.

Radiation

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what present discussions his Department is having as to possible sites to be used for the disposal of radioactive waste.

Mr. Waldegrave: Responsibility for indentifying possible sites for the disposal of radioactive waste rests in the first instance with NIREX. My Department has discussions with NIREX and other Government Departments as necessary on issues of common interest, in pursuit of the Government's published policy on radioactive waste disposal.

Deep Mining (Environmental Effects)

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will consider setting up a study to report into the effects of deep mining on the water table and the subsequent effect on trees;

(2) what representations he has so far received about the effects of deep mining on the water table and the subsequent effect on trees;

(3) if the Government have funded any research into the effects of deep mining on the water table and the subsequent effect on trees.

Mr. Waldegrave: No specific research into the effects of deep mining on the water table and the subsequent effect on trees has been sponsored by the Government. Only one representation has been received on this subject, from Kenilworth town council. So far the Department has received no evidence which would justify setting up a study or funding research on the subject.

Automobile Emissions

Mr. Thornton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to automobile emissions control by Catalyst to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Waldegrave: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Services Committee, arrangemens have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall during the week beginning 23 March.

Houses (Radon Levels)

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his statement on 27 January, *Official Report*, column 189, concerning radon levels in houses, what funds are available in the current year for remedial building work on any dwelling identified as having a radon level *(a)* well above the higher action level and *(b)* above the higher action level; what funds will be available for such work during 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: As I indicated on 27 January, no decisions can be taken on the allocation of funds for remedial work until the work in hand on establishing the extent of the problem and the most effective remedial measures for dealing with it has been completed.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his statement on 27 January, *Official Report*, columns 189-90, concerning radon levels in houses, what number of houses in Somerset is to be included in the further survey announced; whether any parts of Somerset are areas where a measurement service will be provided at no cost to those concerned; what

arrangements have been made for distribution in Somerset of his Department's leaflet; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall answer this question shortly.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information is available to his Department concerning any dwellings in Cornwall where advice has been given that a dwelling is unsafe for a pregnant woman due to naturally occurring radioactivity, either from radon gas or from other sources; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 February 1987]: My right hon. Friend is not aware of any such advice having been given. However, in 1971, officials of the Department recommended to the landlords of a property sited at an old uranium mine in Cornwall that they should seek further advice from the Department if the tenancy of the property were likely to fall to a young family. This was a precautionary step because background radiation and the radioactive content of drinking water and home-grown vegetables had been found to be above normal for the United Kingdom. The levels were far below the values accepted for the continuous exposure of persons working with radioactive materials so no immediate action was considered necessary.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to his statement on 27 January, *Official Report*, column 189-90, concerning radon levels in houses, if he has any plans to offer further guidance on the advisability of a pregnant women residing in a house where the annual dose from radon exceeds the 20 milliSievert action level; what is the level of risk to a foetus or unborn child associated with such a level of exposure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 February 1987]: There is no need for special advice on radon to pregnant women. The radiation dose from radon comes predominantly from the solid decay products of radon, which, if breathed in, can be deposited on the surface of the lungs and so increase the risk of lung cancer. Doses of radiation from radon and its decay products to all other tissues of the body, including the foetus, are very much smaller. The risk of childhood malignancy from exposure in utero at the action level of a 20 milliSievert per year effective dose equivalent to the mother has been estimated by the National Radiological Protection Board to be approximately seven in one million.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to his statement on 27 January, *Official Report*, column 189-90, concerning radon levels in houses, what are the terms under which the Government intend to offer financial assistance to owner-occupiers; what are the proposed limits of such financial assistance; when such assistance will first be available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 February 1987]: No decisions can be taken on financial assistance until the Building Research Establishment has completed the work on remedial measures announced on 27 January.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to his statement on 27 January, *Official Report*, column 189-90, concerning radon levels in houses, what estimates are available to his Department of the likely total costs of remedial building relating to the 20 milliSievert action level for *(a)* owner-occupiers in Cornwall and *(b)* local authorities in Cornwall; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 February 1987]: As I indicated in my statement to the House on 27 January 1987, further research work is now required to establish the extent of the problem and the most effective remedical measures for dealing with it. It is not therefore possible at this stage to estimate the total costs of remedial works.

National Parks

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with the Countryside Commission on access to land owned by the Newton Towers estate in the North York Moors national park which was granted under the Bransdale Moor scheme as an offset against capital transfer tax.

Mr. Waldegrave: None. It is for the Inland Revenue, acting on the advice of the relevant statutory agency, to agree appropriate management conditions with owners of qualifying land before conditional exemption from capital transfer tax is granted.

Sports Council

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is satisfied with the workings of the Sports Council; if the Government have plans to increase the finances; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: My right hon. Friend is satisfied that the work of the Sports Council represents good value for money. The level of grant in aid will be discussed with the council later this year in the light of its corporate plan.

Flooding

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if there are plans to assist local authorities following recent flooding of council dwellings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: It is for local authorities to determine their priorities for expenditure from within the resources available to them. Council rents should be set at levels which provide adequate funds for repairs and maintenance, including works made necessary by severe weather.

Housing Costs

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what evidence he has about any relationship between the cost of housing and restrictions on the supply of housing.

Mr. John Patten: None.

Derelict Land Grant

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the meeting with Saxon Developments on Friday 6 February to discuss the application for a derelict land grant in respect of the Queslett site, Birmingham.

Mr. John Patten: I understand that the purpose of the meeting held on Friday, 6 February was to try to resolve the many complex issues in this case. It was not expected to produce a decision on the outstanding derelict land grant application. I will let the hon. Gentleman know the result of that decision in due course and I will write to him when I have a report of last Friday's meeting.

Household Formation

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the factors affecting rates of household formation; and how these vary in respect of regional household projections.

Mr. John Patten: The factors that influence household formation include the number of adults and their ages; marriages, and divorces; preferences for living independently; incomes; and the supply and cost of housing. The adult population and their marital status are taken into account explicitly in regional household projections. Regional differences in other factors are taken into account implicitly by the use in the projections of past trends in headship rates.

Football Clubs

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest position with regard to the possible introduction of a membership card scheme for Football League clubs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Home Affairs and I will meet representatives of the Football League and the Football Association on 23 February to discuss this issue and other matters covered by the league's report on hooliganism submitted to me on 18 November 1986.

Local Authority Finance

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* the local authorities which have received flow-back in the current financial year; and if he will state how much in each case.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 13 January his firm intentions for the first supplementary report 1986-87.

This report will distribute £618 million grant currently available for recycling and will honour the guarantee given by my right hon. Friend's predecessor that at least £500 million would be available at first supplementary report. It will be made as soon as the Local Government Finance Bill receives Royal Assent. Individual authority figures are as follows.

Note: Authorities in receipt of 100 per cent. grant or out of grant do not receive recycled grant.

Gross receipts from grant recycling in 1986/87
Grant from recycling £618m at 1st SR

	£ million
Greater London	
City of London	—
Camden	—
Greenwich	0·712
Hackney	0·868
Hammersmith and Fulham	1·077
Islington	1·235
Kensington and Chelsea	2·422
Lambeth	1·427
Lewisham	0·909
Southwark	1·381
Tower Hamlets	0·705
Wandsworth	1·372
Westminster	—
Barking and Dagenham	1·634
Barnet	3·836
Bexley	1·974
Brent	3·205
Bromley	3·131
Croydon	4·536
Ealing	3·609
Enfield	2·924
Haringey	2·005
Harrow	2·212
Havering	2·345
Hillingdon	3·617
Hounslow	3·010
Kingston-upon-Thames	1·799
Merton	1.895
Newham	2·260
Redbridge	2·259
Richmond-upon-Thames	1·981
Sutton	1·893
Waltham Forest	1·759
ILEA	—
London Fire & CD Authority	—
Metropolitan Police	12·099
Greater Manchester	
Bolton	2·596
Bury	1·733
Manchester	6·583
Oldham	2·149
Rochdale	1·862
Salford	2·831
Stockport	3·563
Tameside	2·058
Trafford	3·463
Wigan	2·852
Greater Manchester Police Authority	1·788
Greater Manchester Fire & CD Authority	0·839
Greater Manchester Transport Authority	1·590
Merseyside	
Knowsley	1·733
Liverpool	5·772
St. Helens	1·921
Sefton	3·002
Wirral	3·603
Merseyside Police Authority	1·033
Merseyside Fire & CD Authority	0·489
Merseyside Transport Authority	—
South Yorkshire	
Barnsley	1·615
Doncaster	2·465
Rotherham	1·985
Sheffield	5·472
South Yorkshire Police Authority	0·755
South Yorkshire Fire & CD Authority	0·341
South Yorkshire Transport Authority	—
Tyne and Wear	
Gateshead	1·823

	£ million
Newcastle upon Tyne	3·560
North Tyneside	1·804
South Tyneside	1·291
Sunderland	2·685
Northumbria Police Authority	0·884
Tyne and Wear Fire and CD Authority	0·329
Tyne and Wear Transport Authority	0·619
West Midlands	
Birmingham	16·613
Coventry	3·930
Dudley	4·046
Sandwell	4·365
Solihull	2·717
Walsall	3·429
Wolverhampton	3·844
West Midlands Police Authority	2·220
West Midlands Fire and CD Authority	1·053
West Midlands Transport Authority	1·971
West Yorkshire	
Bradford	4·456
Calderdale	1·549
Kirklees	3·061
Leeds	7·738
Wakefield	2·853
West Yorkshire Police Authority	1·190
West Yorkshire Fire and CD Authority	0·533
West Yorkshire Transport Authority	1·000
Shire counties	
Avon	11·581
Bedfordshire	7·076
Berkshire	11·315
Buckinghamshire	9·106
Cambridgeshire	7·990
Cheshire	12·051
Cleveland	7·758
Cornwall	4·508
Cumbria	4·670
Derbyshire	10·589
Devon	10·663
Dorset	7·883
Durham	5·184
East Sussex	9·142
Essex	20·731
Gloucestershire	5·918
Hampshire	18·984
Hereford and Worcester	8·054
Hertfordshire	14·538
Humberside	8·654
Isle of Wight	1·180
Kent	17·359
Lancashire	13·165
Leicestershire	10·540
Lincolnshire	5·736
Norfolk	8·881
Northamptonshire	6·783
Northumberland	2·931
North Yorkshire	6·924
Nottinghamshire	11·868
Oxfordshire	7·291
Shropshire	4·275
Somerset	4·751
Staffordshire	11·327
Suffolk	7·154
Surrey	14·614
Warwickshire	6·096
West Sussex	9·417
Wiltshire	5·742
Avon	
Bath	0·000
Bristol	0·737
Kingswood	0·121
Northavon	0·210
Wansdyke	0·143
Woodspring	0·236
Bedfordshire	
North Bedfordshire	0·267
Luton	0·418
Mid Bedfordshire	0·168
South Bedfordshire	0·227
Berkshire	
Bracknell	0·233
Newbury	0·242
Reading	0·356
Slough	0·371
Windsor and Maidenhead	0·329
Wokingham	0·233
Buckinghamshire	
Aylesbury Vale	0·298
South Bucks	—
Chiltern	—
Milton Keynes	0·301
Wycombe	0·417
Cambridgeshire	
Cambridge	0·358
East Cambridgeshire	0·097
Fenland	0·118
Huntingdonshire	0·210
Peterborough	0·255
South Cambridgeshire[1]	0·000
Cheshire	
Chester	0·214
Congleton	0·127
Crewe and Nantwich	0·150
Ellesmere Port and Neston[1]	—
Halton	0·220
Macclesfield	0·274
Vale Royal	0·181
Warrington	0·321
Cleveland	
Hartlepool	0·146
Langbaurgh	0·260
Middlesbrough	0·200
Stockton-on-Tees	0·336
Cornwall	
Caradon	0·084
Carrick	0·106
Kerrier	0·114
North Cornwall	0·086
Penwith	0·071
Restormel	0·124
Cumbria	
Allerdale	0·104
Barrow in Furness	0·083
Carlisle	0·124
Copeland	0·083
Eden	0·051
South Lakeland	0·119
Derbyshire	
Amber Valley	0·141
Bolsover	0·075
Chesterfield	0·150
Derby	0·387
Erewash	0·148
High Peak	0·109
North East Derbyshire	0·104
South Derbyshire	0·121
West Derbyshire	0·083

	£ million
Devon	
East Devon	0·150
Exeter	0·240
North Devon	0·091
Plymouth	0·508
South Hams	0·080
Teignbridge	0·121
Mid Devon	0·065
Torbay	0·232
Torridge	0·044
West Devon	0·048
Dorset	
Bournemouth	0·349
Christchurch	0·077
North Dorset	0·072
Poole	0·264
Purbeck	0·077
West Dorset	0·122
Weymouth and Portland	0·092
Wimborne	0·102
Durham	
Chester-le-Street	0·050
Darlington	0·144
Derwentside	0·076
Durham	0·097
Easington	0·093
Sedgefield	0·081
Teesdale	0·026
Wear Valley	0·055
East Sussex	
Brighton	0·313
Eastbourne	0·184
Hastings	0·140
Hove	0·252
Lewes	0·140
Rother	0·114
Wealden	0·156
Essex	
Basildon	—
Braintree	0·187
Brentwood	0·155
Castle Point	0·144
Chelmsford	0·373
Colchester	0·321
Epping Forest	0·148
Harlow	—
Maldon	0·099
Rochford	0·125
Southend-on-Sea	0·349
Tendring	0·182
Thurrock	—
Uttlesford	0·100
Gloucestershire	
Cheltenham	0·216
Cotswold	0·110
Forest of Dean	0·079
Gloucester	0·210
Stroud	0·145
Tewkesbury	0·151
Hampshire	
Basingstoke and Deane	0·257
East Hampshire	0·134
Eastleigh	0·180
Fareham	0·161
Gosport	0·138
Hart	0·122
Havant	0·256
New Forest	0·254
Portsmouth	0·291
Rushmoor	0·151
Southampton	0·420

	£ million
Test Valley	0·164
Winchester	0·155
Hereford and Worcester	
Bromsgrove	0·159
Hereford	0·088
Leominster	0·042
Malvern Hills	0·115
Redditch	0·141
South Herefordshire	0·067
Worcester	0·162
Wychavon	0·168
Wyre Forest	0·139
Hertfordshire	
Broxbourne	0·146
Dacorum	0·275
East Hertfordshire	0·205
Hertsmere	0·167
North Hertfordshire	0·221
St. Albans	0·285
Stevenage	—
Three Rivers	0·154
Watford	0·205
Welwyn Hatfield	—
Humberside	
Beverley	0·146
Boothferry	0·067
Cleethorpes	0·107
Glanford	0·109
Great Grimsby	0·182
Holderness	0·065
Kingston upon Hull	0·464
East Yorkshire	0·089
Scunthorpe	0·096
Isle of Wight	
Medina	0·106
South Wight	0·077
Kent	
Ashford	0·135
Canterbury	0·174
Dartford	0·121
Dover	0·148
Gillingham	—
Gravesham	0·149
Maidstone	0·212
Rochester upon Medway	0·328
Sevenoaks	0·162
Shepway	0·147
Swale	0·152
Thanet	0·191
Tonbridge and Malling	0·163
Tunbridge Wells	0·145
Lancashire	
Blackburn	0·152
Blackpool	0·279
Burnley	0·082
Chorley	0·108
Fylde	0·106
Hyndburn	0·083
Lancaster	0·167
Pendle	0·075
Preston	0·193
Ribble Valley	0·056
Rossendale	0·051
South Ribble	0·126
West Lancashire	0·154
Wyre	0·124
Leicestershire	
Blaby	0·121
Charnwood	0·280
Harborough	0·092

	£ million
Hinckley and Bosworth	0·156
Leicester	0·530
Melton	0·066
North West Leicestershire	0·124
Oadby and Wigston	0·107
Rutland[1]	0·001
Lincolnshire	
Boston	0·078
East Lindsey	0·150
Lincoln	0·145
North Kesteven	0·095
South Holland	0·077
South Kesteven	0·000
South Kesteven[1]	0·093
Norfolk	
Breckland	0·145
Broadland	0·130
Great Yarmouth	0·142
North Norfolk	0·131
Norwich	0·266
South Norfolk	0·130
King's Lynn and West Norfolk	0·188
Northamptonshire	
Corby	0·102
Daventry	0·109
East Northamptonshire	0·114
Kettering	0·098
Northampton	0·461
South Northamptonshire	0·110
Wellingborough	0·103
Northumberland	
Alnwick	0·037
Berwick-upon-Tweed	0·036
Blyth Valley	0·080
Castle Morpeth	0·075
Tynedale	0·066
Wansbeck	0·080
North Yorkshire	
Craven	0·054
Hambleton	0·098
Harrogate	0·178
Richmondshire	0·051
Ryedale	0·094
Scarborough	0·124
Selby[1]	—
York	0·191
Nottinghamshire	
Ashfield	0·132
Bassetlaw	—
Broxstowe	0·150
Gedling	0·143
Mansfield	0·094
Newark and Sherwood	0·139
Nottingham	0·684
Rushcliffe	0·160
Oxfordshire	
Cherwell	0·283
Oxford	0·344
South Oxfordshire	0·270
Vale of White Horse	0·299
West Oxfordshire	0·130
Shropshire	
Bridgnorth	0·076
North Shropshire	0·062
Oswestry	0·038
Shrewsbury and Atcham	0·145
South Shropshire	0·037
The Wrekin	0·188
Somerset	
Mendip	0·139
Sedgmoor	0·124
Taunton Deane	0·136
West Somerset	0·080
South Somerset	0·218
Staffordshire	
Cannock Chase	0·138
East Staffordshire	0·167
Lichfield	0·159
Newcastle-under-Lyme	0·166
South Staffordshire	0·160
Stafford	0·210
Staffordshire Moorlands	0·119
Stoke-on-Trent	0·402
Tamworth	0·102
Suffolk	
Babergh	0·111
Forest Heath	0·069
Ipswich	0·269
Mid Suffolk	0·094
St. Edmundsbury	0·162
Suffolk Coastal	0·165
Waveney	0·146
Surrey	
Elmbridge	—
Epsom and Ewell	0·062
Guildford	0·311
Mole Valley	0·156
Reigate and Banstead	—
Runnymede	0·162
Spelthorne[1]	—
Surrey Heath	0·170
Tandridge[1]	0·001
Waverley	0·217
Woking	0·186
Warwickshire	
North Warwickshire[1]	—
Nuneaton and Bedworth	0·144
Rugby	0·149
Stratford on Avon	0·183
Warwick	0·237
West Sussex	
Adur	0·099
Arun	0·199
Chichester	0·164
Crawley	—
Horsham	0·165
Mid Sussex	0·197
Worthing	0·189
Wiltshire	
Kennet	0·083
North Wiltshire	0·127
Salisbury	0·170
Thamesdown	0·207
West Wiltshire	0·150
All Purpose Authority	
Isles of Scilly	0·037

[1] These authorities are in receipt of either no or 100 per cent. block grant at their budgeted expenditure level. In neither case are they covered by the grant guarantee.

Children's Play

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if his Department has assessed what examples from abroad of good practice in providing children's play facilities might usefully be introduced in England and Wales;

(2) what guidance his Department has given to local authorities on how best to design houses and gardens and to plan housing estates in order to enable children to play imaginatively and in safety;

(3) what recent discussions he has had with voluntary children's play organisations; what initiatives he has taken to support the work of voluntary children's play organisations *(a)* in urban programme areas and *(b)* in non-urban programme areas; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what initiatives his Department has taken to support local authorities' provision of children's play facilities *(a)* in urban programme areas and *(b)* in non-urban programme areas;

(5) if he will make a statement about his Department's responsibilities towards children's play; and what initiatives he has taken since April 1983 to seek to improve children's play facilities.

Mr. Tracey: The provision of children's play facilities and support for local voluntary organisations concerned with play are primarily matters for local authorities who are best placed to assess the appropriate level of provision and support against local needs and priorities. It would be for them to consider what useful lessons might be learned from abroad. Nevertheless, the Government are concerned to assist with the provision of better play facilities and support a number of national voluntary organisations concerned wholly or partly with the promotion and development of children's play. Since 1983, Play Board has received £700,000 each year from the Department. Other organisations, including the Pre-School Playgroups Association, the National Out of School Alliance and the National Playbus Association, receive support from the Departments of Health and Social Security, and Education and Science. The Sports Council supports schemes and projects of benefit to children and adults alike and will be given grant-in-aid totalling £37 million next year. In addition, the Department provided about £10 million worth of support in the last financial year through the urban programme for play-related schemes developed and run by local authorities and voluntary organisations. Local authorities outside the urban programme benefit from the work of the national voluntary organisations supported by the Government and from a general recreation element in their rate support grants.

Over recent months I have had discussions with the National Playing Fields Association, the National Play Advisory Committee, Play Board and the Sports Council about the future development of children's play and I have corresponded with a number of other interested organisations and individuals.

The Department has issued guidance on children's play facilities to local authorities in the past including a circular, a comprehensive design bulletin and a paper on children's playgrounds.

Lancaster House

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment who authorised the use of Lancaster house by Mr. Le Pen, Member of the European Parliament and others; what it is to be used for; if it is available for booking by other Members of the European Parliament and hon. and right hon. Members of this House; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Lancaster house is used mainly for purposes of Government hospitality and, less frequently, for conferences. The rule governing use of the building under successive Governments is that a Minister must be involved in meetings there. The European Parliament has arranged meetings from time to time, and a booking had been taken from it for later this month for an unspecified purpose. That booking has now been cancelled because it does not satisfy the rule.

Fuel Consumption

Mr. Rost asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage increase in fabric heat loss would be permitted by the disapplication to industrial and storage buildings of the provisions for the conservation of fuel and power in the Building Regulations (England and Wales), assuming the same levels of heating are maintained as are currently experienced, and assuming a single skin construction.

Mr. John Patten: A single skin sheet steel can have an insulation value (μ value) of 6·5 compared with the present requirement of 0·7 for industrial and storage buildings where the space heating system has output of over 25 watts per square metre. A single skin lightweight block wall might have a μ value of 0·5. In practice it would be for those commissioning such buildings to decide on the appropriate construction and level of insulation they required.

Rates

Mr. Peter Shore asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many ratepayers there are in each of the following boroughs: Brent, Camden, Hackney, Haringey, Islington, Lambeth, Lewisham, Southwark and Tower Hamlets; how many of these pay no rates at all; and how many are partially rate rebated.

Mr. Chope: I shall answer this question shortly.

Housing Costs

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has concerning the average price of a three bedroomed house in *(a)* the north-west region and *(b)* the south-east region in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available.

Mr. Tracey: I regret that the information is not available in the form requested. Annual average house prices in each region, based on a survey of building society mortgages, appear in table 10.11*(a)* of "Housing and Construction Statistics 1975-1985", a copy of which is available in the Library.

Home Ownership

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has concerning the level of home ownership in *(a)* the north-west region and *(b)* the south-east region in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available.

Mr. Tracey: The available information is as follows:

Estimated Stock of Owner-Occupied Dwellings

End of Year	North West		South East	
	Thousand	Percentage of all dwellings	Thousand	Percentage of all dwellings
1976	1,391	58·0	3,462	55·5
1977	1,410	58·4	3,529	55·8
1978	1,429	58·8	3,609	56·3
1979	1,449	59·2	3,693	57·0
1980	1,476	60·0	3,795	58·0
1981	1,503	60·8	3,890	58·9
1982	1,545	62·2	4,013	60·2
1983	1,584	63·5	4,139	61·5
1984	1,611	64·2	4,262	62·6
1985	1,637	65·0	4,380	63·7

Note Although numbers are expressed to the nearest thousand they should not be regarded as accurate to the last digit.

Homelessness

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has concerning levels of homelessness in the north-west region and the south-east region in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Tracey: The number of households whom local authorities accepted responsibility to accommodate under the homelessness legislation is shown in the table:

Number of Acceptances

Year	North West (000)	South East (000)
1978	5·7	23·3
1979	6·1	26·0
1980	6·6	28·3
1981	7·1	31·6
1982	7·8	33·6
1983	8·6	36·1
1984	9·6	38·1
1985	10·9	41·8
1986[1]	9·6	34·6

[1] 9 months.

The legislation was introduced in December 1977; information prior to 1978 is not comparable.

Urban Development Corporations

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of total spending until 1990, by each financial year, on urban development corporations; and how much of that money is attributable to reductions in rate support grant settlement.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 February 1987]: Total planned spending by urban development corporations for each financial year until 1990 is set out in the recently published public expenditure White Paper (Cmnd. 56-II, table 3.10.10). There is no relationship between spending by urban development corporations and changes in rate support grants to local authorities.

Docklands

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate for the total yearly spending of public money in *(a)* London docklands and *(b)* Liverpool docklands.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 February 1987]: The annual public expenditure outturn figures for the London Docklands Development Corporation and for the Merseyside Development Corporation are set out in the following table:

£ million

	LDDC	MDC
1981-82	31·5	6·7
1982-83	41·3	20·5
1983-84	62·4	32·0
1984-85	58·6	29·7
1985-86	56·7	28·9
1986-87[1]	62·7	27·7
1987-88[2]	82·8	28·7

[1] provision.
[2] plan.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Organ Transplants

Mr. Beaumont-Dark asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, for each of the last 10 years, how many organ transplants have been carried out; if he will indicate in each case the organ or organs involved; what information he has as to how many of the recipients of these transplated organs are still alive; and what is his estimate of the cost to the National Health Service of each type of organ transplant.

Mrs. Currie: According to information provided by the United Kingdom transplant service, the number of cadaveric kidneys, heart, heart/lung and liver transplant operations performed in the United Kingdom during 1986 were at record levels. Figures for the last 10 years 1977-86 were as follows:

	Cadaveric Kidney	Heart	Heart/Lung	Lung	Liver
1977	779	—	—	—	—
1978	941	—	—	—	—
1979	842	3	—	—	6
1980	988	25	—	—	5
1981	905	24	—	—	11
1982	1,070	36	—	—	21
1983	1,144	53	1	—	20
1984	1,443	116	10	—	51
1985	1,334	137	37	—	88
1986	[1]1,488	175	51	3	127

[1] As notified to date. Late notifications may necessitate minor revisions.

The total number of corneal grafts performed is not recorded centrally, although it has been estimated that presently about 1,200 operations are carried out each year.

Statistics on patient survival are as follows:

	Organ transplants performed	Number of recipients surviving on 31 December 1986
Hearts	569	375
Hearts/lungs	99	60
Lungs	3	3

Comparable figures are not available for kidney and liver transplantation. However, we are informed by the European Dialysis and Transplant Association that, from the 13,575 kidney transplants performed since the 1950s and up to 31 December 1985, 5,773 were still alive with a

functioning graft on that date. Others were still alive but undergoing different treatment by the numbers are not known precisely.

It should be noted that there is no correlation between graft survival and patient survival with respect to kidney transplantation.

For information on the cost of kidney transplants I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on 17 December at column *571*.

Comprehensive figures are not available on the costs of heart transplants, but our best estimate puts the cost at about £15,000 in the year of operation, and around £3,000 per annum in subsequent years. Details of costs at two centres can be found in research report No. 12 published by the Department in 1985 under the title "Costs and Benefits of the Heart Transplant Programme at Harefield and Papworth Hospitals". A copy of this report is in the Library. No reliable costings are available for heart/lung, lung, and liver transplants.

Hepatitis

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the incidence of hepatitis in the population; if it varies by age; and what is the practice of the blood transfusion service regarding donations from possible sufferers.

Mrs. Currie: Laboratory reports of acute clinical hepatitis B indicate annual total cases of between 1,000 and 1,200 from 1975 to 1983, about 2,000 in 1984, and declining to approximately 1,300 in 1986. Almost three quarters of cases have been male and, among patients of both sexes, about three quarters have been young adults. The disease remains uncommon among children and the elderly.

Regional transfusion directors have clinical responsibility for the acceptance of blood donors. The national blood transfusion service does not collect blood from those believed to be at risk of infection and all potential donors are asked whether they have recently had jaundice. All donations are tested for hepatitis B antigen.

AIDS

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to which European Economic Community countries test blood for the HIV (human immuno-deficiency) virus.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what consideration he has given to disseminating his Department's information on AIDS in ethnic minority languages and through the ethnic minority media.

Mr. Newton: We are urgently considering how best to ensure that essential information about AIDS reaches people from the ethnic minorities, particularly those who have difficulty reading and understanding English, in ways that are sensitive to the needs of each community. On 5 February, I attended a meeting with representatives of the ethnic minority press. The Department will consider carefully all the views expressed in devising a strategy for carrying forward this important aspect of our public information campaign.

Benefits

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will express the current real value of *(a)* invalidity benefit and *(b)* attendance allowance compared with their values before the entry into force of section 1 of the Social Security Act 1980 which abolished the link with the rise in average earnings; how many people are currently in receipt of each benefit; and what have been the savings to his Department on each of these benefits in each year since the act came into force.

Mr. Major: Comparisons of the current rates of invalidity benefit and attendance allowance with the rates obtaining in November 1979 are as follows:

	November 1979 rates	*November 1979 rates increased in line with prices to July 1986*	*July 1986 rates*
	£	£	£
Invalidity benefit	23·30	37·71	38·70
Attendance allowance:			
Lower rate	12·40	20·06	20·65
Higher rate	18·60	30·09	30·95

The latest estimated figures for the number of people receiving these benefits are:

Invalidity benefit—849,000 at March 1985
Attendance allowance—585,000 at March 1986

It is not possible to isolate the effect of section 1 of the Social Security Act 1980 from a variety of other changes which have affected total expenditure on these benefits.

Disabled People

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will request Sir Roy Griffiths to seek evidence from organisations of and for people with disabilities in his overview of community care policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: I understand that Sir Roy Griffiths will be reading, visiting and meeting widely in the course of his overview. I am sure that this will include paying careful attention to the views of organisations of and for disabled people.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the reply to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe on 16 January, *Official Report*, column 348, if a severe disability premium will be payable to a person who has someone living with him to care for him who is ineligible for invalid care allowance on account of *(a)* receipt of an overlapping benefit such as retirement pension or *(b)* earnings of more than £12 a week; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: I shall let the right hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to the reply to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe on 27 January, *Official Report*, column 226, he will list those authorities which made no arrangements for the provision to disabled

people of (a) telephones, (b) aids to daily living or (c) adaptations in the last year for which information is available; if he is satisfied that not one disabled person in those authorities needed the particular service; and if he will make a further statement.

Mr. Major: I shall let the right hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he proposes to implement the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: I am unable to add to my reply to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) and the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley), on 26 November 1986 at column 289. I plan to meet the local authority associations on 24 February to discuss issues relating to the implementation of the Act.

Dialysis

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to extend attendance allowance to people undergoing dialysis in hospital but without any assistance from National Health Service staff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: We are currently considering this matter and I will write to the right hon. Member as soon as a decision is reached.

Alternative Care

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the main findings of the research on the costs of alternative forms of National Health Service care conducted for his Department by the institute of health economics at York university; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The centre for health economics at York university has published findings on "The Costs of Alternative Forms of NHS Care for Mentally Handicapped People" in discussion paper number 7, (1985, centre for health economics, York university), a copy of which is available in the Library. It would be inappropriate to list the recommendations in isolation from the context of the report and the reservations documented by the authors.

It is important that health and local authorities, in planning their services, take account of the costs of various options for residential care open to them. The centre for health economics has started further work on the costs of alternative forms of non-National Health Service care. We expect the results and the methods from both projects to be of help to authorities in doing their own costings.

NHS Staffing

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the total job losses by category of worker since 1979 in the National Health Service by region and district.

Mr. Newton: The table shows the staffing position for England, by main staff group, at 30 September 1979 and 30 September 1985, and the changes (in both whole-time equivalent and percentage terms) in staff in post between those two dates.

NHS directly employed staff in post—by main staff group England

Whole-time equivalents[1]

	30 September 1979	*30 September 1985*	*Change 1979 to 1985*	
			Whole-time equivalents	*Percentage*
Medical and Dental[2]	37,100	40,800	+3,700	+10·0
Nursing and Midwifery[3]	358,400	401,200	+42,700	+11·9
Professional and Technical (excluding works)[4]	60,100	74,300	+14,200	+23·5
Works	5,600	6,100	+500	+8·5
Maintenance	20,100	19,800	−400	−1·8
Administrative and Clerical	103,000	111,000	+8,100	+7·9
Ancillary[4]	171,900	139,400	−32,500	−18·9
Ambulance (including officers)	17,100	18,200	+1,100	+6·2
Total	773,300	810,700	+37,300	+4·8

Source: DHSS Annual Censuses of NHS Medical and Non-Medical Manpower.

[1] Figures are independently rounded to the nearest one hundred whole-time equivalents and therefore the sum of individual components may not agree with the total. Percentage changes have been calculated on unrounded figures.

[2] Includes locum staff. Excludes hospital practitioners and part time medical/dental officers (clinical assistants).

[3] Includes agency staff. Figures not adjusted for the effect of the reduction in nurses' working hours during 1980 (from 40 to 37·5 hours per week).

[4] On 1 April 1984, Operating Department Assistants (approximate 2,600 whole-time equivalents staff) transferred from the Ancillary to the Professional and Technical "B" Staffs Council. These figures will reflect this change.

NHS (Closures)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list all closures of National Health Service property, district by district, since 1979.

Mrs. Currie: We keep a central record of hospitals approved for closure, and I refer the hon. Member to the reply given him by my hon. Friend the Minister for Health on 24 November 1986 at columns 143-46. We do not keep central records of hospital closures. Nor do we keep central records of closures of other National Health Services property and to obtain this information would incur disproportionate cost.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list district by district the number of beds in 1979 and for the latest available year indicating the percentage increase or decrease.

Mrs. Currie: For the numbers of available beds I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 3 February at columns 587-596. The remaining information requested is given in the table. Between 1979 and 1985, in England, the number of in-patient cases treated increased by 17·7 per cent. from 5,400,120 to 6,353,812.

Percentage change in average daily number of available beds: NHS hospitals England

Regional, District and Special Health Authority	*Percentage change 1979-1985*
Northern Regional Health Authority	
Hartlepool	2·5
North Tees	−1·6
South Tees	−16·6
East Cumbria	¹
South Cumbria	¹
West Cumbria	−5·9
Darlington	−6·5
Durham	−7·5
North West Durham	−14·7
South West Durham	−12·0
Northumberland	−8·3
Gateshead	−0·2
Newcastle upon Tyne	−2·2
North Tyneside	0·9
South Tyneside	5·5
Sunderland	−4·7
RHA Total	−6·1
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority	
Hull	−9·9
East Yorkshire	−14·3
Grimsby	20·1
Scunthorpe	−6·0
Northallerton	−7·6
York	−20·4
Scarborough	−1·8
Harrogate	3·3
Bradford	−7·8
Airedale	−11·5
Calderdale	−10·4
Huddersfield	−21·6
Dewsbury	−5·3
Leeds Western	¹
Leeds Eastern	¹
Wakefield	−18·4
Pontefract	3·7
RHA Total	−10·5
Trent Regional Health Authority	
North Derbyshire	1·6
South Derbyshire	−16·0
Leicestershire	−1·9
North Lincolnshire	−25·4
South Lincolnshire	−6·6
Bassetlaw	7·4
Central Nottinghamshire	−10·2
Nottingham	−6·4
Barnsley	17·9
Doncaster	¹
Rotherham	¹
Sheffield	−8·8
RHA Total	−7·3
East Anglia Regional Health Authority	
Cambridge	¹
Peterborough	2·2
West Suffolk	¹
East Suffolk	¹
Norwich	−10·6
Great Yarmouth	23·3
West Norfolk and Wisbech	2·1
Huntingdon	¹
RHA Total	−4·3
North West Thames Regional Health Authority	
North Bedfordshire	−2·3
South Bedfordshire	−6·0
North Hertfordshire	−0·8
East Hertfordshire	−13·8
North West Hertfordshire	−3·4
South West Hertfordshire	−13·6
Barnet	−13·9
Harrow	−0·4
Hillingdon	−15·3
Hounslow and Spelthorne	¹
Ealing	−9·7
Brent	−16·3
Paddington	−11·2
Riverside	7·4
RHA Total	−14·6
North East Thames Regional Health Authority	
Basildon and Thurrock	2·8
Mid Essex	11·5
North East Essex	−24·8
West Essex	−5·1
Southend	−7·5
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	−12·3
Hampstead	¹
Bloomsbury	¹
Islington	¹
City and Hackney	−11·9
Newham	−6·5
Tower Hamlets	−13·2
Enfield	−13·4
Haringey	−20·2
Redbridge	−2·3
Waltham Forest	−24·2
RHA Total	−8·8
South East Thames Regional Health Authority	
Brighton	−10·1
Eastbourne	−18·9
Hastings	−15·3
South East Kent	6·0
Canterbury and Thanet	−18·8
Dartford and Gravesham	−24·8
Maidstone	−10·2
Medway	3·9
Tunbridge Wells	−16·0
Bexley	−13·2
Greenwich	−14·6
Bromley	−23·2
West Lambeth	¹
Camberwell	−11·8
Lewisham and North Southwark	−12·3
RHA Total	−14·5
South West Thames regional health authority	
North West Surrey	−19·5
West Surrey and North East Hants	0·8
South West Surrey	5·2
Mid Surrey	−21·6
East Surrey	−21·8

Regional, District and Special Health Authority	Percentage change 1979-1985
Chichester	−5·9
Mid Downs	2·6
Worthing	6·7
Croydon	−17·4
Kingston and Esher	[1]
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	[1]
Wandsworth	−18·6
Merton and Sutton	−13·2
RHA Total	−15·4
Wessex regional health authority	
East Dorset	6·2
West Dorset	−9·0
Portsmouth	−10·0
South West Hants and Southampton	−3·3
Winchester	−6·0
Basingstoke	−10·7
Salisbury	3·6
Swindon	−11·3
West Wiltshire and Bath	−11·9
Isle of Wight	−22·4
RHA Total	−7·2
Oxford regional health authority	
East Berkshire	−9·4
West Berkshire	−18·8
Aylesbury	[1]
Wycombe	−4·7
Milton Keynes	[1]
Kettering	10·2
Northampton	−8·5
Oxfordshire	−9·7
RHA Total	−8·1
South Western regional health authority	
Bristol and Weston	−10·6
Frenchay	−14·8
Southmead	−22·4
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	−5·6
Exeter	−23·2
North Devon	[1]
Plymouth	[1]
Torbay	13·7
Cheltenham	[1]
Gloucester	[1]
Somerset	−7·4
RHA Total	−10·3
West Midlands regional health authority	
Bromsgrove and Redditch	−25·3
Herefordshire	−16·9
Kidderminster and District	−17·9
Worcester and District	−13·2
Shropshire	−5·9
Mid Staffordshire	−5·2
North Staffordshire	−4·5
South East Staffordshire	−4·1
Rugby	−0·3
North Warwickshire	[1]
South Warwickshire	[1]
Central Birmingham	[1]
East Birmingham	−0·6
North Birmingham	−20·5
South Birmingham	[1]
West Birmingham	[1]
Coventry	0·8
Dudley	2·2
Sandwell	18·1
Solihull	[1]
Walsall	−11·0
Wolverhampton	−3·7
RHA Total	−8·7
Mersey regional health authority	
Chester	−15·6
Crewe	−27·8
Halton	−12·3
Macclesfield	1·3
Warrington	−16·5
Liverpool	−16·5
St. Helens and Knowsley	−13·9
Southport and Formby	−11·6
South Sefton	−2·1
Wirral	−28·5
RHA Total	−16·0
North Western regional health authority	
Lancaster	−16·2
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	12·3
Preston	[1]
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	−8·7
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	−7·4
West Lancashire	−8·3
Chorley and South Ribble	[1]
Bolton	−8·5
Bury	13·1
North Manchester	−14·1
Central Manchester	11·9
South Manchester	−5·4
Oldham	−1·8
Rochdale	−13·6
Salford	−13·2
Stockport	2·8
Tameside and Glossop	8·7
Trafford	−7·3
Wigan	−5·1
RHA Total	−5·8
Special health authorities	
The Hospital For Sick Children	−20·8
National Hospitals For Nervous Diseases	−2·2
Moorfields Eye Hospital	−21·5
Bethlem Royal and Maudsley Hospitals	6·8
National Heart and Chest Hospitals	−25·6
The Royal Marsden Hospital	−4·7
Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's	[1]
SHA Total	−9·7
England Total	−10·0

[1] Comparable figures not readily available because of NHS restructuring on 1 April 1982.
[2] Hammersmith and Fulham DHA and Victoria DHA prior to 1985.

NHS (Property Sales)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list whether planning permission was sought in each case of sale of surplus National Health Service property identified in his answer of 23 January, *Official Report*, column 801; and, where it was so sought, whether it was granted prior to each sale.

Mrs. Currie: Detailed information about individual transactions is not routinely collected or held centrally. The detailed information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Health authorities are instructed that, where the district valuer advises that the sale

proceeds will be enhanced by the obtaining of planning permission, they should make such an application under the Town and Country Planning Act 1984.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services in the case of every sale of a hospital or land as listed in the answer in the *Official Report*, on 23 January, column 801, whether the sale was advertised; and what was the district valuer's estimate of the value of the hospital or land in each case.

Mrs. Currie: Detailed information about individual transactions is not routinely collected or held centrally. The detailed information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many nurses have been displaced from National Health Service accommodation as a result of the sale of such property in each district health authority.

Mr. Newton: Although information in the precise form requested is not collected centrally, we are not aware of any National Health Service employee being required, in connection with the rationalisation of property holdings to move from his or her existing accommodation without being offered a suitable alternative place to live.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to his answer of 23 January, *Official Report*, column 801, on land sales, he will give a breakdown of the location in each case by district health authorities.

Mrs. Currie: Information on land sales is not routinely collected on a district basis and the information now requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

NHS Statistics

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of people permanently sick in each of the Welsh health authority areas, the proportion of the population which they represent, and the corresponding figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Lyell: I regret the information in the form requested is not available. The number of people in Wales in receipt of benefit for long-term incapacity could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mental Hospitals

Mr. Robin Cook asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the number of long-stay patients currently in residence in each mental hospital.

Mrs. Currie: I regret this information is not at present collected centrally. Statistics on resident patients by length of stay will become available following the introduction of new information systems in the National Health Service later this year.

Soya Milk

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply of 3 November 1986, *Official Report*, column 363, regarding soya milk, what is the source of the advice that cows' milk is nutritionally better than soya milk as a source of energy, protein, calcium and other minerals, and certain vitamins essential for the growth of a healthy child.

Mrs. Currie: The advice is given by the Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy in its report "Present-Day Practice in Infant Feeding 1980". I understand that a further report expected later this year repeats this advice.

Corporal Punishment

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he proposes to take to abolish corporal punishment in institutions which fall within the responsibility of his Department and local social service departments, in the light of the provisions relating to corporal punishment in the Education (No. 2) Act 1986.

Mrs. Currie: Regulations governing the conduct of local authority community homes, and of voluntary children's homes which are registered with the Secretary of State for Social Services, are currently being revised. The revised regulations will incorporate a provision prohibiting the use of corporal punishment in these establishments.

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. Blair asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many persons have received exceptionally severe weather payments in the northern region over the last month in each of the categories entitled to such payments; and what was the amount of money paid to each category.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested. However, statistics are being maintained on the total number of payments made, the amount of those payments and the number of refusals and will be published in due course.

Mr. Blair asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much has been spent by his Department on advertising the availability of exceptionally severe weather payments in *(a)* the northern region and *(b)* the whole of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Major: Advertisements were placed in the national press for two weeks ending on Saturday 24 January 1987 and for five days on all 45 local commercial radio stations. The total cost was £400,000. £19,971 was spent on local radio advertising in the social security north-east and north-west regions. All local offices dealing with supplementary benefit were supplied with advertisements for placing in local newspapers.

Mr. Blair asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give an estimate of the numbers of persons in the northern region in each category of those entitled to exceptionally severe weather payments.

Mr. Major: The information requested is not available, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Heating Allowance

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will now ensure that local officers of the Department of Health and Social Security publicise a weekly notice in local newspapers about whether the previous week has been a qualifying week for claiming the special £5 heating allowance.

Mr. Major: Local offices have been directed to publish advertisements in their local newspapers whenever a

qualifying average temperature of 0 deg C is triggered. They have done so for each week of exceptionally cold weather in their area during 1987.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many letters he has received from hon. Members and others about the problem of pensioners who have £500 in savings for their funeral expenses and therefore do not qualify for the £5 heating allowance.

Mr. Major: Numerous letters have been received on this issue.

NHS (Expenditure)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether he will place in the Library tables showing total revenue expenditure and capital expenditure in each health district from 1982-83 *(a)* in cash terms, *(b)* 1982-83 prices, using the gross domestic product deflator and *(c)* at 1982-83 prices, using the National Health Service pay and prices/National Health Service capital deflator;

(2) whether he will place in the Library tables showing total revenue expenditure and capital expenditure in each National Health Service region in each year from 1974-75 *(a)* in cash terms, *(b)* at 1974-75 prices using gross domestic product deflator and *(c)* at 1974-75 prices using National Health Service pay and prices/National Health Service capital deflator.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Patient Records

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he is taking to encourage the computerisation of hospital accident and emergency department records, with a view to improving knowledge of the epidemiology of road accidents and priorities for remedial action, both locally and nationally.

Mrs. Currie: Central funding has been provided for the development of a comprehensive package for accident and emergency departments. It is for authorities to decide whether they wish to join the consortium of potential users which already exists. Some regional health authorities are building such packages on accident and emergency facilities into the patient administration systems. It is for authorities to decide which approach best meets their own strategic requirements.

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has received the report of his Department's regional auditor upon the computerisation of patient records in the north-west region; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The auditor's report on the procurement and development of computer systems by the North Western regional health authority, one of which was the patient administration system for the region, was submitted to my right hon. Friend in February 1986.

The authority was asked by the Department's director of audit to consider the report and produce a plan of action for dealing with the shortcomings revealed. The authority responded with detailed proposals which, together with the corrective action it had already taken, met many of the auditor's criticisms. We have asked the authority to reconsider its response on some specific points, particularly in relation to tendering and contract procedures, and its response to these is awaited.

Birth Statistics

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the prevalence of cerebral palsy at age three years among children born with birth weights *(a)* under 1,500 g *(b)* 1,500 to 2,499 g and *(c)* 2,500 g and over to residents of England and Wales in each National Health Service region in the most recent year for which information is available.

Mrs. Currie: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member the information he seeks. It is not held centrally.

Draught-proofing

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many representations he has received and from whom, on the subject of the abolition of single payments for draught-proofing.

Mr. Major: A number of representations have been received from hon. Members and organisations involved in local draught-proofing schemes.

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he plans to meet with the charity Neighbourhood Energy Action to discuss the proposals they have submitted to him on a grant to replace single payments for draught-proofing.

Mr. Major: I have written to Neighbourhood Energy Action and six other organisations offering a meeting with officials in the first instance to discuss a range of issues connected with helping people keep warm in winter. I have made clear my willingness to meet the organisations after that preliminary discussion.

Mr. and Mrs. Donoghue

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the hon. Member for Walthamstow can expect to receive a full reply to his letters of 4 April, 23 April, 18 June, 25 June, 1 July, 1 August, 22 August, 29 September and 20 November 1986 about the claim to attendance allowance of Mr. and Mrs. Donoghue of 17 Park court, Grosvenor park road, London E17.

Mr. Lyell: My predecessor the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State replied to the hon. Member's letters of 4 April 1986 and 23 April 1986 and on 8 May 1986.

The hon. Member's constituent has made separate claims for mobility allowance and attendance allowance, his claim for mobility allowance having been adjudicated upon on 13 January 1987. I will write to the hon. Member in detail very shortly.

Benefit Office (Dispute)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he is taking to resolve the current dispute in the benefit office in Caerphilly, Mid Glamorgan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lyell: The dispute at Caerphilly has involved some 40 members of the Civil and Public Services Association

who have been on strike since mid-December. The office has continued to pay benefits and has maintained some daily facilities for public callers.

Throughout the dispute local management have met frequently with representatives of the strikers in attempts to settle the issue. Talks have also been held with the union at regional level.

Management have recently made an offer which they consider to be a fair and reasonable basis for bringing the strike to an end. The union has discussed the offer with its Caerphilly members and have subsequently asked for further talks with regional management.

Handicapped Children

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the information available to him on the numbers of children under the age of 16 years who are registered as handicapped in each local authority in England.

Mrs. Currie: Information on the numbers of persons registered as handicapped is collected centrally every three to four years and the latest complete data are found in the Department's publications, "Registered Blind and Partially Sighted Persons at 31 March 1982" (A/F82/7), "Registers of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing at 31 March 1983" (A/F83/20) and "Registers of Physically Disabled Persons at 31 March 1984" (A/F84/19), copies of which have been placed in the Library.

Information about the sensorily impaired groups as at 31 March 1986 is currently being collected. This information is not yet complete, but the available data about persons under 16 are given in the table.

Registration may not be a reliable guide to the numbers of persons handicapped as registration is voluntary, registers may not always be amended to reflect migration or deaths and people with multiple handicaps may be on more than one register.

Data are not collected centrally on the numbers of persons registered as mentally handicapped.

Number of persons aged under 16 registered with Social Services Departments as blind, partially sighted, deaf and hard of hearing at 31 March 1986 (where available):

England *Local Authority*	*Numbers* *Blind*	*Partially Sighted*
Cleveland	23	15
Cumbria	15	19
Durham	21	25
Northumberland	13	8
Gateshead	11	11
Newcastle upon Tyne	37	16
North Tyneside	10	7
South Tyneside	3	3
Sunderland	11	11
Humberside	24	46
North Yorkshire	37	49
Barnsley	15	12
Doncaster	8	8
Rotherham	14	24
Sheffield	22	14
Bradford	23	56
Calderdale	16	13
Kirklees	36	30
Leeds	44	66
Wakefield	12	18
Cheshire	40	34
Lancashire	62	68
Bolton	22	19
Bury	16	5
Manchester	34	18
Oldham	10	12
Rochdale	18	6
Salford	6	10
Stockport	7	6
Tameside	9	11
Trafford	12	6
Wigan	17	9
Knowsley	8	5
Liverpool	14	12
Sefton	13	9
St. Helens	7	10
Hereford and Worcester	21	14
Shropshire	17	6
Staffordshire	34	36
Warwickshire	31	45
Birmingham	68	40
Coventry	9	17
Dudley	13	21
Sandwell	15	24
Solihull	11	4
Walsall	13	13
Derbyshire	35	49
Leicestershire	53	25
Lincolnshire	12	20
Northamptonshire	19	10
Nottinghamshire	46	39
Bedfordshire	18	11
Berkshire	24	28
Buckinghamshire	14	14
Cambridgeshire	18	16
Essex	54	51
Hertfordshire	26	31
Norfolk	19	19
Oxfordshire	11	19
Suffolk	19	33
Camden	7	11
Hackney	8	5
Hammersmith	6	4
Islington	1	5
Kensington	3	2
Lambeth	2	3
Southwark	4	18
Tower Hamlets	11	25
Wandsworth	15	16
Westminster	8	4
City of London	0	0
Barking	2	12
Barnet	11	14
Bexley	10	10
Brent	16	20
Bromley	10	16
Croydon	11	7
Ealing	14	22
Enfield	12	12
Haringey	11	7
Harrow	5	1
Havering	2	1
Hillingdo	7	11
Hounslow	6	5
Merton	10	11
Newham	11	25
Redbridge	11	13
Richmond upon Thames	5	2
Sutton	4	6
Waltham Forest	8	6
Dorset	9	9
Hampshire	52	35
Isle of Wight	5	2
Surrey	34	30
East Sussex	17	19
West Sussex	18	19
Wiltshire	27	41

England Local Authority	Numbers Blind	Partially Sighted
Avon	26	9
Devon	37	44
Gloucestershire	16	21
Somerset	11	9

Local authority	Deaf and hard of hearing
Cleveland	132
Cumbria	47
Durham	70
Northumberland	44
Gateshead	32
Newcastle upon Tyne	19
North Tyneside	16
South Tyneside	1
Sunderland	56
Humberside	108
North Yorkshire	46
Barnsley	0
Doncaster	16
Rotherham	24
Sheffield	46
Bradford	111
Calderdale	39
Kirklees	30
Leeds	91
Wakefield	0
Cheshire	262
Lancashire	157
Bolton	9
Manchester	52
Oldham	40
Rochdale	15
Salford	304
Stockport	5
Tameside	10
Trafford	30
Wigan	25
Knowsley	2
Liverpool	16
Sefton	24
St. Helens	46
Wirral	0
Hereford and Worcester	17
Shropshire	4
Staffordshire	0
Warwickshire	16
Birmingham	53
Coventry	13
Dudley	11
Sandwell	37
Solihull	0
Walsall	112
Derbyshire	109
Leicestershire	50
Lincolnshire	10
Northamptonshire	0
Nottinghamshire	113
Bedfordshire	12
Berkshire	54
Buckinghamshire	33
Essex	43
Hertfordshire	99
Norfolk	32
Suffolk	92
Camden	13
Hackney	29
Hammersmith	8
Islington	18
Kensington	3
Lambeth	13
Lewisham	14
Southwark	5
Wandsworth	14
Westminster	8
City of London	0
Barking	8
Barnet	21
Bexley	22
Brent	42
Bromley	149
Ealing	3
Enfield	11
Haringey	19
Harrow	8
Havering	21
Hillingdon	43
Hounslow	28
Merton	20
Newham	80
Redbridge	14
Richmond upon Thames	1
Sutton	2
Waltham Forest	3
Dorset	21
Hampshire	79
Isle of Wight	50
Surrey	46
East Sussex	15
West Sussex	46
Wiltshire	41
Avon	79
Cornwall	49
Devon	36
Gloucestershire	36
Somerset	96

Maternity Payments

Mr. Redmond asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Don Valley claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Don Valley are expected to qualify each year for a maternity payment from the social fund after April.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Don valley constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Doncaster East, Doncaster West and Mexborough, although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The number of claims received for maternity grant in each of the three offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Doncaster East	1,585
Doncaster West	2,072
Mexborough	482

It is not possible to predict how many women in the constituency will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Houghton and Washington claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Houghton and Washington are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Houghton and Washington constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Chester-le-Street, Houghton-le-Spring and Sunderland North, although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The number of claims received for maternity grant in each of the three offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Chester-le-Street	948
Houghton-le-Spring	579
Sunderland North	2,097

It is not possible to predict how many women in the constituency will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Eastham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Manchester, Blackley claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Manchester, Blackley are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Manchester, Blackley constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Cheetham and Failsworth, although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The number of claims received for maternity grant in each of the two offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Cheetham	1,017
Failsworth	1,349

It is not possible to predict how many women in the constituency will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Hackney South and Shoreditch claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Hackney South and Shoreditch are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund annually after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Hackney, South and Shoreditch constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Hoxton and Hackney, although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the two offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Hoxton	1,585
Hackney	1,374

It is not possible to predict how many women in the constituency will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Barnsley, West and Penistone constituency claimed maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Barnsley, West and Penistone constituency is covered by the Department's office at Barnsley, West, although its boundary is not conterminous with the constituency. The number of claims received for maternity grant in the office during the calendar year 1986 was 2,062.

It is not possible to predict how many women in the constituency will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Wrexham claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Wrexham are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Wrexham constituency is covered by the Department's office at Wrexham, although its boundary is not conterminous with the constituency. The number of claims received for maternity grant in the office during the calendar year 1986 was 1813.

It is not possible to predict how many women in the constituency will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Clwyd, south-west claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Clwyd, south-west are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Clwyd, South-West constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Wrexham, Mold and Rhyl, although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The number of claims received for maternity grant in the 3 offices during the calendar year 1986 was as follows:

	Number
Wrexham	1,813
Mold	497
Rhyl	1,577

It is not possible to predict how many women in the constituency will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Caerphilly constituency claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many are expected to qualify annually for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Caerphilly constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Merthyr Tydfil, Bargoed and Caerphilly although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The number of claims received for maternity grant in each of the three offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Merthyr Tydfil	906
Bargoed	706
Caerphilly	836

It is not possible to predict how many women in the constituency will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Caerphilly constituency received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance annually after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 328 claims to maternity allowance were made at Bargoed, 520 at Caerphilly and 639 at Merthyr Tydfil, the Department's offices which cover the constituency although their boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Caerphilly will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Ernie Roberts asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Hackney, North and Stoke Newington constituency received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available, and how many are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested. But in the twelve months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 866 claims to maternity allowance were made at Hackney, 1,223 at Stoke Newington and 1,209 at Finsbury Park the Department's offices which cover the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Hackney, North and Stoke Newington will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Ernie Roberts asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Hackney, North and Stoke Newington constituency claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Hackney, North and Stoke Newington constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Hackney, Stoke Newington and Finsbury Park, although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the three offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Hackney	1,374
Stoke Newington	1,713
Finsbury Park	1,318

It is not possible to predict how many women in the constituency will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Liverpool, West Derby constituency received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 868 claims to maternity allowance were made at West Derby and 686 at Huyton, the Department's offices which cover the constituency although their boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Liverpool, West Derby will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Liverpool, West Derby constituency claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Liverpool, West Derby constituency is covered by the Department's offices at West Derby and Huyton although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the two offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
West Derby	1,356
Huyton	1,273

It is not possible to predict how many women in the constituency will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Loyden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Liverpool claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are

available; and how many women in Liverpool are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

Liverpool is served by a number of local DHSS offices. The number of claims received for maternity grant in each of the following 11 offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Belle Vale	1,021
Bootle	1,262
Breckfield	1,103
City	388
Crosby	965
Edge Hill	747
Garston	861
Huyton	1,273
Kirkby	1,435
Toxteth	854
West Derby	1,356

It is not possible to predict how many women in Liverpool will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Allan Roberts asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Bootle claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Bootle are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Bootle constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Bootle and Crosby although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the two offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Bootle	1,262
Crosby	965

It is not possible to predict how many women in the constituency will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Allan Roberts asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Bootle received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Bootle are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 846 claims to maternity allowance were made at Bootle and 617 at Crosby, the Department's offices which cover the constituency although their boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Bootle will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Park asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Coventry claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Coventry are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Coventry North-East constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Coventry East and Coventry West although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the two offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Coventry East	2,388
Coventry West	2,150

It is not possible to predict how many women in the constituency will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Park asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Coventry received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Coventry are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,369 claims to maternity allowance were made at Coventry (East) and 1,430 at Coventry (West) the Department's offices which cover the constituency although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Coventry will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Houghton and Washington received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Houghton and Washington are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 575 claims to maternity allowance were made at Chester-le-Street, 1,360 claims at Sunderland North and 370 claims at Houghton-le-Spring, the Department's offices which cover the constituency although their boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Houghton and Washington will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987.

However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Eastham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Manchester, Blackley received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Manchester, Blackley are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,003 claims to maternity allowance were made at Failsworth and 651 at Cheetham, the Department's offices which cover the constituency although their boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Manchester Blackley will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Hackney, South and Shoreditch received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Hackney, South and Shoreditch are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance annually after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 866 claims to maternity allowance were made at Hackney and 695 at Hoxton, the Department's offices which cover the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Hackney, South and Shoreditch will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Clwyd, South-West received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Clwyd, South-West are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,954 claims to maternity allowance were made at Wrexham and at Mold and 1,065 at Rhyl, the Department's offices which cover the constituency although their boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Clwyd, South-West will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Wrexham received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Wrexham are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,954 claims to maternity allowance were made at Wrexham, the Department's office which covers the constituency although their boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Wrexham will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Barnsley, West and Penistone constituency received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and what is his estimate of the number of women in Barnsley, West and Penistone constituency who are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 724 claims to maternity allowance were made at Barnsley West, the Department's office which covers the constituency although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Barnsley, West and Penistone will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Glasgow, Maryhill claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Glasgow, Maryhill constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Glasgow City, Springburn and Maryhill although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the three offices during the calendar year of 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Glasgow City	485
Springburn	927
Maryhill	1,103

It is not possible to predict how many women in the constituency will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (i) how many women in Glasgow, Maryhill received maternity allowance in the last year for which

figures are available and (ii) how many women in Glasgow, Maryhill are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 744 claims to maternity allowance were made at Springburn, 261 at City and 892 at Maryhill the Department's offices which cover the constituency although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Glasgow, Maryhill will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people are in receipt of supplementary benefit; how this compares with 1976; and how benefit rates compare with 1976 in real and money terms.

Mr. Lyell: I refer my hon. Friend to table 34.30 of "Social Security Statistics" 1986 for information about the number of supplementary benefit recipients; and to tables 5.6 and 5.7 of the "Abstract of Statistics for Index of Retail Prices, Average Earnings, Social Security Benefits and Contributions" August 1986 for information on the real and cash value of supplementary benefit rates. Copies of both publications are in the Library.

Casepaper Location

Mr. Lilley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress has been made in implementing the casepaper location project.

Mr. Lyell: The casepaper location system is being introduced to most local supplementary benefit offices on a rolling programme of installation. As at 30 January 1987, 382 offices out of a possible 440 had received the equipment.

Abortions

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, if he will give a breakdown of the different grounds for which abortions were performed in England and Wales in each of the last five years for which figures are available on: *(a)* resident and *(b)* non-resident women, stating how many of those abortions on such women were performed at nought to 19 weeks' gestation, 20 weeks, 21 weeks, 22 weeks, 23 weeks, 24 weeks, 25 weeks, 26 weeks, 27 weeks and 28 weeks or more, stating in each case: (i) the age of the mother, (ii) the marital status of the mother, (iii) the category or premises, (iv) the number of children previously liveborn to the mother, (v) the abortion technique used and (vi) whether the abortion was a National Health Service abortion carried out in a non-National Health Service centre under agency arrangements.

Mr. Newton: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Mortgage Interest Payments

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if the new rules for mortgage payments for the unemployed will apply to job training scheme trainees who do not find employment following the end of their training; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: The main change contained in the Supplementary Benefit (Housing Requirements and Resources) Amendment Regulations 1987 (SI 1987 No. 17)—to limit to 50 per cent. the amount included for mortgage interest in the supplementary benefit assessment of people under 60—only applies for the first 16 weeks on benefit. Subject to any other changes in circumstances, trainees on the job training scheme will receive the same income by way of training allowance and supplementary benefit while on the course as they received previously in benefit alone. Those who do not find work after training and whose circumstances are unchanged will normally get the same rate of benefit that they received before starting the course.

Leukaemia

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why the report by the Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys on the alleged link between leukaemia and nuclear power stations has still not been published and when he now expects to publish it.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to the reply*, 3 February 1987, c. *586*]: The report is a statistical study to provide better data about cancer incidence and mortality in the vicinity of nuclear installations in England and Wales 1959-80. It is expected to be published in March-April 1987 by the Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys in its series of studies of medical and population subjects. The data assembled in the study will be published in the report as an extensive series of tables or will be available on microfiche. My right hon. Friend will be asking the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment to examine the implications of the data in this report; its advice to him will be published in due course.

Single Payments (Birmingham)

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how long appeals against decisions relating to claims for single payments in Birmingham are taking to be dealt with compared to the period before the change in the regulations;

(2) how many appeals are being received each month in Birmingham against decisions relating to single payments for those on supplementary benefit; and how this compares to the period before the change in the regulations.

Mr. Lyell: I have been asked to reply.

I regret the information is not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 10 February 1987

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

State Security

Mr. McNamara asked the Attorney-General when his attention was first drawn to the article on Skynet in the 15 February 1985 edition of "Interspace".

The Solicitor-General: The Government became aware of this article on its publication.

TRANSPORT

A36 (Consultants Report)

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for Transport when the report of the consultant engineers on the A36 trunk road through West Wellow will be completed; and whether its contents will be made public.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We are considering the consultants' report, which we received recently. In accordance with our normal practice, it is not proposed to publish the report. I shall make an announcement as soon as I can.

Traffic Clubs

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the traffic club currently in operation in the Greater London area and its future funding.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The traffic club operating in Greater London is a part of the research and intelligence unit, which is run by the London Residuary Body as an agency service on behalf of the London boroughs. I understand that the future of the unit is currently the subject of discussion by the boroughs.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the contribution which the extension of national traffic clubs could make in regard to safety of young children.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Limited experience of traffic clubs in this country makes it impossible to assess what effect a national traffic club might have on child safety on the roads. There are some indications that in Scandinavia, where traffic clubs have been operating for longer, they have contributed with other factors to reductions in child pedestrian casualties.

Motorways (Lane Closures)

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the day miles of motorway lane closures in each of the last 15 years; and if he will express the lane closures as percentages of the total motorway mileage for each year.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This information is not available. The length of lane closure varies from day to day and hour to hour. It is impracticable to keep a comprehensive record of the changing pattern.

We expect work on about 5 per cent. of the network each year. Before the past six years, work was done on about 3 per cent. Within the next four years, we expect to eliminate the backlog.

Roads (Assessment Committee)

Mr. Ground asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will make a statement about the future of the Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Roads Assessment.

Mr. Moore: The Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Roads Assessment was set up in 1978 following the report of the Leitch committee. It produced a valuable report last year on the appraisal of urban road improvements. An independent committee, smaller in size, can continue to play an important role in the development of assessment methods. I have reconstituted the committee with Mr. Derek Wood, QC, as chairman. The other members will be Dr. P. Goodwin, Mr. A. E. Naylor, Mr. R. H. Stewart and Mr. H. J. Wootton. These appointments are for two years.

ENVIRONMENT

Small Businesses (Tenure)

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to seek to amend the provisions of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 regarding the security of tenure afforded to small businesses whose leases are in the names of the proprietors of the company trading from the premises; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: My Department reviewed all the provisions in part II of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 as recently as 1985, with particular reference to small businesses. It was concluded that generally the Act works well and that there are insufficient grounds for an immediate revision, but we continue to monitor its operation as to the need for any future amendments.

Local Authority Housing

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* those local authorities in England which have over 15 per cent. of their total local authority housing indicated in form HIP 1 as being difficult to let; and if he will give the percentage in each case.

Mr. Tracey: The numbers of difficult to let dwellings reported by authorities and the percentages of their stock were listed in the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) on 18 November 1986, at column *102*.

That list shows that 21 English authorities reported in their 1986 returns that over 15 per cent. of their stock was difficult to let. Figures for difficult to let dwellings were not reported in 1986 by Manchester, which reported about 25 per cent. in its 1984 return and by Southwark, which reported about 23 per cent. in its 1985 return.

Conservation Areas

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a map of England identifying County Heritage sites and areas of special importance for nature conservation which will be protected from industrial development and road planning.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall answer this question shortly.

Spectrum Arena

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply of 17 November 1986, *Official Report*, column 46, whether the sale of Spectrum Arena to CPW Leisure Ltd. has now been completed; what use he expects the arena will be put to after its sale; and how and where the money made from its sale will be spent.

Mr. John Patten: I understand that the proposed sale of Spectrum Arena to CPW Leisure Ltd. is not proceeding. The Warrington and Runcorn development corporation is actively seeking alternative offers. Its general expectation is that the arena will remain in leisure use. The corporation has indicated its intention to seek the Department's approval to spend a part of the proceeds of a sale on appropriate new facilities in Birchwood.

Rate Support Grant

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the rate support grant, in cash terms, to Leeds city council for each year since 1979.

Mr. Chope: The figures requested are as follows.

The figures for 1979-80 and 1980-81 are not comparable with those for 1981-82 to 1986-87 because they comprise the needs, resources and domestic elements, whereas from 1981-82 onwards the figures comprise block grant and domestic rate relief grant. The figures for 1981-82 to 1985-86 are not comparable with those for 1986-87 because of the abolition of the West Yorkshire metropolitan county on 31 March 1986.

All figures are in cash terms. Those for 1979-80 to 1982-83 are final entitlements. Domestic rate relief grant figures for 1983-84 and 1984-85 are final entitlement; those for 1985-86 and 1986-87 are first estimates. Block grant figures for 1983-84 and 1984-85 are entitlements after holdback based upon provisional outturn; those for 1985-86 are entitlements after holdback based on budgets; those for 1986-87 are entitlements based on initial budget returns.

Leeds City
Rate Support Grant (in cash terms)

	£ million
1979-80	118·816
1980-81	141·121
1981-82	122·790
1982-83	118·387
1983-84	123·612
1984-85	125·865
1985-86	119·643
1986-87	139·591

Housing Investment Programme

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the housing investment programme allocation in 1979 prices to Leeds city council for each year since 1979.

Mr. Tracey: The table gives the housing investment programme (HIP) allocations made to Leeds since 1979, together with the total capital expenditure the council has been able to incur on housing:

£ million (1979 prices)	HIP allocation	Expenditure
1979-80	32·349	31·974
1980-81	23·426	24·616
1981-82	19·199	18·557
1982-83	26·797	29·426
1983-84	20·377	25·353
1984-85	19·055	19·637
1985-86	15·380	16·495
1986-87	13·440	[1]27·041
1987-88	11·514	—

[1] Estimate

Private Flats

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to introduce legislation to enfranchise the leaseholders of private flats; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: Before this can be considered it will be necessary to resolve the technical difficulties over the enforcement against successive owners of freehold flats of positive covenants dealing with the repair and maintenance of common parts of the provision of common services. My noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor has set up a working group headed by a law commissioner to put forward a scheme to regulate relations between the owners of properties which are interdependent, such as blocks of flats, and has asked the group to report by the middle of the year.

Housing (Enveloping Schemes)

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many envelope schemes have been approved nationally since the introduction of the envelope scheme in 1982; and how many dwellings they include.

Mr. Tracey: Since 1982 a total of 106 enveloping schemes have been approved in England covering over 10,500 dwellings.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average time in weeks taken between receipt of an application for an envelope scheme by a regional office of his Department and the issuing of a decision on it.

Mr. Tracey: Since current procedures were adopted in 1984 the average time has been 18 weeks. The time taken for the last six schemes has been 11 weeks.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many envelope schemes have been completed; how many dwellings are included in them; and what expenditure has been incurred.

Mr. Tracey: A total of 63 approved enveloping schemes have been completed since 1982. Information is not

currently available on the number of dwellings and expenditure incurred specifically in completed schemes, but total expenditure on enveloping since 1982 has been £45 million up to 30 September 1986.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the distribution of completed envelope schemes; and what are the numbers of completed schemes between authorities.

Mr. Tracey: The following table shows the distribution of approved enveloping schemes in England completed as at 1 February 1987:

Local authority	*Number completed*
Allerdale D.C.	2
Birmingham C.C.	18
Lambeth L.B.	1
Leeds C.C.	1
Leicester C.C.	13
Middlesbrough B.C.	1
Oldham M.B.C.	2
Peterborough C.C.	2
Rochdale M.B.C.	7
Sandwell M.B.C.	1
Sheffield C.C.	1
Stockport M.B.C.	7
Trafford M.B.C.	6
Wolverhampton M.B.C.	1
Total	63

Local Government Finance

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing the amount of local authority rating revenue per head of population and rate support grant per head of population in each local authority area in 1986-87 or for the latest year for which figures are available.

Dr. Boyson: 1986-87 information, for English local authorities, has today been placed in the House of Commons Library.

PRIME MINISTER

EC Budget

Q37. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Prime Minister what proposals have been placed on the agenda of the next meeting of the European Council regarding the budget problem of the EEC; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The agenda for the next European Council has not yet been fixed. However, as I told my hon. Friend on 13 January, at column 144, the Community's financial problems are certain to be considered by the European Council this year.

USSR

Q44. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Prime Minister when she expects to visit the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

The Prime Minister: I expect to visit the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics at the end of March. Dates will be announced in due course.

Company Directors

Q177. **Sir David Price** asked the Prime Minister if she will take steps to consolidate the 250 different statutory provisions relating to the legal duties and responsibilities of directors of public companies in a single measure.

The Prime Minister: Much of the law relating to the duties and responsibilities of company directors has recently been consolidated into the Companies Act 1985, the Insolvency Act 1986 and the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986. The remaining provisions cover a wide area of activity and further consolidation would be inappropriate.

Pay Beds

Mr. Neil Hamilton asked the Prime Minister if she will list for each hospital within each health authority in England and Wales, hospital board in Scotland and hospital and social service board in Northern Ireland, the maximum number of authorised pay beds, distinguishing between non-emergency and emergency beds.

The Prime Minister: Tables giving the information requested will be placed in the Library shortly.

Engagements

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 February.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 February.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 February.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 February.

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 February.

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 February.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others, and attended the memorial service for the first Earl of Stockton. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty The Queen.

Strategic Defence Initiative

Mr. McNamara asked the Prime Minister what assessment she has made of the implications for the 22 December 1984 Camp David agreement with President Reagan of the United States Defence Secretary Caspar Weinberger's support for incremental deployment of strategic defence initiative weapons, as announced on 9 January; and if she has any plans to seek to review that agreement.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to review the Camp David four points.

Mr. McNamara asked the Prime Minister what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards sharing with the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics the results of United Kingdom strategic defence initiative research; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Government do not envisage sharing the results of SDI research with the Soviet Union.

Mr. McNamara asked the Prime Minister whether the doctrine of competitive strategy announced by US Defence Secretary Weinberger on 9 January represents NATO policy; what consultations there have been within the Alliance on the implementation of such a policy; and what is her assessment of the impact of this policy on relations between NATO and Warsaw Pact countries.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) on Friday 6 February.

Previous Administrations (Information)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister if she will specify the types of question which she is prepared to answer which relate to the periods of previous Administrations; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: As a general rule I do not answer questions relating to the policies and decisions of previous Administrations, for which I have no ministerial responsibility.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Highlands and Islands Development Board

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland what action is being taken following police inquiries into allegations of irregularities in the awarding of grants by the Highlands and Islands Development Board; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: A police report on one such case has been made to the procurator fiscal, Inverness, and the papers have been passed to the fraud unit at Crown Office, which is currently investigating this and another similar case. It would not be appropriate to give further details at this stage.

EMPLOYMENT

Jobcentres (Staffing)

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General whether he has any plans to increase jobcentre staff to cover the recently announced increase in restart interviews.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Our announcement of 28 January will result in an addition of about 700 to the number of staff engaged in the restart programme. The increase of staff on this work will be in part offset by the steady introduction of new technology, including the Supervacs system, to other aspects of the work of the jobcentres.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Paymaster General what is the total number of *(a)* unskilled and *(b)* partly skilled persons in the work force of Britain; and what information he has on comparable figures in other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries, showing in each case the actual figure and percentage of the total work force.

Mr. Lee: Estimates from the labour force survey conducted in the spring of 1985 show that at that time there were almost 1·3 million unskilled and just over 4 million semi-skilled manual workers in paid employment in Great Britain, representing respectively some 5·4 per cent. and 16·9 per cent. of all workers in paid employment. There are no figures for other OECD countries using comparable skill definitions.

Mr. Fatchett asked the Paymaster General how many people are registered as unemployed in each of the four city council wards within the Leeds, Central parliamentary constituency; and what is the percentage increase or decrease of the 1979 figures for each ward.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. Figures are given showing the numbers of unemployed claimants in the wards of the Leeds, Central parliamentary constituency on 11 December 1986. Statistics of unemployment from the ward-based system are available only from June 1983.

	Number
Beeston	1,213
City and Holbeck	2,203
Richmond Hill	1,944
University	2,113

Construction Industry

Mr. Rooker asked the Paymaster General if he has any plans to seek to improve the current safety record in the demolition section of the construction industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Yes. The Health and Safety Executive recognises that demolition is a high risk sector of the construction industry and as such is treating it as a priority area for inspection.

Mr. Rooker asked the Paymaster General when he expects the proposed new guidance note on managing health and safety in construction to be issued.

Mr. Trippier: The guidance note on managing health and safety in construction, which has been prepared by the Health and Safety Commission's construction industry advisory committee, has not yet been approved for publication by the commission itself. Until this has been done, it would be premature to give an estimate of the publication date.

Community Projects (Member's Correspondence)

Dr. Godman asked the Paymaster General, pursuant to the answer of 5 February, *Official Report*, column *758*, what are the reasons for the delay in writing to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow about the Manpower Services Commission's inquiry into the funding of certain community projects; if he will now take steps to expedite his Department's response; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: I am arranging to meet the hon. Member to discuss this matter.

Training

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Paymaster General if the eligibility rules for the job training scheme will allow

women who are unemployed, but not in receipt of benefit, to participate in the scheme and receive a training allowance.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 5 February 1987 c. *761*]: The job training scheme is being targeted on those most in need and able to benefit from training for a vocational qualification to obtain employment. Provided men or women have been signing as unemployed at an unemployment benefit office for six months or more, they will be eligible for the scheme. If they did not receive benefit immediately before starting training, but claimed credits for national insurance contributions, they will receive a training allowance whenever a change in their circumstances would have entitled them to benefit had they remained unemployed.

Youth Training Schemes

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Paymaster General how many people have completed youth training schemes in Leicester and the east midlands to date; how many left before completing their full entitlement to training; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 5 February 1987, c. *763-64*]: By the end of March 1986, around 2,500 young people in the local authority district of Leicester had completed YTS schemes since the scheme was introduced in 1983. The comparable figure for the Manpower Services Commissions east midlands and eastern region is 44,000. Over the same period around 3,600 young people in Leicester and 59,000 in the east midlands and eastern region, left the scheme before completing their full entitlement.

Independent research has shown that most of these early leavers left to take up jobs. For example, of those young people who left YTS early, in Leicester between April 1985 and March 1986, 55 per cent. were in work some three months after leaving. All in all, the figures demonstrate that large numbers of young people are both taking up, and benefiting from, the opportunities which YTS has to offer in Leicester and the east midlands.

Greenock and Port Glasgow

Dr. Godman asked the Paymaster General if he will estimate employment trends in the Greenock and Port Glasgow constituency over the next two years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I have been asked to reply.

No official employment projections are available. In the light of recent developments the outlook is obviously uncertain. The Government are considering what steps might be taken to alleviate the problems caused by the planned redundancies at Scott-Lithgow.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Skynet

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when his attention was first drawn to the article on Skynet in the 15 February 1985 edition of "Interspace".

Mr. Renton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given earlier today by my right hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General.

EC (British Presidency)

Sir Russell Johnston asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make available in the Library the booklet, "Guidance on the Exercise of the Presidency", issued to British officials chairing European Community committees during the British presidency.

Mrs. Chalker: I have arranged for a copy to be placed in the Library.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Trade Statistics

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will show the crude balance of imports and exports of *(a)* cereals and cereal preparations, *(b)* motor vehicles and *(c)* electrical goods in 1979 and 1986; and if he will compare the net overall position in 1979 with 1986;

(2) if he will show *(a)* total imports and *(b)* total exports of (i) cereals and cereal preparations, (ii) all agricultural products, (iii) all other imports and exports, (iv) motor vehicles, (v) electrical goods, (vi) steel and (vii) coal for 1979 and 1986; and if he will show, in each case, the difference between *(a)* and *(b)* in actual and percentage terms.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is as follows:

Value: £ million

	1979				*1986*[1]			
	(a) imports (cif)	*(b) exports (fob)*	*Crude balance £ million*	*as percentage of (a)*	*(a) imports (cif)*	*(b) exports (fob)*	*Crude balance £ million*	*as percentage of (a)*
Total trade	48,423	42,802	−5,621	12	86,067	73,009	−13,058	15
of which:								
(i) Cereals and cereal preparations	668	264	−404	60	769	1,177	+408	53
(ii) Agricultural products	6,264	1,814		71	9,356	4,001	−5,355	57
(iii) Other	42,160	40,998	−4,450	3	76,710	69,008	−7,702	10
of which			1,172					
(iv) Motor vehicles	2,997	1,519	−1,479	49	5,684	1,764	−3,920	69
(v) Electrical goods	3,643	3,633	−9	0	11,600	8,799	−2,801	24
(vi) Steel	998	1,080	+83	8	1,520	1,591	+71	5
(v) Coal	136	62	−74	54	443	107	−336	76

Sources: The following SITC/R2 data in the United Kingdom Overseas Trade Statistics: (i) Division 04, (ii) Sections 0 and 4 and Division 22, (iv) Groups 781, 782, 783 and Sub-group 784.1, (v) Divisions 75, 76, 77 and Group 716, (vi) Groups 672-675, Sub-groups 678.2, .3, .4 and 679.3 and Items 676.01 (part), .02 (part), 679.42 and 791.99 (part), (vii) Sub-groups 322.1 and 322.2.

Notes:

(i) Crude balance is United Kingdom exports (fob) less United Kingdom imports (cif)

(ii) 0 signified a value of less than 0·5

(iii) [1] 1986 figures are provisional.

South Africa

Mr. Litherland asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the extent to which civil trade with South Africa should be determined by commercial considerations, rather than the character of the Government of those countries.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Government's policy is that the level of civil trade with South Africa should, within the limits of our international obligations and undertakings, be determined by the commercial judgment of those engaged in it.

Mr. Patchett asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether Her Majesty's Government propose to strengthen the ban on the export of computer equipment liable to be used by South African security forces.

Mr. Alan Clark: No.

Designated Agencies (Power Transfer)

Mr. Nelson asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress has been made towards the transfer of powers under the Financial Services Act 1986 to a designated agency.

Mr. Howard: My right hon. Friend has today received a letter from the chairman of The Securities and Investments Board Limited, together with a statement of the regulatory arrangements the board would propose to operate if powers are transferred to it. This statement includes a copy of the rules and regulations the board proposes to make and the guidance it proposes to issue. The board will be publishing this statement later this week. In accordance with the procedures laid down in the Financial Services Act 1986, my right hon. Friend has asked the Director General of Fair Trading to report to him whether the board's proposed rules, regulations and guidance are likely to have a significantly anti-competitive effect. My right hon. Friend will naturally take into account any representations that he received by 28 February from interested parties on that or any other aspect of the board's proposals. Following this, he will be considering whether the requirements for designation set out in the Act are satisfied in the case of the board. If they are, he hopes to lay a delegation order before the House in draft in the spring.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Alternative Land Use

Mr. Bruce asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he intends to introduce measures to promote the development of woodland on farms; what representations have been made from United Kingdom farming interests and the European Economic Community on this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: We are very much in favour of more farmers planting trees on part of their land and farming interests have made a number of representations to us on this matter which we are still considering. Possible action on forestry is also under consideration by the European Commission.

Cider

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the additives currently permitted to be used in cider brewed or sold within the United Kingdom; and if he proposes any changes.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Cider may contain any additive permitted for general food use plus those specifically permitted for use in cider by the Preservatives in Food Regulations 1979.

We have no plans at present to change existing controls, but food additives regulations are kept under continuous review and are amended when necessary, taking into account the advice of the Food Advisory Committee, and after consultation with all interests.

Beer

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the additives currently permitted to be used in beer brewed or sold within the United Kingdom; and if he proposes any changes.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Beer may contain any additive permitted for general food use plus those specifically permitted for use in beer by the Preservatives in Food Regulations 1979. We have no plans at present to change existing controls, but food additives regulations are kept under continuous review and are amended when necessary, taking into account the advice of the Food Advisory Committee and after consultation with all interests.

Salmon Advisory Committee

Mr. Soames asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, pursuant to his reply of 9 December 1986, *Official Report*, column *110*, he is yet in a position to announce the membership of the Salmon Advisory Committee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Following consideration by Fisheries Ministers of nominations from interested organisations, in consultation with Professor Dunnet, the committee's chairman, I am pleased to be able to announce that the following persons have accepted invitations to serve on the Salmon Advisory Committee:

Mr. G. H. Bielby
Mr. C. G. Carnie
Mr. R. M. Clerk
The Hon. Edward Davies
Mr. S. J. Day
Mr. E. P. Ecroyd
Lt. Col. James H. Ferguson
Sir William Gordon-Cumming
Mr. N. W. Graesser

Dr. M. M. Halliday
Mr. D. Heselton
Mr. A. V. Holden
Dr. W. R. Howells
Dr. P. S. Maitland
Mr. I. Mitchell
Mr. M. J. Morgan
Mr. D. R. Patton
Dr. J. D. Pirie
Dr. D. J. Solomon
Mr. W. A. C. Thomson

In considering membership of the committee we have been aware of the need to strike an appropriate balance both between the interests and experience of the members and between the different parts of Great Britain.

The committee will meet for the first time in London on 26 February 1986.

ENERGY

Foreign Electricity Industries (Costs)

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for Energy what comparative information is available to him on the impact of nuclear power on the operating costs of foreign electricity industries.

Mr. Goodlad: The methods of generating electricity in other countries are a matter for the industries concerned and comparative information is not always readily available. However, as examples, the latest available accounts for Electricité de France show that in 1985 the revenue costs per unit of nuclear output were less than half those per unit of output from conventional thermal stations. The 1984-85 accounts for the German utility RWE comment that as a result of the relatively favourable fuel costs, lignite-fired and nuclear power stations are used to meet base-load electricity requirements.

Severn Barrage

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Energy if there have been any developments regarding the proposed Severn barrage since his announcement of July 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Details of the Severn barrage work programme, related studies and procedures for consultation are being discussed by the Central Electricity Generating Board, the Severn Tidal Power Group and my Department. It is intended that full details of the studies and consultation procedures will be widely circulated for comment and that there should be an ongoing consultation process with all interested parties. A first consultative document will be available soon.

Sizewell B Power Station

Mr. Powley asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will consider representations in reaching his decision on Sizewell B; and when he will reach his decision.

Mr. Goodlad: My right hon. Friend will consider any relevant material which he receives, as he has always done in making his decisions on applications for the construction of power stations. He has said that he wishes to hear the views of the House before reaching his decision on Sizewell B. The debate will take place in the week beginning 23 February. He will reach his decision as soon as possible thereafter.

Electricity Prices

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list electricity prices *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* in France for (i) domestic and (ii) industrial consumers.

Mr. Goodlad [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 January 1987, c. *58*]: A wide range of tariffs is available in both the United Kingdom and France. It is not, therefore, practicable to specify all the prices that a consumer may pay. Moreover, any direct comparison is strongly influenced by the prevailing exchange rate. The Electricity Council's latest estimates for a typical domestic consumer on a standard tariff and for an average industrial consumer are shown in the table below. French prices for domestic consumers include the effects of VAT and local taxes, which are not payable in the United Kingdom. I understand that where customers in France are prepared to suffer substantial amounts of load reduction during 18 designated hours on each of 22 days significant discounts are available.

Average price per unit	*Domestic (3,300 units per annum including standing charge)*	*Industrial (2½ MW maximum demand at 50 per cent. load factor)*
England and Wales (pence/kwh)	6·28	3·75
France (francs/kwh)	0·733-0·792	0·365

THE ARTS

London and the Regions

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Minister for the Arts what research he is undertaking on the provision of art in London and the regions.

Mr. Luce: I contribute to the costs of "Facts about the Arts", a research publication compiled by the Policy Studies Institute which provides regional breakdowns. In addition funding bodies like the Arts Council keep me fully informed as to the relative proportions which go to London and to the regions.

Association of Metropolitan Authorities

Ms. Clare Short asked the Minister for the Arts when he last met the Association of Metropolitan Authorities to discuss arts policy.

Mr. Luce: On 17 November 1986.

Sherman Theatre, Cardiff

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received about the future funding of the Sherman theatre, Cardiff.

Mr. Luce: Two letters.

Public Library Service

Mr. Haynes asked the Minister for the Arts what steps he intends to take to improve funding of the public library service.

Mr. Luce: Planned central Government provision through the rate support grant for libraries in 1987-88 is

over 15 per cent. higher than that for 1986-87. The actual level of spending on public libraries is a matter for individual local authorities.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

North East London Polytechnic

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the capital allocation for 1987-88 for the North East London polytechnic in respect of equipment and buildings on minor works together with those for the financial years 1986-87 and 1985-86.

Mr. Walden: Capital allocations to Barking local education authority included the following sums for advanced further education equipment and minor building works at North East London polytechnic:

	Equipment £	*Minor works* £
1985-86	606,600	115,780
1986-87	523,000	65,000
1987-88	338,000	—

No resources were available nationally for allocation for further and higher education minor works in 1987-88. Authorities are free to start such projects if they can do so within the total capital spending power available to them.

Wheathampstead School

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has received any representations from pupils or parents regarding the future of Wheathampstead school; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has received no such representations.

Student Counsellors

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many institutions of further and higher education have student counsellors; and what information he has on the way in which counsellors are dealing with stress amongst students.

Mr. Walden: The Department does not have this information. Her Majesty's inspectors have observed variations between institutions in the extent of their provision which has been the subject of a recent postal survey by the Association for Student Counselling. Counsellors are increasingly involved in training programmes for staff which will enhance the role of the latter in helping to counsel students.

Mathematics and Physics

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the progress of his measures to recruit service personnel for teaching mathematics and physics.

Mrs. Rumbold: Recruitment to initial teacher training in 1986 was 6 per cent. higher in mathematics and 34 per cent. higher in physics by comparison with 1985. Applications so far for 1987 suggest a further improvement. Data are not held centrally on the previous history of candidates but a number of recruits have employment experience. The armed forces have welcomed information about teaching as a potential second career for suitably qualified personnel.

School Closures

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will now give his decision on the representations he has received against the proposed further reduction of pupils into the Myton school, Warwick, from September 1987;

(2) if he will now give his decision over the proposed closure of Wolverton junior and infant school;

(3) if he will now give his decision over the proposed closure of Baddesley Clinton RC junior and infant school.

Mr. Dunn: These proposals published by Warwickshire LEA are currently before my right hon. Friend, and a decision will be announced shortly.

School Accommodation

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, further to his reply of 21 January, *Official Report*, column *557*, what proportion of school buildings in the 10 local education authorities listed date from before *(a)* 1900 and *(b)* 1918.

Mr. Dunn: This information is not held centrally.

Research

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list any research projects on the implementation of the Education Act 1981 known to his Department other than those commissioned by his Department; and if, in each case, he will give *(a)* a brief description of the project, *(b)* the publication date of the final report and *(c)* any subsequent action taken by the Department.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend is aware of only two such projects:

'Effectiveness of Locational Integration for Children with Special Educational Needs': a 15-month project funded by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. It cost £22,128 and was based at University College, Cardiff under the direction of Dr. G. Upton. It focused on children with moderate learning difficulties in four LEAs in South Wales and its aim was to measure the extent to which local integration led to social and functional integration. The project ended June 1986 and the draft Report is currently under consideration. A decision on publication has yet to be taken.

'Screening and Special Educational Provisions in Schools': a three-year project funded by the Economic and Social Research Council. It cost £100,230 and was based at the University of London Institute of Education under the direction of Professor H. Goldstein. It involved the major application of standardised testing in primary schools to identify children who may be in need of special attention or teaching and investigated both screening and provision for special educational needs within the classroom. The final report is currently under consideration by ESRC and is expected to be published in due course.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the research projects on the implementation of the Education Act 1981 sponsored by his Department; and if, in each case, he will give *(a)* a brief description of the project, *(b)* the publication date of the final report and *(c)* any subsequent action taken by his Department.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has sponsored four research projects concerned with implementation of the Education Act 1981:

Meeting Special Educational Needs — Support for the Ordinary School: National Foundation for Educational Research.

Project Impact — In-service Education and Special Educational Needs: Manchester University/Huddersfield Polytechnic.

Education Act 1981: Policy and Provision for Special Educational Needs: University of London Institute of Education.

Education Act 1981: Development of Training Materials for Use on a Multi-Professional Basis in the Management of Change in the Special Needs Field: University of London Institute of Education. (This project is jointly funded with DHSS).

The NFER project examined ways in which ordinary schools, by re-structuring and by drawing on external resources, can enhance their capacity to educate children with special educational needs. Project impact evaluated a transbinary regional modular diploma leading to an advanced specialist qualification in special educational needs. Policy and provision for special education needs was concerned with procedures adopted by LEAs to implement the provisions of the Act and the impact of these on district health authorities, social services departments, voluntary organisations, parents and the children concerned. The findings of these three projects were the subject of a major dissemination seminar in November 1986 and were presented to the Department on 31 December 1986.

The fourth project began in October 1986 and will run for two years.

The Department is studying the findings of the first three projects. Any further action must await the outcome of the inquiry by the Select Committee for Education, Science and the Arts into special education.

Student Grants

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will outline how he is seeking the views of students on those measures under review relating to students' grants and loans, mentioned in the letter of 2 February to all hon. Members.

Mr. Walden: Written evidence has been invited and received from the National Union of Students and my review group is today meeting the NUS to discuss it. Written evidence has also been received from the Bath Area Students' Organisation, Bristol University Graduate Association, Cambridge University Graduate Union, Cambridge University Students' Union, Cranfield Students' Union, Edinburgh University Students' Association, Heriot-Watt University Students' Association, Herts. Area National Union of Students, National Union of Students (UK) and Union of Students in Ireland, Northern Ireland Regional Committee, Open University Student Association, Oxford University Student Union, Sheffield City Polytechnic Union of Students, Sheffield University Students' Union, and Southampton University Students' Union.

As stated in the letter I have met students at their institutions here and in America to hear their views. I have in particular visited university and polytechnic student accommodation in London.

University Grants Committee

Mr. Knowles asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has yet received the report of Lord Croham's review of the University Grants Committee; and if it will be published.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The report of the committee, chaired by Lord Croham, which has been reviewing the role and functions of the University Grants Committee is being published today. Copies are available in the Vote Office.

It is a valuable report with important recommendations for the future of a body which is central to the relationship between Government and our universities. My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Northern Ireland and Scotland and I are grateful to Lord Croham and the members of his committee for their work and the clarity of their report.

I am inviting interested bodies to let me have detailed comments on the report's recommendations by 30 June 1987. In order to inform this consultative process the Government intends to announce fairly quickly its own broad conclusions on the principal recommendations. I am therefore asking for any comments on the general approach proposed in the report to be submitted within the next month.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Nicaragua

Mr. Ground asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much aid has been given by Her Majesty's Government bilaterally to Nicaragua in each of the last five years; and how much aid has been given by the European Community to Nicaragua in each of the last five years.

Mrs. Chalker: British bilateral aid to Nicaragua over the five years 1981 to 1985 was:

	£'000
1981	91
1982	49
1983	64
1984	9
1985	116

This aid was used for two purposes: disaster relief, channelled through the Nicaraguan Red Cross, Oxfam and the Catholic Fund for Overseas Development; and the training of a few Nicaraguans in Britain. In addition, we helped British voluntary agencies to fund some projects in Nicaragua.

European Community aid to Nicaragua between 1981 and 1985 was:

	£'000
1981	501
1982	415
1983	452
1984	1,099
1985	976

Figures for 1986 are not yet available.

Honduras

Mr. Ground asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much aid has been given

by Her Majesty's Government bilaterally to Honduras in each of the last five years; and how much aid has been given by the European Community to Honduras in each of the last five years.

Mrs. Chalker: British bilateral aid to Honduras over the five years 1981 to 1985 was:

	Bilateral aid £'000	*of which[1] £'000*
1981	5,002	4,702
1982	2,272	1,200
1983	6,670	4,984
1984	3,446	2,599
1985	3,653	2,967

[1] Commonwealth Development Corporation loans.

European Community aid to Honduras between 1981 and 1985 was:

	£'000
1981	3,560
1982	5,130
1983	4,240
1984	8,130
1985	225

Figures for 1986 are not yet available.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Wandsworth Prison

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans his Department has to provide extra car parking space at Wandsworth prison; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: There are no plans to provide additional car parking space at Wandsworth beyond the 82 places currently available for staff.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Gerald Bowden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what studies have been made by his Department of the downwind lethal range of the effects of munitions containing nerve gas;

(2) if his Department's scientific research branch is working on protective measures against chemical weapons.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) on 5 February 1987 at column *775*.

Gas Leaks

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library his Department's advice to local fire authorities in England and Wales on the provision of gas detection equipment on fire appliances for use by fire brigades in the prompt detection of gas leaks at incidents.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have placed in the Library copies of Home Office guidance on problems associated with gas detection.

Fire Brigades (Establishment)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will estimate the loss of firefighters' posts, fire appliances and fire stations that will result from the implementation of the 1987-88 establishment schemes for the London and metropolitan county fire brigades, separately distinguishing each brigade.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is at present considering the proposed establishment, support service and management schemes for 1987-88 submitted by the metropolitan fire and civil defence authorities. The London Fire and Civil Defence Authority has been granted an extension of time, and has not yet submitted its proposals.

When made or approved, copies of the schemes will be laid before Parliament.

Bus Lanes

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will ask the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis how many prosecutions there were in the last 12 months for parking in the bus lane in Whitechapel road in east London.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis has informed me that the information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Prison Officers' Houses

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the 39 prison officers' houses at Culcheth have now been sold; how long they were unoccupied before their sale; how much they were sold for; which estate agents sold them; and how the money from the sale will be used.

Mr. Mellor: None of the 39 houses has been sold because offers so far received have not met the conditions of sale referred to in my reply to the hon. Member of 28 April 1986 at column *307*. Marketing has now been suspended pending agreement on adoption specifications by the local authority.

Most of the houses have now been unoccupied for five to six years. Receipts from the sale will be credited as appropriations in aid to the Prisons (England and Wales) Vote, Class XI, 2.

Animal Procedures Committee

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will now announce the membership of the Animal Procedures Committee under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Animal Procedures Committee will be appointed shortly and the membership of the Committee will be made public.

Police (Traffic Duties)

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers in England and Wales were deployed on specialist traffic duties on 30 November in each year between 1980 and 1986.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I gave the available information for 1986 in my reply to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) on 5 February at column 783. Information for previous years is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has received the 12th annual report of the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tom King: The report has been published today, and copies have been laid before Parliament. It covers the period 1 November 1985 to 31 October 1986.

The report deals with a wide range of matters which the Commission has considered during the year under review. These include emergency legislation, the European Convention on Human Rights, treatment of prisoners, police complaints procedure, electoral and divorce law, special education and children care.

Copies of my response to the Commission's report have been placed in the Library.

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what figures are available to indicate the total number and total value of exceptionally severe weather payments made in each social security office in Northern Ireland in 1986.

Mr. Needham: The available information is as follows:

Exceptionally severe weather payments 1986

Social security office	*Number*	*Amount £*
Andersonstown	2,782	112,376·07
Antrim	1,900	65,458·98
Armagh	1,747	58,918·92
Ballymena	1,443	51,439·13
Ballymoney	1,646	56,281·98
Ballynahinch	290	7,862·00
Banbridge	966	32,253·74
Bangor	401	11,125·01
Carrickfergus	981	31,140·17
Coleraine	1,619	56,597·64
Cookstown	1,499	32,235·79
Corporation Street	4,004	153,995·53
Downpatrick	735	20,747·02
Dungannon	2,168	80,088·97
Enniskillen	2,363	64,358·37
Falls Road	3,736	139,503·69
Holywood Road	2,087	74,336·32
Kilkeel	450	16,417·13
Knockbreda	1,120	45,445·77
Larne	971	22,529·71
Limavady	1,488	36,794·87
Lisburn	1,608	52,401·56
Londonderry	6,153	236,270·43
Lurgan	1,705	64,258·01
Magherafelt	1,887	80,976·50
Newcastle	486	16,609·27
Newry	3,813	97,814·10
Newtownabbey	1,877	67,504·38
Newtownards	1,241	38,716·97
Omagh	1,706	46,302·77
Portadown	1,260	40,473·66
Shaftesbury Square	1,203	37,807·53
Shankill	1,600	54,391·48
Strabane	2,011	84,479·86
TOTALS	60,946	2,087,913·33

Note: The figures relate to payments during the period 12 March 1986 to 16 December 1986. Information for the remainder of the year is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what weeks in 1986 were declared as periods of exceptionally severe weather; and which of those weeks had average temperatures of or lower than *(a)* 0 deg C or *(b)* minus 1·5 deg C in any area of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: The declaration in effect covered four weeks from 3 February 1986 to 2 March 1986. During that period the average weekly temperature did not fall below 0 deg C at any of the weather stations (at Aldergrove, Lisburn, Carmoney and Carrigans) now designated for exceptionally cold weather payments purposes. At two of the stations only (Lisburn and Carmoney) the average reached 0 deg C (during week commencing 24 February 1986).

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what figures are available to indicate for the weeks 5 January to 11 January and 12 January to 18 January 1987 the daily mean temperature, the minimum night temperature and the weekly mean temperature for each weather station in Northern Ireland, designated for measuring temperatures for exceptionally severe weather payments.

Mr. Needham: The information is as follows:

Temperature data: 12 January 1987—18 January 1987

	Weekly mean	*Monday*		*Tuesday*		*Wednesday*		*Thursday*		*Friday*		*Saturday*		*Sunday*	
		Daily mean	*Minimum night*	*Daily mean*	*Minimum night*	*Daily mean*	*Minimum night*	*Daily mean*	*Minimum night*	*Daily mean*	*Minimum night*	*Daily mean*	*Minimum night*	*Daily mean*	*Minimum night*
Aldergrove	0·0	−4·5	−6·0	−4·0	−6·9	−1·1	−4·3	0·5	−1·7	1·7	1·1	3·7	1·5	4·0	1·6
Lisburn	0·3	−4·0	−5·2	−3·5	−6·6	−1·0	−3·8	0·3	−1·6	2·1	1·2	4·1	1·9	4·5	2·0
Carmoney	−0·2	−4·1	−6·0	−3·8	−7·0	−1·5	−4·8	0·2	−1·6	1·0	0·0	3·2	0·4	3·3	−0·4
Carrigans	−0·6	−4·5	−6·5	−5·3	−8·5	−2·2	−6·1	−0·3	−3·0	1·4	0·7	2·6	0·1	3·4	0·2

Temperature data: 5 January 1987—11 January 1987

	Weekly mean	Monday Daily mean	Monday Mini-mum night	Tuesday Daily mean	Tuesday Mini-mum night	Wednesday Daily mean	Wednesday Mini-mum night	Thursday Daily mean	Thursday Mini-mum night	Friday Daily mean	Friday Mini-mum night	Saturday Daily mean	Saturday Mini-mum night	Sunday Daily mean	Sunday Mini-mum night
Aldergrove	2·0	5·0	3·4	3·9	2·3	−0·3	−5·2	0·0	−4·7	3·1	0·7	3·5	3·1	−0·8	−1·2
Lisburn	1·5	5·1	3·8	3·5	1·0	−0·8	−6·0	−0·1	−6·0	0·6	−4·0	3·7	3·4	−0·6	−1·0
Carmoney	2·2	4·9	3·0	4·6	3·5	0·9	−1·2	1·8	−1·0	2·5	0·2	1·8	−0·4	−0·8	−1·4
Carrigans	1·9	4·7	2·8	3·3	1·0	0·0	−3·5	0·1	−3·9	3·3	0·9	3·5	2·1	−0·9	−1·5

Handicapped Children

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the information available to him on the numbers of children with special educational needs in each education authority in Northern Ireland; and what is his estimate, in each case, of the percentage of these children who are persons to whom the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons (Northern Ireland) Act 1978 applies.

Dr. Mawhinney [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 February 1987]: The latest available figures relate to pupils determined as hnadicapped at January 1986 and are as shown in the table.

Insufficient information is available to estimate accurately the percentage of the pupils included who would come within the scope of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons (NI) Act 1978.

Education and Library board	*Number of pupils*
Belfast	1,309
Western	821
North-Eastern	760
South-Eastern	860
Southern	447
Total	4,197

NATIONAL FINANCE

Income Levels

Mr. Raynsford asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the answer to the question from the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) on 1 December 1986, *Official Report*, colum *470*, if he will estimate the average weekly earnings after tax, national insurance contributions and child benefit at *(a)* current prices and *(b)* constant April 1986 prices of (i) a single man, (ii) a married man, (iii) a married man with two children under 11 years, and (iv) a single woman, all with earnings in the highest 5 per cent. of income levels.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Estimates of the levels of earnings for the top 5 per cent. of earners are not published. The information in the table is based on estimates of these levels derived from distributions of earnings published in the relevant new earnings surveys. Earning levels are for men or women as appropriate paid at adult rates with pay unaffected by absence. Taxpayers are asumed to have no reliefs or allowances other than the appropriate personal allowances.

Earnings after Tax, National Insurance Contributions[1] and Child Benefit (£ per week)

	April 1979[4]	*April 1986*
Single Man		
At current prices	114·17	263·18
At constant April 1986 prices[2]	205·37	263·18
Married Man[3]		
At current prices	117·98	272·20
At constant April 1986 prices[2]	212·22	272·20
Married Man[3] with two children under 11		
At current prices	125·98	286·20
At constant April 1986 prices[2]	226·61	286·20
Single Woman		
At current prices	72·23	164·05
At constant April 1986 prices[2]	129·92	164·05

[1] At the contracted in rate.
[2] By reference to the retail price index.
[3] Assuming no wife's earnings.
[4] Under the April 79 tax/benefit regime.

Taxation

Mr. Greenway asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the effect on total tax revenue of reductions in the marginal rates of tax since 1979.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to income tax rates. If the 1986-87 income tax allowances, thresholds, and rates were replaced by the 1978-79 income tax allowances, thresholds and rates, indexed to 1986-87 levels by reference to the statutory formula, the direct revenue cost on the 1986-87 income tax base would be about £8·1 billion in a full year. But this estimate makes no allowance for any behavioural changes.

The direct revenue cost can be attributed to the following changes in allowances, thresholds, and rates:

Changes from 1978-79 tax regime indexed to 1986-87 to obtain 1986-87 tax regime

	Yield (+) Cost (−) £ million
1. Increases in personal allowances	−3,270
2. Abolition of reduced rate band at 25p	+1,400
3. Decrease in basic rate of 4p	−3,920
4. Increase in basic rate limit of £1,100	−185
5. Changes in higher rate thresholds up to 60 per cent.	−500
6. Abolition of higher rates above 60 per cent.	−800
7. Abolition of investment income surcharge	−825
Total	−8,100

In the table, the effect of each change has been calculated on the assumption that each of the previous changes has already been made.

Cigarettes (Taxation)

Mr. Lester asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to the average tax in pence on a packet of 20 of the most popular brand of cigarette in each of the 12 member states of the European Economic Community.

Mr. Brooke: According to the latest information available, the figures for excise duty and VAT on 20 cigarettes in the most popular price category in the EC member states are as set out in the table:

Excise duty and VAT on 20 cigarettes in the most popular price category: 29 January 1987[1]

	RSP[2] *(pence)*	*Factor*[3] *cost (pence)*	*Total duty (pence)*	*VAT (pence)*	*Total tax (pence)*	*Total tax as per cent. of RSP*
Belgium	97	29	63	5	68	70
Denmark	240	32	165	43	208	87
France	49	13	24	12	36	73
Germany	138	36	85	12	102	74
Greece	29	13	16	[4]	[4]	[4]
Ireland	173	45	93	35	128	74
Italy	76	21	43	12	55	72
Luxembourg	76	26	46	4	50	66
Netherlands	106	30	58	18	76	72
Portugal	47	14	26	7	33	70
Spain	50	24	21	5	26	52
United Kingdom	150	37	93	20	113	75

[1] Rates of exchange as at 29 January 1987.
[2] Retail selling price.
[3] Cost exclusive of duty and VAT.
[4] Although Greece has set its VAT rates (6 per cent. 18 per cent. and 36 per cent.) details of which rate will apply to tobacco products are not yet available.
Source: EC Excise Duty Tables.

Mortgage Interest Relief

Sir William Clark asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the cost to the Exchequer if mortgage interest relief was increased to £31,000, £32,000 and £35,000 respectively.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Assuming no consequential changes to the distribution of mortgages outstanding, the direct revenue cost, in a full year at 1986-87 levels, of an increase in the ceiling for mortgage interest relief is estimated to be:

Ceiling £	*Cost £ million*
31,000	25
32,000	45
35,000	100

The cost of an increase in the ceiling at 1987-88 levels would probably be significantly higher than the estimates above, both because the number of new home loans over £30,000 has been increasing recently and because an increase in the ceiling might stimulate additional borrowing. The cost for 1987-88 will also depend on the level of interest rates in that year as well as on the 1987-88 income tax rates and bands.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will state the total of *(a)* persons and *(b)* full-time equivalents employed in the (i) Civil Service, (ii) armed services, (iii) National Health Service, (iv) local authorities and (v) nationalised industries throughout the United Kingdom in 1985-86; and what were the comparable figures with 1979-80.

Mr. MacGregor: Numbers in thousands were as follows:

	mid-year 1979		*mid-year 1985*	
	Headcount	*Full-time Equivalent*	*Headcount*	*Full-time Equivalent*
Civil Service[1]	731	716	600	588
HM Forces[2]	314	314	326	326
National Health Service[3]	1,152	975	1,223	1,026
Local Authorities	2,997	2,368	2,958	2,325
Nationalised Industries	1,849	1,818	1,137	1,124

[1] Excludes Civil Servants employed outside the United Kingdom and also excludes the Northern Ireland Civil Service.
[2] Excludes local engaged personnel abroad.
[3] 1979 full-time equivalent figure relates to 30 September.
Sources: Treasury statistics of Civil Service manpower; 'Employment in the public and private sectors, 1980 to 1986' Economic Trends, December 1986.

Incomes

Mr. Clay asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the increase in the average real net incomes of the working population since May 1979.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 15 January 1987, c. 295]: Real increases in take-home pay from 1978-79 to 1986-87 for those on average adult male earnings are as follows:

	Percentage
Single	18·5
Married man:	
no children	18·1
two children	17·7

The estimates are based on the following assumptions:
(a) No allowances or reliefs other than the appropriate personal allowances;
(b) no wife's earnings;
(c) National Insurance Contributions at the contracted-in rate;
(d) earnings at average adult males (all occupations) rate; and use the retail prices index to measure changes in real terms.

Legislation

Mr. Sean Hughes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer on what occasions since June 1979 his Department had to introduce amending legislation to *(a)* legislation introduced since June 1979 because of doubts about legality or because such legislation had been successfully challenged in the courts and *(b)* amend or withdraw orders introduced since June 1979, because of doubts about legality or because such orders had been successfully challenged in the courts.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 January 1987, c. 86]: From time to time it has been necessary to propose tax legislation in Finance Bills or to make statutory instruments amending past legislation in the light of court decisions or legal advice. It is not, however, possible always to distinguish whether amending legislation is necessary because:

a. the courts or legal advice demonstrated that the original legislation did not meet its original intention, or
b. there were new developments in the external environment which the original legislation did not deal with appropriately, or
c. subsequent experience showed that the original intention behind the legislation needed to be amended.

It is not therefore practicable without disproportionate cost to provide the information sought.

Income Tax

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the cost in the 1987-88 financial year of introducing a reduced rate band of 25p of income tax on (i) the first £750 of taxable income, (ii) the first £1,000 of taxable income and (iii) the first £1,500 of taxable income; and in each case, what would be the impact on the net income of a married man on half average earnings, three quarters average earnings, average earnings, twice average earnings, five times average earnings and 10 times average earnings.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 29 January 1987, c. 384-85]: The direct revenue costs are estimated to be about £700 million, £900 million and £1,300 million respectively, in a full year at 1987-88 levels of income, compared with the tax regime resulting from 3·7 per cent. statutory indexation of 1986-87 allowances and thresholds. At each of the levels of gross income specified the gain in net income from introduction of the reduced rate bands would be (i) 58p (ii) 77p and (iii) £1·15 per week respectively. The estimates of revenue cost assume that a separate lower rate band would also be available to a married couple against the wife's earned income; and that the thresholds for higher rates of tax would be unaffected by the introduction of the lower rate band.

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will report the number of taxpayers and total income tax due from each range of £1,000 between £2,000 and £13,000 and for the following ranges: £12,000 to £16,000, £16,000 to £20,000, £20,000 to £30,000 and £30,000 plus for the latest year available.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 29 January 1987, c. 385]: Estimates for 1986-87 are given in the table. The analysis is of single people and married couples liable to income tax. The figures are based on a projection from the 1984-85 "Survey of Personal Incomes" and are therefore provisional.

Number of tax units liable to income tax and tax liability by range of total income, 1986-87

Total income (lower limit) (£ per annum)	*Number of units[1] paying tax (thousands)*	*Income tax liability (£ million)*
2,000	850	70
3,000	1,350	360
4,000	1,650	800
5,000	1,850	1,320
6,000	1,700	1,620
7,000	1,650	1,980
8,000	1,500	2,120
9,000	1,500	2,560
10,000	1,150	2,170
11,000	1,050	2,260
12,000	3,100	8,120
16,000	1,500	5,430
20,000	1,200	6,280
30,000	550	7,920

[1] ie counting married couples as one and combining their incomes.

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, in the manner of his reply of 17 February 1986, *Official Report*, column *54*, he will publish and update the tax relief figures for 1986-87.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 29 January 1987, c. 386]: The direct revenue cost of income tax relief at rates in excess of the basic rate in 1986-87 is estimated to be about £270 million for mortgage interest relief and about £260 million for relief on employees' and self-employed pension contributions. The direct revenue cost of these reliefs taken in combination is estimated at about £550 million. The corresponding estimates for 1985-86 have been revised and are: mortgage interest relief £250 million, pension contributions £220 million, both reliefs in combination £500 million.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total cost of the report on the incentive of tax cuts commissioned by his Department from Professor C. V. Brown.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 February 1987.] This study was initiated in 1978 and consisted of a survey of households followed by analysis of the data and econometric modelling by the University of Stirling.

The survey work was carried out by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys and cost some £400,000. The data—with full documentation—have been placed in the E.S.R.C. data archive and are available to other researchers.

The analytical work at Stirling cost some £200,000 and was funded by the Treasury. Twenty two technical working papers have been published. The report is in the Library of the House.

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of children under 18 years who are beneficiaries of covenants made by their grandparents and the cost of the tax relief in terms of revenue figures to the Exchequer in 1985-86, and the estimate for 1986-87.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 February 1987]: The total number of deeds of covenant to minor children operative in 1985-86 and 1986-87 is estimated to be 170,000 and 210,000 respectively. Deeds made by grandparents in favour of their grandchildren are estimated to account for about 70 per cent. of the total (ie 120,000 and 150,000 respectively) and the costs of tax relief on such deeds are £60 million in 1985-86 and £80 million in 1986-87.

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of young people aged over 18 years who had covenants made by their parents and the cost of such tax relief in terms of revenue forgone in 1985-86 and the estimated figures and costs for 1986-87.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 February 1987]: The number of people aged over 18 years benefiting from covenants made by their parents is estimated to be 250,000 in both 1985-86 and 1986-87. The cost of tax relief on these covenants is estimated at approximately £100 million annually.

Company Cars

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the percentage of total mileage of company cars spent on private motoring.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 5 February 1987, c. 756]: A company car may be a taxable benefit for an employee if it is available for his or her private use. The taxable amount of the benefit depends to some extent on the amount of business use, but it is not dependent on the amount of private use and there is no requirement for that to be reported to the Inland Revenue. Estimates of the percentage of total mileage attributable to private use cannot therefore be produced from Inland Revenue data.

DEFENCE

50-tonne Cranes

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Defence how long it took Scott-Greenham Limited to dispatch a 50-tonne crane to the scene of the convoy accident after it occurred in Wiltshire on 10 January.

Mr. Stanley: The 50-tonne crane provided by Scott-Greenham Limited arrived on site within two hours of the company being asked to dispatch it, having been put on readiness to do so somewhat earlier.

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many 50-tonne cranes his Department owns or has at its disposal;

(2) if he will give the location of the 50-tonne cranes owned by, or at the disposal of, his Department on 10 January.

Mr. Stanley: I assume that the hon. Member is interested in 50-tonne road mobile cranes, rather than those which cannot be readily moved from their location—for example, at dockyards, workshops or units. The Department owns three such cranes and they are located in the Falklands where they were on 10 January. There are no central records of the number and location of 50-tonne road mobile cranes which the Department has on hire.

Armoured Divisions (Tanks)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the average number of tanks in a NATO armoured division; and what information he has about the average number in a Warsaw pact armoured division.

Mr. Stanley: As far as NATO armoured divisions are concerned, I refer the hon. Member to the reply he received from my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces on 12 January at column 95. Our assessment of the number of tanks in Warsaw pact tank divisions and motor rifle divisions is classified.

Nuclear Defence

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many protests he has received from local education authorities and teachers' organisations concerning the recently-published Government film for use in schools about nuclear defence.

Mr. Stanley: No written representations have been received in the Department as of yesterday. The film to which the hon. Member refers is about conventional and nuclear defence, and arms control.

Skynet

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence when his attention was first drawn to the article on Skynet in the 15 February 1985 edition of "Interspace".

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given earlier today by my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General.

Land Rovers

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many of his Department's Land Rovers have been returned to the manufacturers in the last three years because of engine defects.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None, but about 300 engine defects from a fleet of 20,000 have been rectified by dealers under warranty during the last three years.

Synetta Tanker

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether any Royal Navy vessel was in the vicinity of the tanker Synetta when it was lost on 25 December 1986 off the coast of Iceland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I have given to the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Hancock) today.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence if disciplinary action is currently being considered against any Royal Navy personnel or Ministry of Defence employees over the unauthorised release of information regarding recent naval operations involving damage sustained by one of Her Majesty's ships in Icelandic territorial waters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to his answer*, 6 February 1987]: Any breach of security will be dealt with in accordance with our standard procedures.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence if any Royal Naval vessel was close to the Synetta when it sank near Iceland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to his answer*, 6 February 1987]: It is not our general practice to give details of the operational movements of Royal Navy surface ships and submarines.

SCOTLAND

Jurors' Citations

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he is satisfied that existing procedures concerning notification of sheriff court jurors' citations adequately maintain personal privacy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I am consulting the sheriffs principal, who have a general responsibility for the preparation of jury lists, on a recent incident which has been drawn to my attention and I shall write to the hon. Member on completion of my inquiries.

Roads (Expenditure)

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will show 1985-86 outturn expenditure, 1986-87 estimated expenditure and 1987-88 planned expenditure on (i) trunk roads *(a)* new construction and improvement, *(b)* structural maintenance and *(c)* routine maintenance, (ii) local authority roads *(a)* new construction and improvement and *(b)* maintenance, (iii) public transport administration, (iv) local authority car parks *(a)* capital, *(b)* current (net) and (v) road safety in Scotland.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is set out in the table:

£ million cash

	1985-86 outturn[1]	1986-87 estimate	1987-88 planned
1. Motorways and trunk roads			
(a) New construction and improvement	87·8	79·1	[2]83·6
(b) Structural maintenance	13·2	18·0	21·8
(c) Routine and winter maintenance	17·8	17·0	19·1
2. Local authority roads			
(a) New construction and improvement	129·7	126·0	134·0
(b) Maintenance	148·4	158·7	166·3
3. Public transport administration[3]	23·8	25·6	26·8
4. Local authority car parks			
(a) Capital	1·7	1·9	2·0
(b) Current (net)	—	—	—
5. Road safety in Scotland[4]	1·4	1·5	1·6

[1] Local authority outturn figures are provisional only.
[2] After a transfer of £2·5 million to local authority roads and transport capital to assist with the Edinburgh city bypass.
[3] Local authority expenditure on administration of roads and transport services.
[4] Excludes expenditure by the Department of Transport on national road safety publicity. Expenditure on new construction and improvements and on maintenance also contributes to road safety.

Prisons

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the number of prison places which will be created by 1990 through the prison building programme.

Mr. Lang: When completed this year, phase II of Shotts prison will increase the existing design capacity of the prison system in Scotland by 468 places. No other project is expected to be completed before 1990.

Police Duties

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what research his Department has recently commissioned or undertaken into the proportion of police time devoted to duties other than the prevention or detection of crimes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: A number of police-related research projects have been commissioned or undertaken by the Scottish Home and Health Department in recent years, but none of these comes into the category described by the hon. Member.

Higher Education

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how the extra £6,100,000, which he announced in November is to be spent on higher education in Scotland, is to be allocated.

Mr. John MacKay: An additional £3·3 million will be provided in 1987-88 to the central institutions and colleges of education to meet additional operating costs, but the precise allocation to individual institutions has not yet been determined. The balance is being allocated to the central institutions for capital projects.

Infertility

Mrs. McCurley asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will consider making funds available to each area health board to ensure the development of at least one fully equipped and specially recognised centre of excellence in infertility treatment within each area.

Mr. John MacKay: It is for individual health boards to determine, in the light of the resources available to them, the extent to which they should make infertility services available in their areas and how such services should be organised.

Mrs. McCurley asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress his Department is making on research into the causes of, and treatment for, male infertility.

Mr. John MacKay: The Scottish Home and Health Department is at present funding a research project at Edinburgh university relevant to male infertility.

Job Losses

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the net loss in manufacturing jobs in the Strathclyde region since June 1979.

Mr. Lang: The estimated net fall in employment in Strathclyde region in manufacturing plants employing more than 10 people between 1979 and 1985 was 124,000. This estimate is taken from the regional data system. No reliable information is available from this source for plants with fewer than 10 employees.

Council Houses

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many council houses were completed in Scotland in each year from 1978 to 1986 inclusive.

Mr. Ancram: Information on council house completions for 1978 to 1985 is published in the table on page 9 of "Scottish Housing Statistics 1985", a copy of which is available in the Library. Figures for 1986 are not yet complete.

Apprentices

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total number of apprentices in *(a)* the Strathclyde region and *(b)* the Greenock and Port Glasgow constituency in 1978 and each subsequent year.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is not available. The latest comprehensive estimate is from the 1981 census of population, and this shows that there were 43,248 apprentices and trainees in Strathclyde region and 1,892 in the Greenock and Port Glasgow constituency.

Job Clubs

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for the latest date available for the Greenock and Port Glasgow job clubs *(a)* the total number of participants to date, *(b)* the numbers currently in employment and *(c)* the numbers employed through the community programme.

Mr. Lang: The information is not available in the precise form requested. However, at 9 January 1987, the latest date for which information is available, a total of 182 people had joined the Greenock and Port Glasgow job clubs since their opening in June 1986. Of this number, 108 people have left the job clubs, of whom 61 (56·5 per cent.) were placed directly into jobs and a further 18 (16·7 per cent.) entered some form of Government employment or training scheme, including the community programme.

Public Sector Colleges

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the projected deficits for each of the public sector colleges in Scotland in the current financial year.

Mr. John MacKay: Colleges are expected to operate within the cash limits which have been set in their recurrent grant allocations. However, present indications are that three colleges of education are likely to incur deficits at the end of the current financial year as follows:

	£000
Jordanhill College of Education	300
Moray House College of Education	70
Dunfermline College of Physical Education	70

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is the recurrent grant projected for each college in the public sector in the next financial year;

(2) what representations he has received from public sector colleges about the sufficiency of recurrent grants in the next financial year to cover their expenditure requirements.

Mr. John MacKay: Recurrent grants in respect of the next financial year have not yet been determined for the public sector colleges.

Rate Relief

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many dwellings qualify for relief from rates because of their classification as croft houses.

Mr. Ancram: About 13,000.

Dunblane Bypass

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will publish the amended order for the Dunblane bypass; and what are the reasons for the delay to date.

Mr. Ancram: Following the decision to upgrade the junctions proposed for this scheme, it has been necessary to redesign the layouts and to prepare an amended draft side roads order. It is expected that the revised order will be published in late spring of this year. This should not delay the expected start of construction, subject to the satisfactory completion of the statutory procedures.

Health Service (Consultants)

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has about the cost to the Grampian health board of employing outside agencies to provide financial, technical or consultancy services, for each of the last three financial years and to the latest date in the current financial year.

Mr. John MacKay: Grampian health board has employed since 1 April 1985 the following management consultants:

Name	Cost £
Coopers and Lybrand	60,000
Arthur Young	6,000
P R Consultants	1,100
P A Consultants	9,200

The remainder of the information is not available centrally.

British Telecom

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with British Telecom regarding the retention of a Scottish dimension in its management structure and control.

Mr. Lang: In addition to discussions held between officials and British Telecom's territorial director for Scotland and Northern Ireland, my right hon. and learned Friend discussed BT's regional structure at a recent meeting with the company's chief executive.

While decisions relating to internal organisation and management are commercial judgments for the company itself, my right hon. and learned Friend fully recognises the importance for Scotland of a modern and efficient telecommunications service and, accordingly, will be following future developments with the closest interest. In this context, he also welcomes BT's decisions to create a Scottish advisory forum and to staff the new territorial organisation with advisers located in both Edinburgh and Leeds.

Rate Support Grant

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing the amount of the support grant per head of population in each local authority area in Scotland in 1979-80 and 1986-87, together with a column showing the 1986-87 figures as a percentage of the 1979-80 figures at 1979-80 prices.

Mr. Ancram: The figures show for each local authority the rate support grant per head of population paid in 1979-80, the rate support grant per head paid in 1986-87 and the percentage difference between the 1979-80 and 1986-87 figures at 1979-80 prices. The GDP deflator is used to convert the figures for 1986-87 from cash to 1979-80 prices. The grant figures used for 1986-87 are based on the Rate Support Grant (Scotland) (No. 4) Order 1985. No adjustment has been made for grant penalties since they will be restored if authorities bring their expenditure down to guideline on outturn.

	(1) Total RSG per head 1979-80 £	(2) Total RSG per head 1986-87 £	(3) Percentage Change[1]
Regions			
Borders	215·95	359·81	0·0
Central	163·26	247·28	−9·1
Dumfries	199·07	328·1	−1·1
Fife	174·91	258·53	−11·3
Grampian	183·61	268·9	−12·1
Highland	271·34	416·58	−7·8
Lothian	178·65	243·13	−18·3
Strathclyde	217·72	337·36	−7·0
Tayside	184·5	295·33	−3·9
Islands			
Orkney	268·34	399·79	−10·6
Shetland	277·6	440·19	−4·8
Western Isles	470·53	878·08	12·0
Districts			
Berwick	24·25	22·64	−44·0
Ettrick	18·99	21·78	−31·2
Roxburgh	27·03	42·54	−5·5
Tweeddale	19·06	19·13	−39·8
Clackmannan	22·37	18·3	−50·9
Falkirk	12·4	11·02	−46·7
Stirling	21·42	11	−69·2
Annandale	21·8	20·16	−44·5
Nithsdale	15·84	15·09	−42·8
Stewartry	17·41	18·63	−35·8
Wigtown	18·55	22·47	−27·3
Dunfermline	19·6	10·97	−66·4
Kirkcaldy	21·47	13·12	−63·3
North East Fife	23·04	14·06	−63·4
Aberdeen	18·7	19·42	−37·6
Banff	22·56	10·98	−70·8
Gordon	37·63	21·59	−65·6
Kincardine	20·83	15·83	−54·4
Moray	22·82	14·1	−62·9
Badenoch	17·16	10·74	−62·4
Caithness	30·09	35·31	−29·6
Inverness	15·52	10·91	−57·8
Lochaber	27·69	16·98	−63·2
Nairn	19·88	27·98	−15·5
Ross and Cromarty	37·11	26·53	−57·1
Skye and Lochalsh	28·69	43·02	−10·0
Sutherland	41·6	53·49	−22·8
East Lothian	22·71	19	−49·8
Edinburgh	16·58	25·41	−8·0
Midlothian	27·09	35·22	−22·0
West Lothian	22·82	24·48	−35·6
Argyll and Bute	36·25	54·74	−9·4
Bearsden	29·98	14·81	−70·3
Clydebank	47·71	86·54	8·9
Clydesdale	28·03	38·74	−17·1
Cumbernauld	24·75	31·63	−23·3
Cumnock	42·07	64·14	−8·5
Cunninghame	23·24	29·4	−24·1
Dumbarton	22·58	18·53	−50·8
East Kilbride	20·56	19·12	−44·2
Eastwood	23·87	15·59	−60·8
Glasgow	43·09	63·43	−11·7
Hamilton	38·91	43·74	−32·5
Inverclyde	32·4	35·06	−35·1
Kilmarnock	33·18	43·13	−22·0
Kyle and Carrick	23·74	19·82	−49·9
Monklands	45·23	52·43	−30·4
Motherwell	30·9	36·51	−29·1
Renfrew	28·34	37·33	−21·0
Strathkelvin	31·67	45·76	−13·3
Angus	22·31	23·19	−37·6
Dundee	25·13	40·18	−4·0
Perth and Kinross	20·11	17·35	−48·2
Scotland	231·24	342·91	−11·0

[1] Between RSG 1979-80 and RSG 1986-87 in 1979-80 prices.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Rate Rebates

15. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people currently receive a rebate of over 80 per cent. of their total rate demand.

Mr. Lyell: We estimate that in the current financial year about 3·7 million householders are receiving a rate rebate of more than 80 per cent of their total rate demand.

Benefit Claims

16. **Mr. Holt** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to speed up the decision-making process on claims for mobility allowance, attendance allowance and severe disablement allowance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lyell: Since 1983, the average time taken to decide claims for attendance allowance and mobility allowance has reduced from 12½ weeks and 14½ weeks respectively to a current time of eight weeks. There are no comparable figures for severe disablement allowance. We are continuing to make improvements in both the system and staffing to further reduce these times.

Preventive Medicine

17. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to enhance the provisions of preventive medicine.

Mrs. Currie: My right hon. Friend has taken steps to ensure that prevention and health promotion are given increased weight in the planning of National Health Service priorities and resource allocations. We shall be monitoring health authorities' plans through the regional review process with this aspect in mind.

AIDS

18. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a further statement on the Government's plans to combat the spread of AIDS.

Mr. Newton: We have taken urgent action on a number of fronts, including a large-scale public information campaign, extra resources for treatment, research, training and counselling, safeguarding blood and blood products, support for the voluntary sector and the issue of advice to professions.

We are considering other initiatives, particularly in regard to caring for AIDS patients, taking account of what we have learned from how other countries are tackling the problem.

29. **Mrs. Shields** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has received on the AIDS advertising campaign; and if he will make a statement.

43. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received regarding the leaflet on AIDS distributed by his Department.

Mr. Newton: Our surveys show that the great majority of people consider the Government's public education campaign on AIDS to be necessary. The general response to the household leaflet has been favourable, although we have received complaints from people who objected to some of the information it contained or felt it should not have been sent to them. We shall continue to monitor the effectiveness of the campaign and to develop it in the light of the findings.

54. **Mr. McCrindle** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services to what extent he envisages community care as part of the treatment provided for AIDS victims.

Mr. Newton: The family practitioner, community nursing and personal social services have an important role to play in the care and treatment of AIDS sufferers, as do voluntary bodies. We intend shortly to convene a conference on this subject.

58. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his latest estimate of the proportion of HIV carriers who will ultimately die as a result of the virus.

Mr. Newton: Our current estimate is that 10 per cent. to 30 per cent. of those infected with HIV will develop AIDS within five years. We do not yet have the experience on which to estimate the proportion who will develop AIDS over a longer time period.

Disabled People

19. **Mr. Alfred Morris** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on progress on the implementation of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986.

Mr. Major: We hope to be able to implement sections 4, 8, 9 and 10 of the Act by next April and section 11 during the course of 1987. We are discussing with the local authority associations how to implement those provisions of the Act, including sections 5 and 6, which have significant resource implications. At present I am unable to give any indication when these can be implemented.

27. **Mr. Crowther** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will increase the number of registered disabled persons employed in his Department in order to meet the quota provided for in the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944, as amended by the 1958 Act.

Mr. Major: Although the Act is not binding on the Crown, successive Governments have undertaken to accept the same responsibilities as other employers. There are 1,235 registered disabled staff in the Department. In addition there is an unknown number of disabled staff who have not registered. We would welcome more applications from disabled persons for employment in the Department and we shall continue to facilitate recruitment of registered disabled people. Those who apply for clerical posts without the prescribed education qualifications can take a written test instead. Special arrangements are made for disabled people to attend tests and interviews.

Deprived Urban Areas

20. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to improve National Health Service provision in deprived urban areas.

Mr. Newton: It is for district and regional health authorities to plan service provision within the resources available to meet local needs and circumstances, taking account of factors such as social deprivation where these have an impact on need for health care. The £30 million special fund recently announced by my right hon. Friend will particularly benefit many inner city areas.

Pensioners

21. **Mr. Adley** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services by how many the total number of pensioners eligible for state pension has changed since 1979; and what this change represents as a percentage of the total cost of the state pension.

Mr. Major: There are about 1 million more retirement pensioners now than in November 1978. This increase accounts for nearly 11 per cent. of total spending on state retirement pension in the current financial year.

Elderly People

22. **Mrs. Roe** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what increase in the proportion of the population over the age of 65 years his Department estimates there will be by the year 2000.

Mrs. Currie: According to the Government Actuary's mid-1985-based principal projection, the proportion of the population of Great Britain aged 65 or over is projected to rise from 15·2 per cent. in 1985 to 15·7 per cent. in the year 2000.

Hypothermia

23. **Mr. Livsey** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many fatalities resulting from hypothermia have been reported since 10 January; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The provisional number of deaths registered with any mention of hypothermia on the death certificate, irrespective of whether it did or did not appear as the underlying cause of death, from 10 January 1987 to 30 January 1987 in England and Wales is 87.

26. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the latest estimate of the number of cases of hypothermia among elderly people during the recent cold weather.

Mrs. Currie: Provisional figures from the Registrar General for England and Wales show that between 10 January and 30 January 1987 hypothermia was mentioned on 80 death certificates for persons aged 65 years or more.

Information on the incidence of morbidity due to hypothermia is not available centrally.

Severe Weather Payments

24. **Mr. Geraint Howells** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied with the present form of the exceptionally severe weather payments system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: Yes. The new arrangements are a significant improvement on previous schemes for exceptionally severe weather payments, in terms of simplicity, comprehensibility and certainty of payment. From 26 January we have changed the qualifying temperature from minus 1·5 deg C to 0 deg C over a fixed seven-day period. Under the revised arrangement help for vulnerable groups during exceptionally cold weather can be expected to be given more often than under any previous system. The review now provides the most generous system ever for helping vulnerable groups during exceptionally cold weather.

32. **Ms. Richardson** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average time before payment of the severe weather allowance, once payment has been triggered for a given area.

Mr. Major: Information on clearance times for exceptionally cold weather claims is not available. However, local offices have been instructed to give priority to cold weather payments and to deal with claims immediately on receipt.

33. **Mr. Rogers** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services in how many of the chosen weather stations the severe weather payments trigger temperature of minus 1·5 deg C was achieved in the weeks 5 to 11 January and 12 January to 18 January.

Mr. Major: In the week 5 to 11 January, one weather station achieved the trigger temperature of minus 1·5 deg C. In the week 12 to 18 January, 48 weather stations achieved that temperature.

Cities (Hospital Provision)

25. **Mr. Wainwright** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on his plans for the provision of hospital services in major cities over the next decade.

Mr. Newton: Regional and district health authorities have prepared comprehensive plans for developing and improving hospital and other health services—including those in major cities—over the period to 1993-94.

Housing Benefit

28. **Mrs. Beckett** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether those in receipt of housing benefit in areas of high rent levels will have rent covered under his proposals to change the housing benefit scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lyell: In the reformed housing benefit scheme from April 1988 calculation by local authorities of entitlement to housing benefit will be based on the claimant's full rent in all cases except where the amount of rent eligible for benefit is restricted because the authority decides that the rent is unreasonably high. The provision which exists in the present scheme for authorities to operate high rent schemes for certain claimants who pay unavoidably high rents will therefore not be necessary and will be withdrawn when the new housing benefit scheme is introduced.

45. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the number of households receiving housing benefit.

Mr. Lyell: Estimates of the number of households receiving housing benefit, based on inquiry information which relates to the autumn of 1985, are as follows:

	Number
Standard housing benefit	3,840,000
Certificated housing benefit	3,310,000
All housing benefit	7,150,000

Mentally Ill and Handicapped People

30. **Mr. O'Brien** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what additional resources are made available to local authority social services departments when the care for the mentally handicapped is transferred from hospitals to local authority and voluntary organisations.

Mrs. Currie: Health authorities can make payments, for as long as necessary, to local authority and voluntary

organisations to meet the cost of providing community care for people moving out of long-stay hospitals. The detailed mechanisms by which health authorities arrange such transfers, and the amounts of money involved, vary from authority to authority.

Joint finance can be used to fund community care projects and, in particular, as a source of bridging funds to enable community services to be developed before patients are transferred. Joint finance allocations have increased from £34·5 million in 1978-79 to £110·8 million in 1986-87—a real terms increase of over 60 per cent. The main regional allocation for 1987-88 will increase over the previous year by 3·75 per cent. About one third of joint finance is spent on services for mentally handicapped people.

Additionally, £18 million over four years has been centrally reserved from the joint finance allocations to explore and evaluate cost effective ways of providing community care for long-term hospial patients.

49. **Mr. Ashley** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many mentally ill and handicapped people have been discharged from mental hospitals in the last year for which figures are available; and if he is satisfied with the care in the community that they have received.

Mrs. Currie: In 1985, the last year for which figures are available, there were 188,653 discharges from mental illness hospitals and units in England, and 38,762 discharges from mental handicap hospitals and units. These figures include transfers to a different hospital. Full statistics on admissions and discharges are available in the series of DHSS booklets "Mental Health Statistics for England 1985", copies of which are in the Library. These statistics show that 89 per cent. of the in-patients discharged from mental illness hospitals and units during that year had been in-patients for less than three months, and 92 per cent. of those discharged from mental handicap hospitals and units had been in-patients for less than three months.

My predecessor's reply to the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) on 25 February 1986 at column *534* gave particulars of the numbers of people who had been in-patients for five years and over who were discharged in recent years.

There are many examples of good practice on the part of health and local authorities spread across the country and we have several sources for monitoring and obtaining feedback. Authorities are also responsible for monitoring their own services. However we do recognise that in some instances community care is not managed exactly as we would like. That is why my right hon. Friend has asked Sir Roy Griffiths to study the situation generally and report back within 12 months.

Abortions

31. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services in how many cases provision for an abortion has been refused under the Infant Life Preservation Act in the past year.

Mr. Newton: As there is no requirement for refusal of an abortion to be notified to the Department, this information is not available centrally.

Board and Lodging Regulations

34. **Ms. Clare Short** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will now abolish the time limits imposed on under 26-year-olds in the board and lodging regulations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: These limits were introduced to contain escalating expenditure and curb abuse. We have published a consultative document proposing a simpler, more coherent system for payments to boarders while tackling effectively the problems of incentives and maintaining proper financial controls. These proposals could not be introduced before the new income support scheme in April 1988.

37. **Mr. Caborn** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services in how many cases the time limits imposed by the board and lodging regulations were waived because of the severe weather.

Mr. Major: A wide range of factors is taken into account in exercising the discretionary power to exempt individuals from the time limits. Severe weather was put forward as a reason for exemption in only one case which was subsequently successful.

Supplementary Benefit

35. **Mr. George Howarth** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average length of time now being taken to deal with claims for supplementary benefit.

Mr. Lyell: During the year ending on 16 December 1986 the average time taken to deal with new and repeat claims for supplementary benefit was six days.

This represents the time from receipt of a completed claim form to the time when a decision is made on the claim.

64. **Mr. Watts** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much was paid in supplementary benefit to single people under the age of 18 years in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Lyell: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Single Payments

36. **Mr. Leadbitter** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average length of time now being taken to deal with claims for single payments.

Mr. Lyell: Local offices do not routinely keep records of clearance times for single payment claims. However, claims are determined as soon as possible after all the information required has been collected; urgent cases are given priority.

NHS—Private Sector (Co-operation)

38. **Mr. Galley** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he is taking to encourage co-operation between the National Health Service and the private health sector.

Mrs. Currie: We take every available opportunity to promote collaboration between the National Health Service and the independent health care sector as a means of maximising the benefits to patients from available

resources. Health authorities should make use of private sector facilities for the treatment of NHS patients wherever this is a cost-effective way of improving or extending the service they can provide. It is for individual health authorities and private sector providers to get together on specific proposals. Private sector providers should ensure that authorities in their locality are aware of what they have to offer.

Speech Therapists

39. **Mr. Mikardo** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received on the establishment of improved salaries for speech therapists.

46. **Mr. Hoyle** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received on the salaries of speech therapists.

65. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received about establishing an improved pay structure for speech therapists.

66. **Dr. Roger Thomas** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has received about the salaries of speech therapists.

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received on the subject of new salary scales for speech therapists; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stan Thorne asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received on the subject of new salary scales for speech therapists; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Members to my reply earlier today to the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook).

Chemical Weapons (Casualties)

40. **Dr. Twinn** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what preparations his Department has made for treating casualties resulting from the intentional or accidental use of chemical weapons in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Currie: In the absence of a ban on chemical weapons, the Government are considering the questions of detection and warning of chemical attacks and protective measures against them.

Health authorities are being advised that the threat from chemical weapons will be the subject of guidance when current studies by the Government are complete.

The National Health Service has the capability to treat casualties from a variety of chemical hazards in peacetime. Specialised advice on effects and treatment can be sought from the National Poisons Information Service.

Battery-powered Wheelchairs

41. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has yet decided on a date to make public his decisions regarding the recommendations of the McColl committee on dual purpose battery-powered wheelchairs.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) on 29 January 1987.

Computer Bed Bank Scheme

42. **Mr. Heddle** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on progress by the West Midlands regional health authority on the computer bed bank pilot scheme.

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to him on 19 December 1986 at c. 787.

Health Authorities (Real Estate)

44. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidelines he has issued to health authorities regarding the disposal of real estate for which they have no further need.

Mrs. Currie: The National Health Service handbook on land transactions, a copy of which is in the Library, provides detailed guidance to health authorities on all aspects of land transactions including the disposal of surplus property.

Nurses

47. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what new initiatives he has for increasing nursing recruitment and for reducing the annual wastage of qualified nurses from the National Health Service.

Mr. Newton: The position in London is currently the subject of a review commissioned by the National Health Service Management Board. The Department is also currently undertaking a special inquiry into nurse recruitment and retention problems across the country with the aim of identifying management action which may be required to overcome recruitment difficulties. The management and staff sides of the Nursing and Midwifery Staff Negotiating Council are reviewing nursing clinical grading structure and are aiming to develop a structure which is appropriate to current and future needs. A joint DHSS-NHS group is examining equal opportunities, with specific reference to management of the career break. Additionally health authorities have been asked to consider increasing male recruitment, making greater efforts to recruit mature entrants, organise "Back to Nursing" campaigns, establish nurse banks and give more opportunities for flexible working arrangements, part-time working and job sharing.

Finally, as an immediate response to the "Project 2000" proposals on future nurse education and training published by the United Kingdom Central council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting, the Department is setting up a major feasibility study into the extended use of the youth training scheme in the National Health Service. A feature of this study is to look at the way such training might facilitate entry to professional nurse training and thus help to alleviate recruitment difficulties.

48. **Mr. Fallon** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many nurses are employed in the northern National Health Service region; and how many were employed in 1979.

Mr. Newton: The information requested is shown in the table.

National Health Service staff in post

	Northern RHA whole time equivalents[1]		
	30 Sept. 1979	*30 Sept. 1985*	*30 June[4] 1986*
Directly Employed Nursing and Midwifery staff[2] [3]	23,940	27,110	27,390

Source: DHSS Annual Census of NHS Non-Medical Manpower.

[1] Figures are independently rounded to the nearest ten (10) whole time equivalents.

[2] Includes agency nursing and midwifery staff.

[3] Figures are not adjusted for the effect of the reduction in nurses' working hours during 1980 (from 40 to 37·5 hours per week).

[4] Not validated below this level of detail.

Cottage Hospitals

50. **Sir John Farr** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy to promote and enhance the role of the cottage hospital within the National Health Service.

Mrs. Currie: Small community hospitals make an important contribution to the National Health Service. It is, however, for each health authority to determine the appropriate pattern of district services. In doing so they will balance the benefits of cottage hospitals alongside those of larger district hospitals in the light of changing circumstances and so as to secure from available resources the best possible value and level of service provision for all the local communities they serve.

Arthritics

51. **Mr. Robert Atkins** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has had about care for arthritics in Lancashire.

Mrs. Currie: We have had a number of representations from my hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble and other hon. Members in Lancashire about the proposed new service at Preston for juvenile arthritics who are at present cared for at Wrightington hospital.

Copies of my recent correspondence with Sir John Page have been placed in the Library.

Radiotherapy Unit (Southend General Hospital)

52. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many letters he has now received from the general public about the proposed closure of the radiotherapy unit at Southend general hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: We have received 14 letters which have been referred by hon. Members, together with about 480 letters direct from members of the general public.

Hospital Waiting Lists

53. **Mr. Parry** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what response he has had from health authorities to his latest plans for reducing hospital waiting lists.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend to my hon. Friends the Members for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) and for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle) and to the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) on 13 January 1987 at c. *136-38*.

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people in the Leeds, East and Leeds, West district health authority are currently waiting for hospital treatment; how many have been waiting for one year; and how many of these cases are classified as urgent.

Mr. Newton: The latest information available centrally is included in a bound volume of the hospital waiting lists for health authorities in England at 31 March 1986, copies of which have been placed in the Library. For more recent information, the hon. Member may wish to write to the chairmen of the Leeds Eastern and Leeds Western district health authorities.

Funeral Directors (Advertising)

55. **Mrs. Renée Short** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what approval he or the Trent regional health authority gave to Lincolnshire health authority's proposal to raise money for the hospital service by allowing funeral directors to advertise their services in hospital corridors in return for a fee.

Mr. Newton: I understand that this proposal was one of many concerned with income generation discussed by the North Lincolnshire district health authority last year. The authority does not intend to proceed with it and no approach about it has been made, either to the Trent regional health authority or to Ministers.

Basingstoke Hospital

56. **Mr. Hunter** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received from Basingstoke and North Hampshire health authority about reducing waiting lists at Basingstoke hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend has written to my right hon. Friend, on behalf of the Basingstoke and North Hampshire district health authority. Wessex regional health authority has reported to my right hon. Friend on the action proposed by that district to reduce hospital waiting lists and times, including bids against first year's allocation of the £50 million waiting list fund.

Family Income Supplement

57. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will state the average length of time taken to process family income supplement claims; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lyell: Taking all claims for family income supplement, the length of time between the date of claim and when the decision is made averages 17 working days. Where benefit is awarded, the average interval between the date of claim and issue of an order book is 23 days.

Trent Regional Health Authority

59. **Mr. Haynes** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he last met the chairman of the Trent regional health authority; and what matters they discussed.

Mr. Newton: My right hon. Friend normally meets all regional chairmen every two months to discuss a wide range of issues. The last such meeting was on 19 November 1986.

Heating Allowance

60. **Mr. Bill Walker** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give details of the number of pensioners in Scotland who are in receipt of heating allowance.

Mr. Major: In 1984, the latest year for which information is available, a total of 141,000[1] supplementary pensioners in Scotland received a heating addition.

[1] *Source:* 1984 Annual Statistical Inquiry (figure has been rounded to the nearest 1,000).

Inner London (National Health Service)

61. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will increase resources for the National Health Service in inner London.

Mr. Newton: Resource allocations to inner London district health authorities are a matter for the four Thames regions. For 1987-88, the Thames regions have the benefit of special allocations totalling £10·6 million from the fund of £30 million over two years which the Government have established to help transitional problems in regions receiving less than national average growth. Each Thames region will receive a total increase, from its main RAWP allocation and the special fund, of 5·1 per cent. It is for regions to decide how their allocations from the special fund should be spent, within the guidelines that the Government have issued, but we expect that inner London districts will benefit substantially.

The London postgraduate special health authorities will receive over £2 million from the special fund. This, together with their baseline allocations, will ensure that no special health authority receives a cash increase of less than 5·1 per cent.

Sheltered Accommodation

62. **Mr. Andrew Bowden** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what regulations he proposes to make to render assistance to supplementary benefit recipients who are long-leaseholders of sheltered accommodation under the Social Security Act 1986.

Mr. Major: The proposed provisions for long-leaseholders under the Social Security Act 1986 will broadly mirror those in the present supplementary benefit and housing benefit schemes. We plan to lay the income support and housing benefit regulations in April this year for implementation in April 1988.

Homeless Persons

63. **Mr. Tom Cox** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the long-term policy of his Department on the provision of overnight sheltered accommodation for homeless people in London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lyell: Accommodation for homeless people is primarily a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and for local housing authorities under part III of the Housing Act 1985.

However, this Department has certain responsibilities for people without a settled way of life. The Department provides temporary accommodation through its resettlement units of which there are seven in London. We plan to replace these units with smaller, more homely dwellings in the voluntary and local authority sector for which we will provide funding. Funds are already provided for voluntary organisations which currently offer a similar service.

In addition, funds were made available recently to cover the additional costs of voluntary organisations providing support and extra places of shelter for people sleeping rough during the spell of extremely severe weather.

Financial help with securing accommodation is available through the supplementary benefit scheme.

Condoms

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to enable general practitioners to supply condoms free on prescription; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: We have no plans to do so.

Social Security Budget

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what have been the reductions in the social security budget since 1979 caused by the changes in the bases of calculation of various benefits.

Mr. Major: There have been a substantial number of changes to the benefit structure since 1979, some increasing and some decreasing expenditure. Because there was never a rigid set of rules for the uprating of benefits, it is not possible to say what expenditure would now have been, had these changes not been made, nor is it possible to assess the effect of individual changes in isolation.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the numbers of available beds in National Health Service hospitals in England for each year since 1979 expressed as totals and by specialist.

Mrs. Currie: The information is given in the table. Between 1979 and 1985 the number of in-patient cases treated increased by 17·7 per cent., from 5,400,120 to 6,353,812 in England.

Average daily number of available beds by specialty in National Health Service hospitals in England

Specialty	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
General medicine	28,205	27,902	28,179	28,084	27,776	27,076	26,982
Paediatrics	6,775	6,709	6,574	6,638	6,420	6,251	6,148
Infectious Diseases	1,780	1,616	1,507	1,425	1,317	1,147	1,125
Thoracic medicine[1]	4,789	4,164	3,752	3,524	3,138	2,682	2,430
Dermatology	1,701	1,695	1,644	1,650	1,620	1,592	1,527
Neurology	2,011	1,935	1,937	1,974	1,953	1,927	1,856

Specialty	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Cardiology	1,180	1,206	1,228	1,177	1,188	1,291	1,306
Rehabilitation	1,127	1,036	1,003	1,130	1,129	1,054	1,068
Genito-urinary medicine	34	28	22	23	19	21	18
Rheumatology	1,954	1,987	1,968	1,896	1,917	1,945	1,887
Geriatrics	55,139	54,947	55,550	55,646	55,801	55,571	55,320
Units for Younger disabled	1,681	1,647	1,620	1,694	1,692	1,656	1,624
General surgery	27,268	26,913	26,690	25,931	25,682	24,786	24,007
Ear, Nose and Throat	4,932	4,925	4,820	4,650	4,658	4,491	4,275
Trau and orthopaedic	20,814	20,595	20,677	20,482	20,323	20,075	19,792
Ophthalmology	3,878	3,936	3,826	3,791	3,787	3,605	3,518
Radiotherapy	2,253	2,247	2,245	2,242	2,255	2,200	2,165
Urology	2,832	2,952	3,016	3,129	3,274	3,287	3,279
Plastic surgery	1,537	1,533	1,548	1,535	1,555	1,541	1,502
Thoracic surgery	1,816	1,650	1,576	1,574	1,589	1,581	1,504
Oral surgery	947	969	990	963	980	1,009	1,019
Orthodontics	25	24	24	23	18	9	6
Neurosurgery	1,294	1,248	1,274	1,269	1,276	1,279	1,359
Gynaecology	9,836	9,781	9,702	9,463	9,500	9,407	9,168
Obstetrics	15,541	15,490	15,463	15,434	15,238	14,902	14,574
Special Care Baby Unit	3,945	3,959	3,940	3,902	3,898	3,872	3,756
Psychiatry children	652	659	721	713	706	659	599
Mental handicap	50,122	48,863	47,255	46,983	45,631	43,985	41,561
Mental illness	85,401	82,411	79,735	76,288	73,435	69,405	63,979
Adolescent psychiatry	506	560	480	486	479	497	517
G.P. Maternity	3,099	2,916	2,713	2,675	2,562	2,296	2,074
GP other	6,370	6,383	6,385	6,655	6,555	6,532	6,429
GP dental	8	7	7	7	8	5	4
Pre-convalescent	2,759	2,280	2,013	1,846	1,657	1,309	934
Convalescent	721	534	432	302	313	283	206
Staff Wards	290	236	196	162	138	82	73
Unclassified	1,974	1,846	1,666	1,569	1,357	1,388	1,317
Other special units	6,476	8,192	9,147	11,171	12,250	13,819	16,578
Total	361,670	355,979	351,505	348,103	343,091	334,513	325,487

[1] Chest diseases prior to 1984
Total may not sum due to rounding.

Maternity Payments

Mr. James Lamond asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Oldham, Central and Royton received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Oldham, Central and Royton are expected to receive each year statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,475 claims to maternity allowance were made at Oldham (Central), the Department's office which covers the constituency although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Oldham, Central and Royton will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Linlithgow constituency claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in the Linlithgow constituency are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Linlithgow constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Edinburgh, West and Bathgate and their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The number of claims received for maternity grant in each of the two offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Edinburgh, West	1,821
Bathgate	2,091

It is not possible to predict how many women in the constituency will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Edinburgh, Pentlands constituency claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in the Edinburgh, Pentland constituency are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Edinburgh, Pentlands constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Edinburgh City and Edinburgh South and their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The number of claims received for maternity grant in each of the two offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Edinburgh City	325
Edinburgh South	1,684

It is not possible to predict how many women in the constituency will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Barnsley claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Barnsley are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The number of claims received for maternity grant in each of the two Barnsley offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Barnsley East	1,445
Barnsley West	2,062

It is not possible to predict how many women in Barnsley will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Glasgow, Govan constituency claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in the same area are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund in the year from April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Glasgow, Govan constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Glasgow, Craigton and Glasgow, Southside and their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The number of claims received for maternity grant in each of the two offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Glasgow, Craigton	876
Glasgow, Southside	1,430

It is not possible to predict how many women in the constituency will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Glasgow, Govan constituency received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in the same area he expects to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance in the year from April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 522 claims to maternity allowance were made at Craigton and 902 at South Side the Department's offices which cover the constituency although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Glasgow, Govan will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Linlithgow constituency received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in the Linlithgow constituency are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,434 claims to maternity allowance were made at Edinburgh, West and 2,109 at Bathgate, the Department's offices which cover the constituency although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Linlithgow will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Edinburgh, Pentlands constituency received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in the Edinburgh, Pentlands constituency are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,215 claims to maternity allowance were made at Edinburgh, South and 839 at Edinburgh, City, the Department's offices which cover the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Edinburgh, Pentlands will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Barnsley received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Barnsley are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 747 claims to maternity allowance were made at Barnsley, East and 724 at Barnsley, West, the Department's offices which cover the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Barnsley will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Leicester, West received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are

available; and how many are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowances annually after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 2,211 claims to maternity allowance were made at Leicester (Yeoman Street), and 1,558 at Leicester (Lower Hill Street) the Department's offices which cover the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Leicester West will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Evans asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in St. Helens, North constituency received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many are expected to receive statutory maternity pay and maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,425 claims to maternity allowance were made at St. Helens and 2,057 at Warrington, the Department's offices which cover the constituency although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in St. Helens, North will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Evans asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in St. Helens, North constituency claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund annually after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The St. Helens, North constituency is covered by the Department's offices at St. Helens and Warrington, although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The number of claims received for maternity grant in each of the two offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows—

	Number
St. Helens	2,051
Warrington	2,977

It is not possible to predict how many women in St. Helens, North will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Coventry, South-East, or the nearest area for which statistics are available *(a)* claimed the maternity grant, and *(b)* received the maternity allowance, in the last year for which figures are available; and how many such women are *(c)* expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund, and *(d)* expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,369 claims to maternity allowance were made at Coventry (East) and 1,430 at Coventry (West) the Department's offices which cover Coventry South-East, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Coventry, South-East will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Information on the number of women in Coventry, South-East who received a maternity grant in 1986 is not available.

The number of claims for maternity grant received in the two Coventry local offices of the Department during the calendar year 1986 was as follows—

	Number
Coventry (East)	2,388
Coventry (West)	2,150

It is not possible to predict how many women in Coventry, South-East will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Leicester, West claimed maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund in each year after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Leicester, West constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Lower Hill street and Yeoman street, although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The number of claims received for maternity grant in each of the offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Lower Hill Street	2,099
Yeoman Street	3,022

It is not possible to predict how many women in the Leicester, West constituency will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in St. Helens, South claimed maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The St. Helens, South constituency is covered by the Department's office at St. Helens, although the local office

boundary is not conterminous with the constituency. The number of claims received for maternity grant at the St. Helens office during the calendar year of 1986 was 2,051.

It is not possible to predict how many women in St. Helens, South will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in St. Helens, South received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,425 claims to maternity allowance were made at St. Helens, the Department's office which covers the constituency although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in St. Helens, South will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Family Planning Clinics

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary State for Social Services what was the change in the number of minor girls attending family planning clinics between 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Newton: The information requested is given in the table.

Number of girls attending family planning clinics England

Age	*1984*	*1985*
Under 16	17,400	11,600
16 and 17	93,100	88,900

Infertility

Mrs. McCurley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress his Department is making on research into the causes of, and treatment for, male infertility.

Mrs. Currie: Such research would be a matter for the Medical Research Council, which receives an annual grant in aid from the budget of the Department of Education and Science. Exploratory discussions have taken place involving officials from the Department and the council, which may in time lead to the commissioning of research in this field.

Mrs. McCurley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will consider making funds available to each regional health authority to ensure the development of at least one fully equipped and specially recognised centre of excellence in infertility treatment within each region.

Mrs. Currie: It is for health authorities to decide how best to organise National Health Service infertility services in the light of local needs and priorities.

Bath Additions

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he proposes to amend paragraph 4531 of the "S manual" to restrict bath additions for people in need of more than one bath a week; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has any plans to restrict bath additions to people in need of more than one bath a week; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: Supplementary benefit legislation provides that additional supplementary benefit for baths is payable in respect of any person who on medical grounds needs more than one bath a week. There are no plans to amend that provision prior to the introduction of the new income support scheme. Guidance to the independent adjudication officers on the interpretation of the legislation is the responsibility of the chief adjudication officer. I understand that he is reviewing the guidance contained in paragraph 4531 of the "S manual", in the light of recent advice that incontinence may not be medical grounds justifying additional benefit for baths within the terms of the legislation. He is awaiting decisions on two appeals to the Social Security Commissioners before considering whether to amend the "S manual", but he has issued guidance based on the new advice in answer to individual enquiries from adjudication officers who are responsible for deciding entitlement on the facts of each case.

Elective Surgery

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his answer of 21 January, *Official Report*, column 2, what general information is collected centrally on the occasions on which elective surgery is suspended.

Mrs. Currie: Information is not collected centrally, but we keep in regular contact with regional health authorities and thus may learn of temporary difficulties as, for example, we did during the recent spell of bad weather.

Benefits

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people in the Leeds metropolitan district council area have been in receipt of *(a)* supplementary benefit, *(b)* invalidity benefit and *(c)* housing benefit for each of the last five years.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many people in the Leeds metropolitan district council area have been in receipt of unemployment benefit for *(a)* less than six months, *(b)* six months to one year, *(c)* one year to two years and *(d)* more than two years at the latest date for which figures are available;

(2) how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women in the Leeds metropolitan district council area have been in receipt of unemployment benefit who are aged *(a)* under 25 years, *(b)* 25 to 35 years, *(c)* 35 to 50 years and *(d)* over 50 years, for each of the last five years.

Mr. Lyell: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Family Practitioner Committees

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what were, for the latest available year, the numbers of complaints received by family practitioner committees, the number of formal hearings heard by those committees, the number of practitioners found in breach of their terms of service, and the number of cases in which such doctors were fined.

Mr. Newton: I regret that information on the number of formal hearings held in service committee investigations could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

The other details requested for 1986 are:—

	All practitioners	*Doctors*
the number of complaints resulting in formal investigations	1,875	1,138
the number of practitioners found in breach of their terms of service	694	309
the number of cases in which withholdings from practitioners' remuneration were directed by the Secretary of State	305	64

The term "practitioner" is used collectively to describe doctors, dentists, pharmacists and opticians.

Occupational Therapists

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what new funds are being allocated for occupational therapists' training to overcome the current shortage in qualified people to fill all the funded posts;

(2) how many funded positions for occupational therapists in the National Health Service and local authorities are at present vacant due to shortage of applicants.

Mr. Newton: The results of the most recent sample surveys by health authorities of shortfall are not yet available for technical reasons. I shall let the hon. Member have a further reply as soon as they are ready. Meanwhile, planned allocation for occupational therapy training in 1987-88 will be 12 per cent. greater than in the present year as compared with an increase of 6 per cent. in current spending on the hospital and community health services.

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current waiting list of people awaiting assessment by occupational therapists in the United Kingdom as a percentage of the total number of assessments carried out by occupational therapists in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Newton: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member the information he seeks, since it is not collected centrally.

Population Statistics

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the increase in numbers of the ethnic minority population of the United Kingdom for the latest convenient year; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Estimates are not made for individual years, but it is estimated that, during the period 1981-86, the average annual increase in the size of the ethnic minority (non-white) population was about 90,000 a year. An equivalent estimate for the United Kingdom is not available.

An article, giving further information about the estimation of the size and rate of increase of the ethnic minority population was published in December 1986 in "Population Trends" No. 46.

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate for the latest convenient year the number of live births to mothers of New Commonwealth and Pakistan descent but who themselves were born in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Estimates are not made for individual years, but it is estimated that, during the period 1983-85, an average of some 5,000 children were born in Great Britain each year to ethnic minority (non-white) mothers who were themselves born in the United Kingdom. An equivalent estimate for mothers of New Commonwealth and Pakistan descent, excluding those belonging to other ethnic minority groups, is not readily available.

Climatic Variability

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to implement the recommendations relating to his responsibilities in the report "Social and Economic Responses to Climatic Variability" in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 January 1987, c. *235*]: The report recommends that elderly people in danger from the cold should be made aware of the risks and sensible precautions publicised. The Health Education Council, funded by the Government, makes available each year, in conjunction with Age Concern, an information leaflet for elderly people containing simple, practical advice on keeping warm. The council has also recently launched a comprehensive pack of training and information materials on this subject for those in contact with elderly people. We believe that health and social services staff and voluntary organizations will find this initiative helpful. The report also recommends better targeting of the money available for heating additions. We believe that this will be achieved through the new income support scheme, which will provide help more directly through the premiums to those groups in greatest need. The new supplementary benefit exceptionally cold weather scheme also concentrates help on those most at risk from the cold, and on those parts of the country which are actually coldest.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 11 February 1987

ENERGY

Coal Board Houses

Mr. Ashton asked the Secretary of State for Energy what instructions he has given the Coal Board about the sale of Coal Board houses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: None. Housing disposals are a management matter for British Coal.

Desulphurisation Plant

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many staff from his Department have made visits to foreign flue-gas desulphurisation plant or training centres to prepare for the operation of British desulphurisation plants.

Mr. Goodlad: Three members of my Department's staff have visited foreign flue gas desulphurisation plants in the normal course of their duties. The operation of flue gas desulphurisation plants at the Central Electricity Generating Board stations will not be a matter for my officials.

Pressurised Water Reactors

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will send an official to the Sandia laboratories at Albuquerque to discuss the experiment carried out there to investigate what would be likely to happen to a pressurised water reactor vessel flawed with a crack and to investigate its relevance to British reactors.

Mr. Goodlad: I am advised by Her Majesty's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate of the Health and Safety Executive that representatives of the Inspectorate have visited the Sandia test site.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Spain

Mr. Nicholls asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has been the effect of the United Kingdom's presidency of the Council on trade relations with Spain and its territories.

Mr. Alan Clark: While the United Kingdom presidency did not in itself affect our excellent bilateral trade relations with Spain, I am pleased to say that these were fully maintained in 1986. United Kingdom exports to Spain increased to record levels last year, totalling £1,905 million.

Commodities (Imports and Exports)

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the value of *(a)* imports and *(b)* exports of the following commodities in 1980, 1984 and 1986 at current prices for (i) cereals,(ii) all agricultural products, (iii) motor vehicles, (iv) coal, (v) steel and (vi) electrical goods; and if he will show the net increase or decrease since 1980 in money and percentage terms.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is as follows:

Value £ million

	(a) United Kingdom Imports (cif)			*Change 1980-86*		*(b) United Kingdom Exports (fob)*			*Change 1980-86*	
	1980	*1984*	*[1]1986*	*£ million*	*Per cent.*	*1980*	*1984*	*[1]1986*	*£ million*	*Per cent.*
(i) Cereals and cereal preparations	603	629	769	+166	28	456	993	1,177	+721	158
(ii) Agricultural products	6,003	8,588	9,356	+3,353	56	2,125	3,260	4,001	+1,876	88
(iii) Motor vehicles	2,493	4,356	5,684	+3,191	128	1,525	1,486	1,764	+239	16
(iv) Coal	215	493	443	+228	106	116	72	107	−9	−8
(v) Steel	1,274	1,244	1,520	+246	19	769	1,287	1,591	+822	107
(vi) Electrical goods	3,838	9,976	11,600	+7,762	202	4,149	7,332	8,799	+4,650	112

Sources: The following SITC/R2 data in the United Kingdom Overseas Trade Statistics: (i) division 04, (ii) sections 0 and 4 and division 22, (iii) groups 781, 782, 783 and sub-group 784.1, (iv) sub-groups 322.1 and 322.2, (v) groups 672-675, sub-groups 678.2, 678.3, 678.4 and 679.3 and items 676.01 (part), 676.02 (part), 679.42 and 791.99 (part), (vi) divisions 75, 76, 77 and group 716.

[1] 1986 figures are provisional

Financial Aid

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what financial assistance has been provided by his Department directly to industry in Wales since 1979; and if he will outline the categories of support provided.

Mr. Butcher *[pursuant to his reply, 6 February 1987, c. 839]:* From 1 April 1979 to 31 March 1984 regional development grants (RDG) payments to companies in Wales totalled £470 million. Responsibility for administration of the RDG scheme in Wales was transferred to the Welsh Office from my Department in November 1984.

Complete information on other expenditure by my Department on a regional basis could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, we can say that under the selective investment scheme payments to industry in Wales since 1979 had totalled some £18 million at 31 March 1986. Also, under support for innovation under the Science and Technology Act 1965 more than £7·5 million has been paid to industry in Wales since 1 April 1982 (figures for the earlier years are not available).

HOME DEPARTMENT

Racial Incidents

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps are taken to monitor the implementation of *(a)* the minimum requirements and *(b)* the options set out in appendix B of the territorial operations instruction 1/86, best practice guidelines for recording and monitoring racial incidents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Commissioner keeps these matters under continuous review.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of reported cases of racial incidents within the London borough of Newham for each month of 1986; how many of these cases led to arrests being made; and what was the total number of persons arrested.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information is set out in the table.

I am informed by the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that of the 244 incidents, 29 led to arrests, but figures are not available on the number of persons arrested.

Reported racial incidents in Newham by month for 1986

	Number
January	15
February	8
March	19
April	21
May	14
June	28
July	23
August	31
September	30
October	21
November	21
December	13
Total	244

Fire Stations

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what advice his Department gives to local authorities regarding fire station rebuilding and refurbishment.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None.

Licensing

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what records are kept by licensing magistrates of applications for and permissions granted for licences in the Occasional Permissions Act 1983.

Mr. Waddington: It is for individual courts to determine the form of records maintained on occasional permissions, but licensing justices need to be able to ensure that not more than four permissions in a 12-month period are granted to the same organisation.

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the recent meeting on the Pompidou group on drug abuse and illicit trafficking.

Mr. Mellor: The eighth ministerial conference of the Council of Europe co-operation group to combat drug abuse and illicit trafficking in drugs (the Pompidou group) was held in London on 20 and 21 January under my chairmanship. The group is a multidisciplinary body which acts as the main forum for co-operation on all drug misuse and drug trafficking matters within Europe. The conference reviewed work since the seventh conference in 1984 and set a new programme of work for the group to pursue over the coming two to three years, comprising:

1 Practical measures for effective implemention of legislation to confiscate the proceeds of drug trafficking;
2 Mechanisms to improve co-ordination of controls in major ports and maritime surveillance;
3 Role of the media in shaping attitudes to drug misuse;
4 Role of primary health care personnel and short term crisis intervention;
5 Problems related to the operating and funding of treatment facilities;
6 Encouragement of co-operation and action by municipalities and local action groups;
7 Review of drugs legislation in member states in order to compare solutions adopted to deal with similar problems;
8 Preparation of a handbook setting out the division of responsibilities for drug questions at national level;
9 Detection and prevention of drug misuse in the armed forces;
10 Exchange of information on the role and effects of methadone in treatment.

The conference also decided that the group should continue to pursue the following topics on which work is already in hand:

1 Liaison between those responsible for airport control services within member states;
2 The role of the criminal justice system in responding to the needs of drugs misusers;
3 Ways of reaching young people particularly at risk of becoming involved in drug misuse;
4 Examination of the special problems experienced by female drug misusers;
5 The epidemiology of drug misuse in member states.

By consensus, it was agreed that the United Kingdom should continue to chair the group until the next ministerial conference.

A copy of the declaration of the conference has been placed in the Library.

Television Licences

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the estimated loss of revenue to the British Broadcasting Corporation resulting from Crown exemption from paying television licences.

Mr. Mellor: It is not practicable to estimate how much additional licence revenue would be received if the Wireless Telegraphy Act 1949 were binding on the Crown.

Wapping (Dispute)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many plain-clothes police officers were on duty at the News International dispute at Wapping on 24 January.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner that there were four plain clothes officers on duty in the vicinity of the demonstration.

Mr. Peter Shore asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the current Association of

Chief Police Officers guidelines are binding on the officers responsible for policing the Wapping disturbances on 24 January.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. The responsibility for maintaining the Queen's peace and enforcing the law rests with the chief officer of police concerned, in this case the Commissioner.

Mr. Peter Shore asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the terms of reference of the inquiry to be conducted by Chief Superintendent Wyrko of Northamptonshire into complaints against the alleged excessive use of force by the police during the Wapping demonstration on Saturday 24 January; how many complaints have been received so far; what publicity has been given to this inquiry; and to whom aggrieved members of the public should address their complaints.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that Chief Superintendent Wyrko has been appointed

"to investigate all allegations and complaints against police officers and about police officers' actions arising from the disturbance at the Wapping demonstration on Saturday 24 January 1987".

Those terms of reference have been agreed with the Police Complaints Authority, which will be supervising the investigation. Twelve complaints have been received so far. I understand that both the Metropolitan police and the Police Complaints Authority have issued press notices about the inquiry. Members of the public who wish to make a complaint may do so at any police station or direct to the Police Complaints Authority.

Mr. Peter Shore asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether there is to be an internal inquiry conducted by the Metropolitan police into the tactics used to control the crowds at the recent Wapping demonstration.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No.

Police (Photographs)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of photographs taken by the Metropolitan police of detained, arrested and suspected persons for each year since 1979; and if he will indicate in how many cases in each year those photographs were destroyed when charges were not subsequently brought or the individual concerned was acquitted.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that this information is not collected centrally.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will give the number of photographs taken of persons arrested, charged or otherwise detained as a result of the News International dispute; and what is the procedure adopted by the Metropolitan police with regard to the destruction of photographic material relating to those persons subsequently not charged or acquitted by the courts;

(2) in what percentage of cases the Metropolitan police have photographed and fingerprinted pickets and demonstrators arrested, charged or otherwise detained as a result of incidents arising from the News International dispute at Wapping.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner that photographs and fingerprints have been taken in all cases where those arrested or detained have been charged with recordable offences. Of 1,471 persons arrested up to 10 February, 857 (58 per cent.) have been so charged. The photographs and fingerprints of any person subsequently acquitted or bound over to keep the peace by the courts are destroyed in accordance with the code of practice for the identification of persons by police officers.

Police (Armed Patrols)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to how many police forces in England and Wales maintain armed patrols on either a 24-hour or a part-day basis.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Three forces in England and Wales operate a system of armed response patrol cars.

Police (Helicopters)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to how many times during the past 12 months a Metropolitan police helicopter has been used in Newham; what incidents were involved; and what arrests resulted from information received from the helicopter crew.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I will reply as soon as possible.

Police (Wrongful Acts)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the amounts paid in out-of-court settlements of claims arising from the wrongful acts of Metropolitan police officers in 1986; what were the amounts paid under awards made by courts in similar cases in 1986; and what was the number of cases concluded in 1986.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I will reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for 1986 the cases involving police officers in England and Wales where civil damages have been awarded and where, following the conclusion of the case, details of the court's findings have been forwarded to the Director of Public Prosecutions for further action.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for 1986 the cases involving Metropolitan police officers where civil damages have been awarded and where, following the conclusion of the case, details of the court's findings have been forwarded to the Director of Public Prosecutions for further action.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I will reply as soon as possible.

Passports

Mr. Harris asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to computerise passport

issuing in the United Kingdom and to issue the new machine readable common European Community format passport.

Mr. Hurd: Our earlier target of 1987 has had to be revised. Nevertheless, the project to computerise passport issuing is on a firm footing and the contract for the supply of the computer system has been let to Software Sciences Limited. We now plan for the first of our offices to be computerised from July 1988 and for the system to be introduced in all offices by the end of 1989. It follows that the machine readable common format passport will now be produced in mid-1988. We understand that the Netherlands and West Germany have also revised their timetables and plan to introduce their machine readable passports in 1988, too.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

School Inspections

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a list showing, for each quarter of each year in which Her Majesty's inspectors' reports of inspections of schools have been published *(a)* the number of reports of full inspections published in the quarter and *(b)* the average time in months between dates of such inspections and dates of publication in that quarter; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The detailed disaggregated information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Between 1 January 1983 and 31 December 1986 a total of 936 reports of all kinds by Her Majesty's inspectors were published. The quarterly split was as follows:

	Number
1983	
January to March	29
April to June	66
July to September	63
October to December	79
1984	
January to March	87
April to June	60
July to September	46
October to December	61
1985	
January to March	40
April to June	48
July to September	64
October to December	52
1986	
January to March	84
April to June	60
July to September	31
October to December	66

The average time between inspection and publication is close to one year. It remains the aim of Her Majesty's inspectors that reports should be issued to individual institutions within six months of an inspection. They are reviewing their procedures. However, no institution or governing body has to wait that long to know the findings of an inspection. Her Majesty's inspectors discuss these and other matters with the head or principal during and at the end of each inspection, and with the governing body shortly after.

Schools (Finance)

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much was spent per pupil in secondary schools in each local authority in England for the most recent years for which figures are available; what is the average figure for England as a whole; and what are the 1979-80 comparable figures at constant prices.

Mr. Dunn: The information requested is given in the table.

Net Institutional Expenditure per Secondary School Pupil

	1979-80 (£)	*1984-85 (£)*
Barking	1,090	1,225
Barnet	1,050	1,265
Bexley	960	1,080
Brent	1,195	1,525
Bromley	1,005	1,155
Croydon	1,020	1,225
Ealing	1,095	1,315
Enfield	925	1,150
Haringey	1,160	1,615
Harrow	1,135	1,240
Havering	1,025	1,230
Hillingdon	1,010	1,275
Hounslow	1,045	1,190
Kingston-upon-Thames	960	1,165
Merton	1,000	1,040
Newham	1,110	1,485
Redbridge	1,010	1,185
Richmond-upon-Thames	960	1,170
Sutton	920	1,060
Waltham Forest	1,195	1,450
ILEA	1,410	1,940
Birmingham	935	1,060
Coventry	960	1,180
Dudley	825	990
Sandwell	955	1,135
Solihull	870	1,020
Walsall	915	1,105
Wolverhampton	965	1,130
Knowsley	975	1,240
Liverpool	1,030	1,165
St. Helens	920	1,040
Sefton	900	1,045
Wirral	880	1,035
Bolton	875	1,035
Bury	910	1,100
Manchester	1,175	1,295
Oldham	870	995
Rochdale	990	1,155
Salford	960	1,110
Stockport	850	1,130
Tameside	885	1,070
Trafford	840	1,040
Wigan	925	1,110
Barnsley	940	1,070
Doncaster	955	1,065
Rotherham	870	995
Sheffield	970	1,150
Bradford	825	990
Calderdale	860	1,000
Kirklees	820	950
Leeds	745	970
Wakefield	820	975
Gateshead	915	1,080
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	1,060	1,245
North Tyneside	930	1,180
South Tyneside	985	1,150
Sunderland	940	1,060
Isles of Scilly	1,405	1,670
Avon	885	1,085
Bedfordshire	925	1,060
Berkshire	875	1,055

	1979-80 (£)	1984-85 (£)
Buckinghamshire	955	1,095
Cambridgeshire	895	960
Cheshire	885	1,010
Cleveland	925	1,075
Cornwall	850	965
Cumbria	890	1,025
Derbyshire	860	1,020
Devon	835	980
Dorset	850	960
Durham	870	965
East Sussex	910	1,000
Essex	870	1,015
Gloucestershire	845	1,015
Hampshire	860	980
Hereford and Worcester	850	955
Hertfordshire	990	1,075
Humberside	865	1,040
Isle of Wight	815	960
Kent	835	935
Lancashire	870	1,015
Leicestershire	890	1,100
Lincolnshire	885	985
Norfolk	875	1,010
North Yorkshire	900	1,035
Northamptonshire	865	1,035
Northumberland	870	1,000
Nottinghamshire	880	1,110
Oxfordshire	900	1,070
Salop	875	1,040
Somerset	810	950
Staffordshire	915	1,025
Suffolk	800	975
Surrey	900	1,030
Warwickshire	865	1,010
West Sussex	820	965
Wiltshire	850	975
ENGLAND	925	1,085

Note
1. The cash figures for 1979-80 have been repriced to 1984-85 prices using the gross domestic product (market prices) deflator.

School Population

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, further to his reply of 21 January, *Official Report*, c. *557*, if he will give the total school population of the 10 local education authorities listed for 1985-86 and 1986-87, and projected figures for the next three years.

Mr. Dunn: The total number of pupils in maintained schools in 1985-86 in the local education authorities listed was as follows. The numbers relate to a one-day count of pupils in January 1986. Pupil numbers for 1986-87 are not yet available. Projections of pupil numbers for local education authorities are not available centrally.

Total number of pupils in maintained schools[1]—1985-86[2]

LEA	Number
Inner London	289,768
Essex	234,776
Hampshire	221,497
Humberside	146,137
Derbyshire	148,370
Manchester	72,979
Staffordshire	168,194
Kent	229,222
Gloucestershire	76,913
Suffolk	93,286

[1] Includes part-time pupils in nursery and primary schools and pupils in special schools.
[2] January 1986.

Projections of pupil numbers for succeeding years are made only for England as a whole.

Literacy and Numeracy

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are his aims and policy on adult education in basic skills of literacy and numeracy; what are the standards of achievement considered appropriate for a child aged 16 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend's policy in adult education is to encourage LEAs and voluntary bodies to make available an appropriate range of learning opportunities for adults who lack basic skills of literacy and numeracy, within the constraints of available resources. To this end, he gives high priority to the funding of the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit in order to stimulate further development of adult basic skills provision. Grant has risen from over £470,000 in 1980-81 to more than £2,050,000 in 1986-87, a fourfold increase in cash terms.

It is also my right hon. Friend's aim that 80 per cent. to 90 per cent. of 16-year-olds should attain at least the foundation level of GCSE grade F in a minimum of five subjects, including English and mathematics. We are developing policies for the improvement of the school curriculum to achieve that aim.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a table showing for each recent year, with a breakdown by budget heading or project name, his Department's expenditure on adult education in basic skills of literacy and numeracy, expressed in figures adjusted to constant prices; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: The expenditure from the Department's adult education budget on the adult literacy and basic skills unit since 1980-81 is as follows:

Grant paid in 1986-87 real terms measured by the GDP deflator at market prices

Financial Year	£
1980-81	659,245
1981-82	1,239,548
1982-83	1,553,311
1983-84	1,638,658
1984-85	1,487,004
1985-86	[1]1,687,140
1986-87	[1]2,052,000

[1] Estimated outturn.

Some literacy and numeracy provision is also funded as part of more general DES grant-aided activities undertaken by the Workers Educational Association, the national associations primarily concerned with adult education, residential colleges for adults and the REPLAN programme. In these cases, resources for literacy and numeracy are not separately earmarked.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what statistical information is available to his Department on adults with reading, writing and arithmetical skills less than those considered appropriate for a child age 16 years; what relevant surveys have been undertaken in recent years by his Department or other bodies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: The National Child Development Study survey of 1981 found that 10 per cent. of the 23-year-olds asked said that they had had reading problems since leaving school and 3 per cent. said that these problems had made things difficult for them in everyday life. In the same survey, 5 per cent. of those asked said that they had had numeracy problems since leaving school and 1·5 per cent. said these problems had made things difficult for them. A survey was also conducted in 1981 by Social Surveys (Gallup Polls) Limited which tested the numeracy skills of a sample of the adult population. It found that 10 per cent. could not handle simple addition, and higher percentages had difficulty with more complex numeracy tasks.

A recent survey by Mori of the basic literacy and numeracy skills of a sample of the population of Rochdale found that 10 per cent. of the teenagers asked said that they had some problems with reading, 16 per cent. had some problems with spelling and 18 per cent. had some problems with basic maths. Of the adults asked, 7 per cent. had some problems with reading, 13 per cent. had some problems with spelling and 13 per cent. had some problems with maths.

There are difficulties in comparing these results with the reading, writing and arithmetical skills considered appropriate for a child aged 16.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he has taken to co-ordinate action on adult education in basic skills of literacy and numeracy with the work of other departments in contact with large numbers of members of the public; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: Membership of the management committee of the Government-funded Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit facilitates co-ordination of the work of the Department of Education and Science, the Welsh Office, the Home Office and the Manpower Services Commission. There is also frequent day to day contact at a working level between the unit, the Department of Education and Science, other relevant Government Departments and the MSC.

Boarding

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what is the number of boarding school places currently taken up by local education authorities *(a)* in schools maintained by other authorities and *(b)* in the independent sector; and what were the equivalent figures for September for each of the years 1980 to 1986 inclusive;

(2) whether he will give details under all appropriate headings of the range of statistical information available to his Department relating to the discharge by local education authorities of their duty to meet essential boarding school needs under section 52(1)*(a)* of the Education Act 1944.

Mr. Dunn: This information is not collected centrally.

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the current number of boarding school places provided in maintained schools in England by local education authorities; and what were the equivalent figures as of September for each of the years 1980 to 1986, inclusive.

Mr. Dunn: The information is available neither in the form nor over the whole period requested. The number of boarders in maintained schools in England in January for each year shown was as follows:

	Number
1983	8,341
1984	7,884
1985	7,583
1986	7,118

GCSE

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the rate of supply of teaching aids for the General Certificate of Secondary Education in the southern region; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The southern examining group's GCSE syllabuses contain full specimen question papers and marking schemes, together with a wide range of information about the assessment of course work. In addition, the group is producing further in-service training aids in the form of open-learning packages containing written materials, which are currently being sent to schools.

Meningococcal Infections

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much of his Department's money has been spent on research into meningococcal infections in (i) the last year and (ii) the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Walden: The Medical Research Council, which receives its grant in aid from the Department's science budget, has spent the following sums on research into meningococcal infections:

Financial year	*£000*
1981-82	13
1982-83	11
1983-84	13
1984-85	58
1985-86	27

Research work on meningococcal infections may also be carried out in universities and medical schools using funds allocated for teaching and research on the advice of the University Grants Committee. Details of any such work are not collected centrally.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Supplementary Benefits

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the number and total value of single payments under supplementary benefit made in each social security office in Northern Ireland in 1986 in respect of claims made before the amendments to the regulations came into effect and the amounts and values of payments in respect of claims made under the amended regulations.

Mr. Needham: Information is not readily available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Single Payments Cases

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the backlog of single payments cases which built up in 1986 and the delays in processing claims, indicating the case load and the rate at which they have been processed.

Mr. Needham: In 1986 there was a marked increase in single payment claims due mainly to the declaration of a period of exceptionally severe weather in February resulting in some 70,000 claims and a build-up of other single payment claims in some social security offices in the weeks prior to the changes in single payment regulations effective from 11 August 1986.

During the period 18 December 1985 to 16 December 1986, a total of 375,606 single payment claims were received. These were processed as quickly as possible with priority being given to the more urgent cases. Backlogs of claims varied from office to office and from month to month. Similar variations also applied to clearance time per case, which ranged from 10-12 days at the beginning of the year to more than 28 days in the peak month of August. However, overall the average daily clearance rate was 1,473 with the average clearance time per case being 12·4 days. Additional resources were made available to assist those offices with abnormal backlogs and by the end of the year the position had returned to normal.

Prisoners (Maltreatment)

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the number of allegations of police maltreatment of prisoners held in their custody under the emergency provisions in Northern Ireland during the years 1975 through 1985 on a year-by-year basis; how many investigations were held and how many of the allegations were upheld during the same years, again on a year by year basis.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 January 1987, *c.586*]: The information is not available in the form or for the period requested. However, the total number of complaints as recorded by the Police Complaints Board for Northern Ireland alleging irregularities of procedures by persons arrested and held in custody under the emergency legislation is as follows:

	Number
1979	220
1980	133
1981	81
1982	162
1983	189
1984	220
1985	232

These figures represent around 10 per cent. of the total number of all complaints recorded by the Police Complaints Board for Northern Ireland during the period.

Detailed statistics from the Police Complaints Board on the outcome of the cases are available only from 1984. They are as follows:

	1984	*1985*
Investigations completed	62	75
Withdrawn by complainant	29	16
Investigations incomplete because of non co-operation of complainant	129	141
Total	220	232

In all cases complaints are investigated by the RUC. In addition, the papers are forwarded to the Police Complaints Board for consideration of disciplinary action. Disciplinary action was not considered appropriate in any of these cases.

WALES

Gross Domestic Product

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the Welsh gross domestic product for each of the last seven years.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Estimates of the Welsh gross domestic product for each of the last seven years are given in the following table:

Gross domestic product at factor cost: £ million at current prices

	£ million
1979	7,343
1980	8,203
1981	8,727
1982	9,674
1983	10,640
[1]1984	11,010
[1]1985	12,680

Source: Central Statistical Office.
[1] Provisional.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales at the latest date for which figures are available, how many people in *(a)* Wales, *(b)* Mid-Glamorgan and *(c)* Clwyd have been unemployed for five years or more in numerical terms and as a percentage of the total unemployment figure; and if he will give the same sum for comparative months from 1980 to 1986 inclusive.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what was the number of Welsh people employed in *(a)* service sector and *(b)* manufacturing sector jobs in Wales in each year from 1979 to 1986 inclusive.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The estimated numbers of employees in employment in Wales in the service and manufacturing sectors (excluding the self-employed) are given in the following table:

Employees in employment: Wales *Thousands at September*

	Services	*Manufacturing*
1979	572	317
1980	565	278
1981	561	239
1982	549	223
1983	549	214
1984	554	212
1985	554	210
1986	554	203

Source: Department of Employment quarterly estimates.

Chest Consultants

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many chest consultants there are currently in Welsh

hospitals, in whole-time equivalent terms and per head of population; and what was the figure for February in each of the last seven years.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The required information is given in the table:

	Consultants in Thoracic Medicine [1] *Whole-time equivalents*	*Rate per million population*
1979	18·1	6·5
1980	14·1	5·1
1981	12·1	4·3
1982	10·1	3·6
1983	8·1	2·9
1984	6·3	2·2
1985	6·6	2·3
1986	[2]4·8	[3]1·7

[1] As at September each year
[2] provisional
[3] Based on 1985 population estimates.

Capital and Improvement Grants

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what changes have been made to the rules regarding the payment of capital grants and improvement grants since 1979; and why changes were instituted.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I will write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

ADAS

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the future of the Agricultural Development Advisory Service in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The Agricultural Development and Advisory Service (ADAS) is a part of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and operates in Wales as the agent of the Secretary of State for Wales. These arrangements will continue in future.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Hong Kong

Mr. Yeo asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the Sino-British agreement for the return of Hong Kong to Chinese rule in 1997 in the light of recent political events in China.

Mr. Renton: We have noted statements by Chinese officials that China's policies towards Hong Kong are unaffected by recent internal developments. We remain confident in the commitment of the Chinese Government to the full implementation of the Sino-British joint declaration on the future of Hong Kong.

Afghanistan

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Soviet Union on Afghanistan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We have taken every opportunity to see clarification of Soviet intentions and to emphasise the need for a genuine settlement to bring peace and freedom to Afghanistan and enable its people to determine their own future. I did so when I received a Supreme Soviet delegation on 3 February; so did Her Majesty's ambassador in Moscow on 29 January; so also did my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, the hon. Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton) with the Soviet ambassador on 20 January.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had recently with the Government of Pakistan with particular reference to the situation on the Afghanistan border and the provision of aid for refugees from Afghanistan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Afghan refugees continue to flee to Pakistan. We remain in touch with the Pakistan Government on the subject of aid. My hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development, the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Patten), announced a further allocation of £3·5 million during his visit to Pakistan in November, as he told the House on 2 February.

Middle East

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he proposes to initiate any discussions within the European Economic Community about the role within an overall settlement in the middle east of the promotion of human and civil rights on the west bank and in the Gaza strip.

Mr. Renton: Developments in Arab territories occupied by Israel are kept under close review by Ministers of the Twelve.

We have made clear on many occasions to the Israeli Government that improvements in conditions in the occupied territories would improve the climate for peace negotiations.

Terrorism

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the latest progress on arrangements for the pooling of information about terrorism by European Governments.

Mr. Eggar: As I told my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) on 12 January, we gave high priority to measures to combat terrorism during the United Kingdom presidency. Ministers met in the TREVI group on 25 September 1986 and 9 December 1986 and there was an informal meeting of Interior and Justice Ministers on 20 October 1986. The subject was also discussed by Foreign Ministers meeting in political co-operation and by Heads of State/Government at the European Council on 5 to 6 December.

These meetings resulted in enhanced practical co-operation between member states on counter-terrorism measures, including the setting up of a secure communications link between police forces of the member states; intensification of liaison between counter-terrorism experts and mutual exchanges of information about people excluded from the territory of any one member state. We will continue to do everything possible to promote effective counter-terrorist co-operation among the Twelve.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many checks Falkland Islands fishery protection ships have made on vessels fishing inside the Falkland Islands conservation zone since 1 February.

Mr. Eggar: In the first week of the implementation of the Falkland Islands interim conservation and management zone, which came into effect on 1 February, Falkland Islands Government fisheries protection officers boarded six fishing vessels.

El Salvador

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps the Government are taking to monitor instances of human rights violations by Salvadorean military and security forces both before and after they receive training by United Kingdom personnel.

Mrs. Chalker: We have made it clear that candidates for training should be both professionally and personally suitable. Our current monitoring of the human rights situation in El Salvador will be continued after the cadet has returned.

Shell Tanker (Attack)

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made and to whom about the attack on the Shell tanker Isomeria in the straits of Hormuz at 20.00 hours on 23 January; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: I summoned the Iranian chargé d'affaires, Mr. Akhundzadeh-Basti, on 26 January to deliver a protest at this premeditated, totally unprovoked and unjustifiable attack. The acting head of the British interests section in Tehran delivered a similar protest to the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We await a satisfactory Iranian response.

Soviet Jews

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to the numbers of Jews who were allowed to emigrate from the Soviet Union during the month of January 1987.

Mr. Renton: According to our information, 92. We continue to press for a significant increase in the numbers permitted to leave.

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Mid Sussex (Mr. Renton), received during his recent discussions in Moscow about the effect of the new Soviet law narrowing the family reunification invitations to Soviet Jews who wish to emigrate, especially on those who have already applied outside the new criteria; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave him on 26 January at column *41*.

Nuclear Test Ban Treaty

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy of 29 January, *Official Report*, columns *334-35*, on information made available on technical verification of a nuclear test ban treaty to bodies in the United States of America, if he will list those United States technical authorities with which regular contact on these matters is maintained.

Mr. Renton: We are in regular contact with the Departments of both Defence and Energy, in particular the Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency which is the umbrella organisation for research into technical issues relevant to a comprehensive nuclear test ban.

Five Continents Peace Initiative

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy of 29 January, *Official Report*, column *335*, on the five continents peace initiative, if he will place a copy of the replies mentioned in the Library.

Mr. Renton: No.

BBC Scotland

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if his Department was consulted about the issue of warrants for the search of British Broadcasting Corporation premises in Glasgow.

Mr. Renton: No.

Meeting with Philip Habib

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why, on 22 January, he had to cancel a meeting with Philip Habib; and when this meeting was arranged.

Mrs. Chalker: The meeting of my right hon. and learned Friend with Mr. Philip Habib was arranged some days before it was due to take place. It was cancelled because the Foreign Secretary had to attend other urgent business. Mr. Habib was received by a senior FCO official instead.

Middle East Association

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why he asked his hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton) to deliver his speech to the Middle East Association on 22 January in the Shell centre; and when the invitation from the Middle East Association was accepted.

Mr. Renton: The invitation to address the Middle East Association on the occasion of its 25th Anniversary was accepted by my right hon. and learned Friend on 21 July 1986. Due to urgent Government business he was, with much regret, unable to fulfil the engagement. I was therefore asked to deliver his speech at the Shell centre.

BBC External Services

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to announce agreement with the British Broadcasting Corporation on a revised financial memorandum governing the financial relationship between external services and his Department.

Mr. Eggar: We expect to reach agreement soon with the BBC on a revised financial memorandum on the external services' finance and principles governing expenditure. We believe that it should include provision for the National Audit Office to carry out economy, efficiency and effectiveness examinations.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give details of the changes proposed and effected in the British Broadcasting Corporation's external services output following publication of the Perry review.

Mr. Eggar: Since publication of the Perry report, the BBC external services are broadcasting a post-1950 record of 732¾ hours per week. The net increase of 5¼ hours broadcasting per week over the pre-Perry output breaks down as follows:

	Time change
Increases per week	
English by Radio service	2 hours
Portuguese for Africa service	1 hour, 45 minutes
Indonesian service	1 hour, 45 minutes
Persian service	1 hour, 45 minutes
Decreases per week	
German service	1 hour, 45 minutes
Hungarian service	45 minutes
Czech/Slovak service	45 minutes

Diplomats

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the answer of 6 February to the hon. Member for Leicester, East, if he will make it his policy to require the removal from the United Kingdom of any diplomat for any alleged drunken driving offence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Our policy is fully set out in the White Paper on "Diplomatic Immunities and Privileges" (Cmnd. 9497), particularly paragraphs 65 and 69. There are no current plans for a change.

Fernando Perez (Abduction)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the Spanish authorities to secure the return of Fernando Perez, a ward of court who was abducted from his school in Eastbourne on 10 October 1986 and taken by his father to the Canary Islands.

Mr. Eggar: Fernando Perez has both British and Spanish nationality. In accordance with international practice, dual nationals cannot be protected by Her Majesty's Government in the country of their other nationality.

Wardship orders taken out in this country can be enforced abroad by the local court under the terms of the European convention on the recognition and enforcement of decisions concerning the custody of children. We understand that solicitors acting for Mrs. Perez, the child's mother, have been advised of the correct channel for making application.

Our consular officers in Spain have no authority to expedite proceedings: this is a matter for the local court, in which we cannot intervene.

Our consul in Las Palmas has, however, informally drawn the court's attention to the wardship order, and has also agreed to effect service of the wardship papers against the child's father on behalf of Mrs. Perez's solicitors.

Immigration

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received in respect of de-oxyribosenucleic acid testing in connection with immigration cases.

Mr. Eggar: We have received representations from hon. and right hon. Members on behalf of constituents requesting the DNA test, together with similar representations from immigrant organisations and law centres. I hope that it may be possible to include a few of these cases in the pilot scheme to which I referred in my written answer to the hon. Member on 28 January at column *283*.

South Africa

Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish details of all the measures currently being taken by the Government against South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: The restrictive measures currently being applied by us are as follows:

An embargo on arms exports to South Africa (United Nations Security Council resolution 418);
An embargo on arms imports from South Africa (United Nations Security Council resolution 558);
No military co-operation with South Africa;
The recall (since 1985) of British military attachés from South Africa;
The discouraging of sporting links with South Africa (1977 Gleneagles agreement);
The discouraging of cultural and scientific events and agreements with South Africa except where these contribute towards the ending of apartheid or have no possible role in supporting it;
No exports of oil to South Africa;
No collaboration with South Africa in nuclear development;
A ban on all new Government loans to the Government of South Africa and their agencies;
A ban on the import of gold coins from South Africa;
No Government funding for trade missions to South Africa or for participation in exhibitions and trade fairs in South Africa;
A voluntary ban on new investment in South Africa;
A voluntary ban on the promotion of tourism to South Africa;
A ban on iron and steel imports from South Africa;
A ban on the export of sensitive equipment to the South African police and armed forces.

THE ARTS

English Regional Arts Association

Mr. Favell asked the Minister for the Arts what proportion of the English Regional Arts Associations' expenditure was accounted for by administration in the latest available year.

Mr. Luce: The proportion varies considerably between one association and another. I am pleased to learn that the Arts Council is to conduct a review of its own administrative costs and those of the regional arts associations, and I have asked the chairman to report to me on the findings.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Government Purchasing Procedures

Mr. Hannam asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to change the procedures used for Government purchasing.

Mr. Brooke: Government Departments are continually updating their practices in pursuit of a more commercial approach. In their search for greater value for money, Departments are helped and advised by the Central Unit on Purchasing, set up in August 1985 following a report by the Cabinet Office (MPO), "Government Purchasing". Information about the unit's work so far was given in the answer by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) on 19 November at column *229*.

Government Expenditure

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will explain why, in table 2.4 of the Government's expenditure plans 1978-1989-90, there are no projections to 1990 for the National Health Service, the Northern Ireland Government services, local authorities or the nationalised industries and local authorities (trading).

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend's question appears to be directed at the public sector manpower table published in table 2.14 of Cmnd. 56. A note to table 2.14 states:

"Manpower projections for future years are not included for local authorities, the National Health Service, public corporations and other central government. The Government does not directly control manpower numbers in these areas. Its influence is exercised essentially through expenditure and financial controls".

However, the figures provided for the Northern Ireland Government service include the Northern Ireland Departments and the Northern Ireland Office, whose manpower is under the control of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland—see table 3.18.37 of Cmnd. 56.

Film Industry

Mr. Janner asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he is prepared to consider similar Inland Revenue write-off proposals for the British film industry as exist in other major western film producing countries; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Premium Bond Draws

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his reply of 6 February, if he will give sub-totals for the unclaimed prize money from premium bond draws by year; and what is his policy in respect of unclaimed prize money.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Inland Revenue (Cash Limit)

Mr. Colvin asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether any changes are proposed in the cash limit for the Inland Revenue.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class XIX, vote 7 will be increased by £4,500,000 from £958,817,000 to £963,317,000 to cover extra spending on professional assistance, current computer costs, accommodation and training which is partly offset by a reduction in capital spending on computers. The increase will be charged to the reserve. At the same time, the Department's running cost target will be increased by £6,500,000 from £914,950,000 to £921,450,000.

PRIME MINISTER

Young Conservatives Conference

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Prime Minister if any public expenditure was incurred in her travel arrangements to the Young Conservatives' conference on 7 February.

The Prime Minister: The cost of my travel to the conference does not fall on public funds.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

State Security

Mr. Dalyell asked the Attorney-General what steps he takes, when considering prosecutions or the issue of warrants in relation to offences under the Official Secrets Act, to ascertain the damage to public interest caused by the particular disclosure.

The Solicitor-General: My right hon. and learned Friend takes such steps as are practicable to ensure that he is fully advised of all factors which affect the public interest. These will depend on the scope and nature of the breach of the Official Secrets Acts that is alleged in a particular case.

Fernando Perez (Abduction)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Attorney-General what efforts are being made to secure the return of Fernando Perez, a ward of court who was abducted from his school in Eastbourne on 10 October 1986 and taken by his father to the Canary Islands.

The Solicitor-General: I understand that Mrs. Perez's solicitors are applying for an order granting her care and control of the child and a declaration that his removal was unlawful. If Mrs. Perez obtains the order and declaration, an application for the return of the child may be made to the Spanish authorities on her behalf by the Lord Chancellor's Department under the Child Abduction and Custody Act 1985.

ENVIRONMENT

Conifers (Air Pollution)

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what evidence he has about the effect of air pollution on the vitality of British conifers.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Forestry Commission has been conducting annual surveys of forest tree health and has recently published the findings of its 1986 survey. This

suggests a worsening of tree condition, but I understand that there is no firm evidence that points to a cause such as air pollution as distinct from other factors such as climate, or the depredations of insects or fungi. The Forestry Commission and my Department are continuing their research to further the understanding of the roles played by climate, soil factors and pollutants and their interaction in tree health. In consultation with the NCC and other interested bodies, further extension in terms of species and areas covered are being planned for 1987.

Local Authority Housing

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list in the *Official Report* those local authorities in England whose total of housing classified as unfit together with those classified as fit but lacking basic amenities is over 5 per cent. of their total housing stock as recorded on form HIP 1; and if he will give the percentage in each case;

(2) if he will list in the *Official Report* those local authorities which have over 20 per cent. of their total housing stock indicated in form HIP 1 as being non sub-standard dwellings in need of renovation; and if he will give the percentage in each case.

Mr. Tracey: The inforation requested is as follows. Numbers reported are not necessarily comparable as authorities' criterion may differ and national totals are not consistent with estimates from the English house condition survey of 1981.

Local authorities with more than 5 per cent. of dwelling stock substandard (unfit or fit but lacking basic amenities) April 1986: England

Local authority	*Percentage of total stock*
1. Newham	28·5
2. Hackney	22·6
3. Lewisham	†22·0
4. Hammersmith and Fulham	†19·6
5. Lambeth	19·2
6. Southwark	18·8
7. Haringey	17·2
8. Kensington and Chelsea	†16·8
9. Tower Hamlets	16·8
10. Blackburn	16·6
11. Camden	16·5
12. South Herefordshire	16·0
13. St. Helens	15·3
14. Wandsworth	†15·2
15. Rugby	†14·7
16. Birmingham	14·7
17. Stoke-on-Trent	†14·6
18. Hyndburn	14·6
19. Caradon	14·6
20. Mendip	14·2
21. Bolton	13·6
22. Sandwell	†13·5
23. Staffordshire Moorlands	†13·2
24. Forest of Dean	†12·3
25. Leominster	12·2
26. Chorley	11·8
27. Wolverhampton	11·8
28. Trafford	11·7
29. Kettering	11·6
30. South Holland	11·6
31. Torridge	11·5
32. Malvern Hills	11·0
33. Waltham Forest	10·6
34. Hounslow	10·6
35. Richmond upon Thames	10·5
36. Leeds	10·5
37. Barnsley	10·5
38. Penwith	10·3
39. Islington	10·2
40. Leicester	†10·1
41. Cleethorpes	10·0
42. Thurrock	9·9
43. Brighton	9·7
44. Ealing	†9·6
45. Norwich	†9·6
46. Bath	†9·6
47. Allerdale	9·6
48. Mid Suffolk	9·4
49. East Staffordshire	9·4
50. Oldham	9·4
51. Hastings	9·3
52. Westminster	9·3
53. Kingston upon Hull	9·2
54. Portsmouth	9·1
55. Oswestry	9·0
56. Pendle	9·0
57. Great Grimsby	8·9
58. Reading	8·9
59. Kirklees	†8·8
60. Carrick	8·8
61. Walsall	8·8
62. Bristol	8·7
63. South Derbyshire	8·5
64. Kennet	8·5
65. Teignbridge	†8·4
66. Tameside	8·2
67. Durham	8·2
68. Ipswich	8·2
69. Rossendale	8·1
70. Manchester	†8·0
71. Sheffield	8·0
72. Restormel	7·7
73. Kerrier	7·6
74. Taunton Deane	7·5
75. Great Yarmouth	7·4
76. Southampton	7·4
77. Liverpool	7·3
78. Wyre Forest	7·3
79. Carlisle	7·2
80. Bolsover	7·2
81. Burnley	7·2
82. Macclesfield	7·1
83. Derby	7·1
84. Rochester upon Medway	†6·9
85. Thamesdown	†6·9
86. Maidstone	6·9
87. Erewash	6·9
88. Greenwich	6·8
89. Harrow	†6·7
90. Rochdale	6·7
91. Lincoln	6·7
92. Dudley	6·6
93. Kings Lynn and West Norfolk	6·6
94. Merton	6·6
95. Chesterfield	6·5
96. North Norfolk	6·4
97. Doncaster	6·4
98. Eastbourne	6·3
99. West Wiltshire	6·3
100. Chelmsford	6·3
101. Woodspring	†6·2
102. Warrington	6·2
103. Salford	6·2
104. High Peak	†6·2
105. Ashford	6·1
106. West Lindsey	6·0
107. Hillingdon	6·0
108. Oxford	6·0
109. Thanet	†5·9
110. Sutton	†5·8
111. Northampton	5·8
112. Brent	5·8

Local authority	Percentage of total stock
113. Breckland	[1]5·8
114. Runnymede	5·7
115. Hartlepool	5·7
116. Sedgemoor	[1]5·7
117. Newcastle upon Tyne	5·7
118. Eastleigh	5·7
119. Blyth Valley	5·6
120. Scarborough	5·6
121. Gedling	5·6
122. Preston	5·6
123. Maldon	5·5
124. Selby	5·3
125. Harrogate	[1]5·3
126. Wychavon	5·3
127. Hinckley and Bosworth	5·2
128. North West Leicestershire	5·2
129. Bradford	5·2
130. Darlington	5·2
131. Forest Heath	5·1
132. Ashfield	5·1
133. Wirral	5·1
134. Harborough	5·0
135. Sefton	[1]5·0
136. Plymouth	5·0

[1]Return of substandard dwellings incomplete in respect of housing associations or other public sector or both.
[2]Total stock includes allowance for other public sector stock not included in HIP return.
[3]Return of substandard dwellings incomplete in respect of local authority and other public sector dwellings.

Local Authorities with more than 20 per cent. of dwelling stock non-substandard but in need of renovation April 1986 : England

Local authority	Per cent. of total stock
1. Rossendale	56·6
2. Bournemouth	50·7
3. Sheffield	49·1
4. Sedgefield	49·0
5. North Tyneside	44·6
6. Stoke-on-Trent	43·9
7. Barking and Dagenham	41·0
8. Oswestry	[1]39·5
9. Bolton	35·5
10. Manchester	[1]35·4
11. Barnsley	35·1
12. Wakefield	35·1
13. Leeds	35·0
14. St. Helens	33·1
15. Scunthorpe	33·0
16. Tower Hamlets	32·8
17. Gateshead	31·8
18. Thamesdown	[1]31·4
19. Torridge	31·3
20. Tameside	30·6
21. Leicester	[1]30·6
22. Pendle	30·3
23. Cleethorpes	30·2
24. Hartlepool	29·0
25. Hackney	28·8
26. Langbaurgh	[1]28·5
27. Shrewsbury and Atcham	28·4
28. Islington	28·2
29. Middlesborough	28·0
30. Mid Suffolk	27·6
31. Ipswich	27·5
32. Oxford	27·5
33. Nottingham	27·3
34. Newham	27·3
35. East Lindsey	27·0
36. Sunderland	26·9
37. Birmingham	26·7
38. Reading	26·7
39. Rotherham	[1]26·7

Local authority	Per cent. of total stock
40. Hyndburn	26·6
41. Spelthorne	[1]26·5
42. Kirklees	[1]26·2
43. Barrow-in-Furness	26·1
44. West Lindsey	25·8
45. Hounslow	25·7
46. Great Yarmouth	25·4
47. Brent	25·2
48. Allerdale	25·0
49. Burnley	24·8
50. Haringey	24·4
51. Easington	24·4
52. Brighton	24·0
53. Newcastle upon Tyne	22·9
54. Blackburn	22·8
55. Chesterfield	22·4
56. Warrington	22·4
57. Rugby	[1]22·3
58. Kensington and Chelsea	[1]22·2
59. Wirral	22·0
60. Calderdale	22·0
61. South Derbyshire	21·8
62. Durham	21·6
63. Waltham Forest	21·4
64. Worcester	21·4
65. South Ribble	21·3
66. North Cornwall	21·3
67. Kingston upon Hull	21·2
68. Suffolk Coastal	[1]20·8
69. Peterborough	20·8
70. Plymouth	20·7
71. Trafford	20·6
72. East Cambridgeshire	20·6
73. Ealing	[1]20·2

[1]Return of non-substandard dwellings in need of renovation incomplete in respect of housing associations or other public sector or both.

Derelict Land Grant

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many derelict land grants have been paid in respect of schemes in Birmingham in each of the past three years; how much grant was paid; and what was the value of the schemes;

(2) if he will list current applications for derelict land grants in Birmingham and the west midlands;

(3) if he will list all projects funded by derelict land grants in the west midlands during the past three years.

Mr. John Patten: I shall answer these questions shortly.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department carries out any checks on the form of contracts used in respect of projects funded by derelict land grant.

Mr. John Patten: The Department specifies that tenders for local authority reclamation schemes shall contain the general conditions of contract issued by the Institute of Civil Engineers in collaboration with the Federation of Civil Engineering Contractors, the general conditions of engagement issued by the Landscape Institute or the standard form of building contract produced by the joint contracts tribunal, as appropriate. Copies of the tender documents must be submitted to the Department with the preferred tender. Similar conditions will apply to private sector reclamation schemes from 1 April 1987.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if contractors carrying out work funded by

use of derelict land grant are required to state if they are using labour-only sub-contractors with or without the use of a tax exemption certificate.

Mr. John Patten: The Department imposes no such requirement.

Planning Appeals

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply of 3 February, *Official Report*, column 620, why Mr. P. R. D. Young, his Department's inspector, was appointed to hear an appeal in relation to a block of flats adjacent to Kittery court on the heritage coastline at Kingswear, Devon, when an identical previous application had been refused by him on the advice of the High Court; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: When an inspector's decision is quashed by the High Court, the appellant rightly expects his appeal to be redetermined as quickly as possible. This can best be achieved by redetermination by the original inspector. The same inspector will therefore generally be reappointed unless, in the particular circumstances of a case, there are good reasons to appoint another in his place.

GLC (Abolition)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list what studies he has initiated since the abolition of the Greater London Council to monitor and assess any effects which might have occurred as a result of the transfer of responsibilities from the Greater London Council to other bodies.

Mr. Chope: Information is collected from local authorities under section 56 of the Local Government Act 1985 and analysed regularly in order to assess the overall costs and savings from abolition.

London Boroughs (Expenditure)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what factors governed the timing of the substantive reply on 6 February to a question from the hon. Member for Newham, North-West about expenditure by London boroughs to which a holding reply had been given on 5 February, *Official Report*, column 774.

Mr. Chope: In trying to answer the hon. Member's previous question I authorised my officials to investigate all possible sources of the information sought. This was not completed to my satisfaction in time for a substantive reply to be given on 5 February and I therefore gave a holding reply. Shortly afterwards it became apparent that I would be unable to provide the required figures and so I issued my substantive reply at the earliest opportunity.

Local Authorities (Capital Receipts)

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the information he has collected on the accumulated capital receipts held by local authorities at the end of 1985-86.

Mr. Ridley: My Department has now received accumulated capital receipts returns for 1985-86 from 97 per cent. of English local authorities. On the basis of these, it is estimated that at the end of 1985-86 local authorities in England held accumulated receipts giving rise to spending permission in later years of £7·4 billion. Some of these receipts were notional, such as leasing disposals. The cash from much of the remainder had been used for such purposes as repaying debt and financing capitalised housing repairs. After allowing for such factors only £4·3 billion out of the £7·4 billion spending permission could be converted into cash. But very little even of this £4·3 billion was actually held on deposit at a bank. Most of it had been temporarily lent within the authority and spent for other purposes. In such instances it could only be turned into cash if the authority undertook further borrowing.

I have today placed in the Library a table showing for each local authority which has provided a return *(a)* the accumulated receipts giving rise to spending permission and *(b)* the amount which could be converted into cash.

Coal Board Houses

Mr. Ashton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement on the recent discussions he has had with the Coal Board on the sale of Coal Board houses.

Mr. Tracey: I have written to the hon. Member and my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department of Energy and I have also written to several other Members with an interest in this issue.

Minespoil

Mr. Iain Mills asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has now received the Ove Arup report on the diposal of minespoil; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: The contractors have submitted their main research report and I have today placed copies in the Library. As part of their research the contractors also produced an evaluative framework to assist in the assessment of alternative options for the disposal of colliery spoil which we intend to publish shortly together with a planning circular encouraging its use in appropriate circumstances. Copies of the consultation draft and the evaluation framework were placed in the House Library in August last year.

Disabled People

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) on 28 January, *Official Report*, column *241*, he will list the housing authorities which did not either make adaptations to the homes of people with disabilities in 1985-86 or support adaptations through improvement grants; and if he will make a further statement.

Mr. Tracey: It is for each housing authority to determine its own priorities for housing investment and to decide whether there is a need for purpose-built dwellings or for adaptations to existing dwellings to make them suitable for occupation by disabled people.

Programmes of adaptation and new build are best considered over a period of more than one year. Of the 12 authorities not covered by my reply of 28 January, 11 have reported action in the years 1984 to 1986, either through

new build, or by adaptations, or through improvement grants. One, Hillingdon borough council, has made no returns of housebuilding, renovation of its housing stock or improvement grants for several years.

Caravan Sites

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria he uses in deciding whether to grant an application from a local authority for designation under the Caravan Sites Act 1968; if he will now designate Bradford as an authority under that Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: My right hon. Friend normally requires to be satisfied that adequate accommodation exists for the needs of those gypsies who reside in or resort to the area to be designated. He has power to designate on the grounds that it is not necessary or expedient to make adequate provision but, as he stated in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) on 6 February, he would require convincing reasons for designation in those circumstances. My right hon. Friend has no powers to designate any area except on the application of the local authorities for the area concerned.

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those local authorities that have been designated under the Caravans Act 1968 with the number of pitches they provide for gypsy encampments and the total population of those authorities.

Mr. Tracey: Following is the list of designated authorities. A list of the sites and number of pitches provided by local authorities is available in the House Library. Information on the populations of local authority areas is available in "Vital Statistics 1985" published by OPCS and also available in the Library.

London Boroughs
- Barking
- Bexley
- Camden
- Croydon
- Enfield
- Greenwich
- Hammersmith and Fulham
- Havering
- Hillingdon
- Islington
- Kensington and Chelsea
- Kingston-upon-Thames
- Lambeth
- Lewisham
- Merton
- Newham
- Redbridge
- Richmond-upon-Thames
- Sutton
- Waltham Forest
- Wandsworth
- Westminster

Metropolitan Districts
- Oldham
- Trafford
- Rochdale

Areas of former County Boroughs
- Bolton
- Bury
- Leeds
- Lincoln
- Manchester
- Oxford
- Plymouth
- St. Helens
- Stoke-on-Trent
- Wolverhampton

Counties and Districts

Bedfordshire:
- Luton
- South Bedfordshire

Berkshire:
- Windsor and Maidenhead

Buckinghamshire:
- Aylesbury Vale
- Chiltern
- Milton Keynes
- South Bucks

Cambridgeshire:
- Huntingdonshire
- Peterborough

Cheshire:
- Chester

Cleveland:
- Hartlepool
- Middlesbrough
- Stockton-on-Tees

Derbyshire:
- Bolsover
- Chesterfield
- High Peak
- North East Derbyshire
- South Derbyshire

Dorset—whole county

Durham:
- Chester-le-Street
- Darlington
- Derwentside
- Easington
- Sedgefield
- Teesdale
- Wear Valley

East Sussex:
- Eastbourne
- Hastings
- Rother
- Wealden

Hertfordshire:
- Broxbourne
- Watford

Kent:
- Ashford
- Canterbury
- Dartford
- Gravesham
- Maidstone[1]
- Tonbridge and Malling

Lancashire:
- Hyndburn

Lincolnshire:
- Boston
- West Lindsey

Northamptonshire
- East Northamptonshire
- Northampton
- South Northamptonshire
- Wellingborough

North Yorkshire:
Ryedale
Selby

Shropshire:
Oswestry

Suffolk:
Babergh
Ipswich
Mid-Suffolk
Suffolk Coastal

Surrey:
Epsom & Ewell

Warwickshire:
Nuneaton & Bedworth

West Sussex—whole county

Wiltshire—whole county

[1] Order due to come into force on 20 February 1987

Local Authority Housing

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many empty council-owned flats and houses there are in the London boroughs of Brent, Camden and Tower Hamlets.

Mr. Tracey: The latest available figures on vacant council dwellings were provided by local authorities in their housing investment programme returns and the totals for these three boroughs appear in column A99 on page 8.6 of the "HIP1 (1986) All items print" which is in the Library.

Land Register

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the land on which notices have been served as a result of their being on the register for vacant and derelict public land, and the time interval between service of notice under the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 and the completion of the sale for each parcel of land on which notices were served.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 January 1987, c. *244*]: Notices under section 99 of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 have been issued in respect of the sites listed as follows. Directions under section 98 of the Act have subsequently been issued in appropriate cases and these are denoted by an asterisk. Decisions have not yet been taken on whether a direction is appropriate on those sites denoted by a dagger. The period between the issue of a section 98 direction and compliance with it, or where directed sales have not yet taken place the period since the issue of a section 98 direction, is shown against each of the sites concerned.

Site
Barmpton Lane West, Darlington (10 months)*
Doxford Park Way, Sunderland (9 months)*
Oozewood Road, Royton, Oldham (5 months)*
Bruntcliffe Drive, Morley, Leeds
Keswick Lane, Bardsey, Leeds
Barton Lane, Clifton, Nottingham (Revoked)*
Portland Gardens, Chadwell Heath
Raydons Road, Dagenham
Twickenham Road, Isleworth
Crawley Avenue, Crawley
College Road, Hextable
St. John's Road, Timsbury, Wansdyke
Gribblemead, Colyton, East Devon
Potterne, Verwood, Wimborne
Colchester Close, Westbury-on-Severn
Connor Road, Barking
Meadway/Potters Lane, Barnet
261-281 Regents Park Road, N3 (13 months)*
The Grange, Southgate Circus, (15 months to date)*
Oak Avenue, Hampton
Grange Farm, Felixstowe
Land rear of Burleigh College, Loughborough
Hills Farm, Bloxwich
Colton Common, Colton (Revoked)*
Austhorpe Drive, Leeds
Richmond Road/Dawsons Corner, Pudsey (8 months)*
Holt Lane, Leeds
Stone Brig Lane, Rothwell, Leeds
Denison Street/Silver Lane, Yeadon, Leeds (Revoked)*
Old Farm Close, Leeds (Revoked)*
Kirkfield Lane, Thorner, Leeds (8 months)*
Freely Lane, Bramham (8 months)*
Lyndon Road, Bramham (8 months)*
Willow Avenue, Clifford, Leeds (8 months)*
Primrose Lane, Boston Spa, Leeds (8 months)*
Shaw Barn, Wetherby
Whitley Croft, Otley (1 month to date)*
Keswick Lane, Bardsey (8 months)*
Stocks Park Drive, Horwich, Bolton (5 months)
Bethnall Drive, Fallowfield, Manchester
Wythenshawe Road, Manchester
Boothroyden 'A' site, Blackley, Manchester (15 months to date)*[1]
Maple Road West, Brooklands, Manchester (15 months to date)*[1]
South Street/Parkhouse Street/Wood Street, Openshaw (15 months to date)*
Old Market St./Lion St./Lawson St./Dommett St., Blackley (15 months to date)*
Lime Bank Street/Ashton Old Road, Ancoats
Alfred Street/Oak Bank, Harpurhey, Manchester (15 months to date)*[1]
Old Market Street/Grant Street, Blackley (15 months to date)*[1]
Boyle Street/Smedley Lane, Cheetham, Manchester
Richmond Street, Ashton-under-Lyne
Newmarket Road, Ashton-under-Lyne
St. Annes Road, Audenshaw
Hawthorne Road, Denton
St. Annes Road/Guide Lane, Audenshaw
Knowsley Road, Macclesfield
Beck Lane/Lanark Walk, Upton Priory, Macclesfield†
Rosewood Lane, Higher Hurdsfield, Macclesfield (15 months to date)[1]*
Whitehill Park, Chester-le-Street
Land rear of Hendon Town Hall, NW4†
Land at Provident Park, Enfield
106-110 Eltham Road, Greenwich (Revoked)*
Junction of Hornpark Close/Eltham Road, Greenwich (Revoked)*
Southville Road/Grovestile Way, Bedfont, Hounslow
Great Chertsey Road, Hanworth, Hounslow†
Sydney Road, Feltham
Farnell Road, Isleworth
273-295 High Street, Brentford
Land south of Gladstone Road, Kingston
Surbiton Lagoon/Raeburn Avenue, Surbiton†
Oaklands/Clayton Road, Chessington
141-179 Warwick Road and land at rear of Fenelon Place, W14
Meadway, Twickenham
Land north of Park Road, Kingston†
Fernbank, Sydenham Hill, SE26, Southwark
Land at Abbey Street and Grange Walk, SE1, Southwark
London Road, Southwark, SE1 (7 months to date)*
Car Park adjacent to Civic Offices, Sutton†
Car Park, Camden Road, Sutton†
Land adjacent to Southwick Cemetery, Wiltshire Road, Sunderland†
Queens Road/Lilburn Place, Southwick, Sunderland
Land south of Hall Farm Road, Doxford Park, Sunderland (3 months to date)*
Land south of Back Lane, Penshaw, Sunderland

Land off Johnson Drive, Newlands, Heanor, Amber Valley
Land off Greenfields Avenue, Littleover, Derbyshire
Land off Station Road, Chellaston, Derbyshire
Land at Hearthcote Rise, Church Gresley, Swadlincote, South Derbyshire
Land south of Thievesdale Lane, Worksop
Albert Road/Roding Road, Buckhurst Hill, Epping
Richmond Road, Costessey, South Norfolk
Ling Close, Coltishall, Broadland (4 months)*
Land at South Park Drive, Blackpool (5 months to date)*
Land at Whiteholme, off Snowhill Crescent and Whiteholme Road, Blackpool
Land north of Westfield Avenue, Little Carleton, Blackpool
Land north of Oxcliffe Road, Morecambe
Land at Lydney Road, Flixton
Fleetbank, adjacent to Curzon Road, Poynton
Land at Droomer, Windermere, Cumbria
Land off Hoole Lane, Chester
Keysbrook, Tattenhall, Chester
The Hollins, off Plodder Land, Farnworth, Bolton (3 months to date)*
Fylde Road/Aqueduct Street, Preston
Land east of Adelphi Street and south of Moorbrook Street, Preston
Number 25 Lode Lane, Solihull
Derwent Road, Leighton Buzzard
Bicester Road, Aylesbury
The Oval, Stevenage, Hertfordshire†
Land off Oakleas Rise, Thrapston, East Northamptonshire
Land off Walford Road, Killamarsh, North East Derbyshire
Fiddlers Green Lane, Cheltenham (3 months to date)*
Bamfield/Briery Leaze Road, Whitchurch, Bristol (3 months to date)*
Russells Hall, "H7", Dudley (3 months to date)*
Russells Hall, "H8", Dudley (3 months to date)*
Land off Racecourse Lane, Bicton Heath, Shrewsbury
Land off Racecourse Lane, Bicton Heath, Shrewsbury
Elm Tree Farm, Stockton-on-Tees
Stamfordham Road/Chessar Avenue, Blakelaw, Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Carrhouse Drive/Lumley Road, Newton Hall, Durham
Warning Tongue Lane, White Hill, Cantley, Doncaster
Goodison Boulevard, Cantley, Doncaster
Park Lane, Blaxton, Doncaster
New Otley Road, Bradford
Fell Lane, Keighley†
Low Stakesby, Whitby
Rye Street, Heywood, Rochdale
Duddon Close, Ireleth, Barrow-in-Furness (2 months to date)*
Biggar Bank Road, Walney Island, Barrow-in-Furness†
New School Site, Heversham, Cumbria†
Hoghton Lane, Hoghton, South Ribble (2 months to date)*
Hardy Avenue, Brierfield, Pendle (2 months to date)*
Shed Lane, Vicars Cross, Chester†
Land between Copse Hill and Shawbridge, Harlow†
Station Road, Haughley, Stowmarket, Suffolk†
Hawk End, Elmswell, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk†
Church Road, Elmswell, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk†
Land next to Pightle Close, Elmswell, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk†
Eardley Road Sidings, London, SW16†
Lonesome Depot, Leonard Road, London, SW16†
Hemans Estate, south of Pascal Street, London, SW8†
Galleywall Road, Anchor Street, and Lynton Road, London, SE16†
Land at Orient Street and Hayles Street, London, SE11†
Land adjoining Marle Place, Leylands Road, Burgess Hill, West Sussex†
Bluegates, London Road, Ewell, Surrey†
Land at Pear Tree Farm, Bonehurst Road, Reigate and Banstead†
Land off Bewcastle Road, Top Valley†
Nelson Close, Topsham, Exeter†
Rear of Kings Tamerton Road, Plymouth†
Palmerston Road, Upton, Purbeck†
Land off Orchard Street, Birtley, Gateshead†
Land at Sandyflatts Farm, Middlesbrough†
Stephenson Road, West Moor, North Tyneside†
Pleckgate Lane, Blackburn†
Congleton Road, Macclesfield†
Land off Charlecote Road (Towers Road), Poynton†
Land off Beam Street, Nantwich†
Albion Place/Back Lane, Salford†
West Paddock, Leyland†
Newcroft Drive, Urmston, Trafford†
Lowton Road, Sale†
Land at Washway Road, Sale†
Land at Westbourne Road, Manningham, Bradford†
Land at County Road North, Kingston-upon-Hull†
Land at County Road North, Kingston-upon-Hull†
Land at County Road North, Kingston-upon-Hull†
Land at County Road North, Kingston-upon-Hull†
Land at Hall Road, adjoining Beverley and Barmston Drain, Kingston-upon-Hull†
Longcroft/Benomley, Almondbury, Huddersfield†
Royd House, Reinwood Road, Huddersfield†
Land adjoining Henslow Lane, Yeadon, Leeds†

[1] Manchester City Council are appealing against an order of the High Court enforcing compliance.

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many acres of land have been placed on the register of vacant and derelict public land since its inception in 1981; if he will show in tabular form the ownership and size of parcel of land removed from the register since 1981; what new sites have been added each year; and under whose ownership;

(2) if he will list the parcels of land which have moved *(a)* on and *(b)* off the register of vacant and derelict public land in each of the last five years, identifying how much has been removed by disposal in each year; and what percentage of such land belongs to: (i) Government (ii) local government (iii) nationalised industries (iv) statutory undertakers or (iv) any other category;

(3) if he will set out in tabular form the ownership and size of the parcels of public land which have been removed from the register of vacant and derelict public land since the first register was published in 1981, showing how much was realised in each sale and the owner.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 January 1987, c. *244-45*]: By 31 December 1986, 149,000 acres of land had been entered on the register of unused and underused land owned by public bodies; less than 100,000 acres now remain. The following tables show the remainder of the information that is available at reasonable cost.

Table 1
Parcels of land entered (percentage of annual total)

	1981-82 (inclusive)	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Government (Crown land)	368 (4%)	64 (11%)	56 (9%)	89 (8%)	50 (6%)
Local authorities	6,199 (62%)	393 (69%)	417 (67%)	687 (63%)	645 (77%)

	1981-82 (inclusive)	1983	1984	1985	1986
Nationalised industries	2,293 (23%)	66 (12%)	38 (6%)	110 (10%)	100 (12%)
Statutory undertakers	646 (6%)	30 (5%)	45 (7%)	38 (4%)	27 (3%)
Others, eg New Towns, UDCs	565 (6%)	18 (3%)	70 (11%)	160 (15%)	17 (2%)
TOTALS	10,071	571	626	1,084	839

Table 2
Parcels of land Removed (percentage of annual total)

	1981-82 (inclusive)	1983	1984	1985	1986
Government (Crown land)	73 (4%)	21 (4%)	32 (4%)	68 (4%)	77 (4%)
Local authorities	1,212 (72%)	413 (71%)	520 (65%)	833 (53%)	932 (53%)
Nationalised industries	282 (17%)	90 (15%)	155 (19%)	419 (27%)	433 (25%)
Statutory undertakers	81 (5%)	36 (6%)	35 (4%)	77 (5%)	226 (13%)
Other (see Table 1)	44 (3%)	21 (4%)	55 (7%)	168 (11½%)	82 (5%)
TOTALS	1,692	581	797	1,565½	1,750

Table 3
Disposals Parcels of land entered (percentage of annual total)

	1981-82 (inclusive)	1983	1984	1985	1986
Government (Crown land)	55 (7%)	12 (4%)	21 (4%)	54 (6%)	52 (5%)
Local authorities	550 (66%)	214 (67%)	295 (61%)	497 (52%)	516 (51%)
Nationalised industries	148 (18%)	47 (15%)	107 (22%)	247 (26%)	263 (26%)
Statutory undertakers	54 (7%)	29 (9%)	26 (5%)	54 (6%)	102 (10%)
Other (see Table 1)	26 (3%)	16 (5%)	32 (7%)	103 (11%)	71 (7%)
TOTALS	833	318	481	955	1,004

Notes:
(a) The information requested on the ownership and size of each of the 6,000 individual parcels removed and the 13,000 individual pacels entered could only be shown at disproportionate cost.
(b) Details of additions and removals in individual years prior to 1983 could only be provided at disproportionate cost.
(c) Information about the price realised for each sale is not available.
(d) Percentages may not sum to 100, due to rounding.

Opinion Polls

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what use his Department has made of commissioned opinion polls in the past five years.

Mr. Ridley [*pursuant to his reply*, 5 February 1987, c. *770*]: In 1986 the Department of the Environment commissioned NOP Market Research Ltd to conduct a survey amongst the general public in England and Wales to investigate atttitudes to a number of environmental protection problems. A report on the results will be published shortly.

TRANSPORT

Road Markings

Sir Anthony Grant asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will initiate a study of the French road marking system designed to enable drivers to maintain a proper distance between vehicles in order to minimise accidents;

(2) if he will initiate a study of the French chevron system on roads in order to minimise accidents in fog conditions.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department is aware of these experimental chevron markings. No evidence that they are effective is yet available for study in the United Kingdom.

Motorways (Compensation)

Mr. Iain Mills asked the Secretary of State for Transport what criteria are used by his Department and the district valuer to assess the degree of compensation resulting from increased use of motorways.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Compensation payable following the opening of a road is based on an assessment of the

depreciation in the current value of the property attributable to noise and other relevant effects of its use. Account is taken of any future increase in the use of the road which may then reasonably be expected.

Mr. Iain Mills asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to review the operation of the Land Compensation Act 1973 in the compensation of those affected by increased traffic resulting from extensions of motorways; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The operation of part I of the Act as it applies to properties affected by highways is kept under review. If my hon. Friend has a particular point in mind, perhaps he will write to me.

M42 (Noise)

Mr. Iain Mills asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has received representations about the increase in noise resulting from the recent extension of the M42.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department has received a number of representations.

The relevant statutory provisions are the Noise Insulation Regulations and part I of the Land Compensation Act 1973. Correspondents are being advised on both procedures and conditions governing eligibility.

Orange Badge Scheme

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will extend the orange badge scheme to central London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: That is primarily for the local authorities concerned to decide.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all the organisations which have responded to his Department's discussion paper on the orange badge scheme.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The following 178 organisations have responded to the Department's discussion paper on the orange badge scheme:

Aberdeen and North East Council on Disabled
Access Committee (England)
Access Derby
Access for All
Access for the Disabled (Kensington and Chelsea)
Access for the Disabled (Leeds)
Access for the Disabled (North Tyneside)
Age Concern
Age Concern (Brent)
Alzheimers Disease Society
Alzheimers Disease Society (Salisbury and District)
Arthritis Care (Chorley Branch)
Arthritis Care (Cleveland)
Association of Chief Police Officers
Association of Chief Police Officers (Scotland)
Association of County Councils
Association of Directors of Social Services
Association of Directors of Social Work
Association of Disabled Professionals
Association of District Councils
Association of London Authorities
Association of Metropolitan Authorities
Association of Welsh Health Authorities
ASTMS (Ward End Branch)
Automobile Association
Aylesbury Vale Health Authority

Bath Association for the Disabled
Beeston Partially Sighted Society
Bexley Access Group
Bexley Association of the Disabled
Birmingham Voluntary Service Council
Blackpool and Fylde Society for the Blind
Bognor Regis Joint Committee of the Disabled
Bolton Access Group
Borough of Sunderland Council for the Disabled
British Association of Social Workers
British Association of Social Workers (Wales)
British Council of Organisations of Disabled People
British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association (BLESMA)
British Medical Association
British Medical Association (General Medical Services Committee)
British Pensioners and Trade Unions Action Association
British Polio Fellowship
British Polio Fellowship (North London)
Buckinghamshire Association for the Blind
Buckinghamshire Local Medical Committee

Cambridge Disabled Access and Transport Group
Cambridgeshire Society for the Blind
Cheshire Society for the Deaf
Chester and District Committee for the Disabled
College of Occupational Therapists
Confederation of British Industry
Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
Council of British Service and Ex-Service Organisations (COBSEO)

Daventry Council for the Disabled
Derbyshire Centre for Integrated Living
Disabled Action South Holland
Disabled Advice Bureau
Disabled Advice Service (Wandsworth)
Disabled Drivers Association
Disabled Drivers Association (Bournemouth)
Disabled Drivers Association (Scunthorpe)
Disabled Drivers Club (Peterborough)
Disabled Drivers Motor Club
Disabled Information Service (Westminster)
Disabled Motorists Club (Gloucester)
Disabled Motorists Club (Lunesdale)
Doncaster and District Association for the Welfare of the Disabled

Enfield Voluntary Association for Disabled
Epping Forest Association of Disabled People
Equality Council
Exeter Access Committee

Freight Transport Association

Gedling Access Group
Godalming Disablement Action Group
Greater London Association for the Disabled
Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People
Greater Manchester Highways and Disability Group
Greater Manchester Police

Haringey Day Centre
Hove Society for the Disabled
Hucknall Partially Sighted Society
Hull Council for Disabled People
Hull Society for Mentally Handicapped Children and Adults
Humberside Society for the Physically Handicapped

Institute for the Blind (Dewsbury/Batley)

Joint Committee on Mobility for the Blind
Joint Committee on Mobility for the Disabled

Kent Associaton for the Blind

Leicestershire Consumers Council
London Boroughs Association
London Boroughs Disability Resource Team

Magistrates Association
Merrion Club for the Blind
Mid Suffolk Re-Think for Disabled People
Milton Keynes Council of Disabled People
Monmouthshire Disablement Association
Multiple Sclerosis Society
Multiple Sclerosis Society (Rotherham)

National Advisory Unit for Community Transport
National Association of Citizens Advice Bureau
National Association of Health Authorities
National Association or Limbless Disabled
National Association of Local Government Workers (NALGO)
National Chamber of Trade
National Federation of the Blind (Cleveland)
National Federation of the Blind (Darlington and South Durham)
National Federation of Kidney Patients Associations
National Federation of St. Raphael Clubs for the Physically Disabled
National League of the Blind and Disabled
National Union of Public Employees (Hull) (NUPE)
Newham Association for the Disabled
Norfolk Association for the Disabled
North Regional Association for the Blind
North Tees Community Health Council
North West Surrey Health Authority
Nottingham Partially Sighted Society
Nottinghamshire Coalition of Disabled People
NUCLEUS
Nuneaton and Bedworth Council for the Disabled

Open Sesame Group for Handicapped in Wyre Forest

Parkinsons' Disease Society
Pedestrians Association
Phobic Aid Group Enterprises (PAGE)
Plus Self Help Association
Polynous (Group of Retired Thinking People)
Poole and District Association for Disabled
Portsmouth Council of Community Service

Royal Association of Disability and Rehabilitation (RADAR)
Royal Automobile Club
Roya British Legion
Royal College of Medical Practitioners
Royal Leicestershire, Rutland and Wycliffe Society for the Blind
Royal Leicestershire Society for the Blind
Royal National Institute for the Blind
Royal Sheffield Institute for the Blind
Royal Society for the Blind (Bristol)

St. Dunstans
Scottish Council of Disability
Scottish Spinal Cord Injury Association
S.E.N.S.E. (National Deaf-blind and Rubella Association)
Social Care Association
South Cleveland Hospital
South Cleveland Hospital—Occupational Therapists
Southend District Community Health Council
Southend Federation for the Handicapped
South Glamorgan Access and Mobility Committee
South Lakeland Council for the Disabled
South Regional Association for the Blind
Spastics Society
Spelthorne Talking News
Spinal Injuries Association
Stockport Society for Mentally Handicapped Children
Sutton Coldfield Association of Disabled People

Teddington and Hampton Wick Community Care Group
Telford Community Council
Thalidomide Trust
Torquay Rehabilitation Centre for the Blind
Transport 2000
Transport and General Workers Union Retired Members Association (Cardiff Branch)

Vectis Association for the Disabled

Wales Council for the Blind
Wales Council for the Disabled
Wandsworth Disablement Association
Warrington Committee for the Disabled
Warrington Community Council
Warrington and Widnes Society for the Blind
Warwick District Branch of the National Federation of the Blind
Welsh Association of District Councils
Welsh Counties Committee
West Sussex Association for the Disabled
Wheels Club (Military Hospital)
Wigan, Leigh and District Society for the Blind
Wigan Metro Access for Disabled Committee
Winchester Group for the Disabled
Working Association of Voluntary Service
Women with Visible and Invisible Disabilities (WINVISIBLE)
Worcester Access Group

In addition, there were 77 responses from individual local authorities and 409 from individuals.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to abolish the two-hour limit which currently applies to the orange badge scheme outside scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This is one of a very wide range of suggestions and contributions we have received in response to our discussion paper. They are being examined.

Accident Investigation and Prevention Teams

Mr. Carter-Lewis asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will consider providing financial assistance to those local authorities which have not yet established specialist accident investigation and prevention teams; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Accident investigation and prevention work (AIP) is an extremely effective way of reducing casualties. We continue to encourage all highway authorities to give priority to the use of resources for this purpose. We want to see all highway authorities saving life through these proven means.

We are considering what further might be done to encourage the development and expansion of AIP work — whether or not highway authorities already have teams in existence.

Cherished Numbers

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library details of the steps necessary for an applicant for a particular cherished vehicle registration number to obtain that number.

Mr. Michael Spicer: A specific registration number may be obtained only by transfer from a vehicle already displaying that number. The procedures are explained on the application form V317, a copy of which I have placed in the Library.

Local Government Finance Bill

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from the Greater Manchester transportation consultative committee about the Local Government Finance Bill; what reply he is sending; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Greater Manchester transportation consultative committee wrote to my right hon. Friend on 21 January to express views on the finances of the Greater Manchester passenger transport authority. I will be taking these views into account in my continuing discussions with the PTA, and will ensure that the right hon. Member receives a copy of the reply to the TCC in due course.

A1-M1 Link

Mr. Fry asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to make an announcement on the inspector's report on the public inquiry on the A1-M1 link road.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer my hon. friend to the reply I gave on Monday 9 February at column *43*, to my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant)

EMPLOYMENT

Adult Training

Mr. Thurnham asked the Paymaster General what is the estimated expenditure for 1986-87, and the projected expenditure for 1987-88, for adult training by the Manpower Services Commission's vocational education and training group in each of the north-west region's individual areas.

Mr. Lee: The estimated expenditure on adult training for 1986-87 in each of the Manpower Services Commission's vocational education and training group's north-west region's areas is as follows:

	£ million
Cheshire	2·7
Cumbria	1·4
Lancashire	6·0
Manchester (Central)	7·4
Manchester (East)	2·0
Manchester (North)	3·7
Merseyside (Inner)	4·0
Merseyside (Outer)	2·6
Total North West	29·9

I regret that projected figures for 1987-88 are not yet available.

Mr. Thurnham asked the Paymaster General what is the estimated expenditure for 1986-87, and projected expenditure for 1987-88, out of the Manpower Services Commission's vocational education and training group budget for adult training at skill centres by each area in the north-west.

Mr. Lee: The estimated expenditure on adult training at skillcentres for 1986-87 in each of the Manpower Services Commission's vocational and education group north-west region areas is as follows:

	£ million
Cheshire	0·8
Cumbria	0·6
Lancashire	2·3
Manchester (Central)	2·1
Manchester (North)	2·2
Merseyside (Inner)	1·1
Merseyside (Outer)	1·4
Total North West	10·5

I regret that the figures for 1987-88 are not yet available.

Construction Industry Training Board

Mr. Sean Hughes asked the Paymaster General if he has any plans to alter the basis of the construction industry training board levy from £15,000 per annum; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I have no such plans. Firms whose payroll and payments to labour-only subcontractors amount to less than £15,000 are not required to pay the levy. This exclusion level is one which the construction industry training board has decided is appropriate in the light of the circumstances in the construction industry. It is estimated that it excludes about 37 per cent. of firms in the industry.

Literacy and Numeracy

Mr. Ashdown asked the Paymaster General what assessment he has made as to whether inadequate skills or literacy and numeracy in persons in training sponsored or directed by his Department reduce the effectiveness of such training; what steps he has taken to overcome relevant difficulties that may be experienced by trainees and potential trainees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Evidence suggests that a significant proportion of unemployed people undertaking training courses, sponsored or directed by my Department have problems with their basic skills which need to be remedied if they are to improve the range of opportunities open to them.

The Manpower Services Commission makes a significant contribution to improving the literacy and numeracy skills of such people through a range of schemes including YTS, wider opportunities training programme, voluntary projects programme, community programme and the new job training scheme. The commission is currently reviewing its provision in this area.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Paymaster General what information is available to his Department on the number of persons unemployed or in training whose skills of literacy and numeracy are inadequate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The Manpower Services Commission is currently examining the scale of the problem as a matter of urgency. I shall write to the hon. Member when the results of this study are available.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Janner asked the Paymaster General how many and what percentage of the work force over 60 years of age are men.

Mr. Lee: It is estimated from the labour force survey conducted in the spring of 1985 that, at the time, there were 966,000 men aged 60 and over in paid employment, representing 69·5 per cent. of all persons aged 60 and over in paid employment in Great Britain.

Manpower Services Commission Schemes

Mr. Hicks asked the Paymaster General, for the Manpower Services Commission, YTS, adult training and community programmes, what are the total numbers involved since their inception for *(a)* England, *(b)* the south-west region and *(c)* Cornwall; and what are the available proportions who found permanent positions after taking part in these schemes.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 February 1987, c. *54*]: The information is not available in the precise form requested. However, from the latest information available, the total numbers involved in YTS, adult training and community programmes and the percentage who were known to have found employment after taking part in the schemes in England, the south-west region and Cornwall are shown in the table.

Starts	*England*	*South West*	*Cornwall*
	YTS		
1983-84	[1]293,500	[1]26,200	1,234
1984-85	[1]328,251	28,400	1,730
1985-86	[1]329,800	[1]29,800	1,994
1986-87 (April-December)	[2]311,477	28,469	[1]1,824
Leavers known to be in employment			
June 1984-March 1985	56 per cent.	62 per cent.	[3]55 per cent.
April 1985-March 1986	58 per cent.	65 per cent.	55 per cent.
	ADULT TRAINING		
1979-80	74,000	6,400	—
1980-81	57,200	5,300	—
1981-82	66,600	5,900	—
1982-83	60,100	5,900	—
1983-84	65,900	6,300	[4]150
1984-85	73,900	6,100	469
1985-86	178,600	15,400	898
1986-87 (to December 1986)	205,669	23,810	1,850
Leavers known to be in employment	Information not available.		
	COMMUNITY PROGRAMME		
October 1982-December 1983	89,923	5,921	744
January-December 1984	118,307	9,330	1,370
January-December 1985	167,724	13,640	2,216
January-December 1986	241,232	21,902	3,088
Percentage of leavers in employment			
April-December 1985	[5]28 per cent.	31 per cent.	n/a

[1] These figures are definitive.
[2] Figures quoted are for entrants which are first time starters to YTS.
[3] June 1984-March 1985 figures are not available for the County of Cornwall: the figure quoted is for the area covered by the Manpower Services Commission Vocational and Education Training Group (VETG) Devon and Cornwall area office.
[4] Not including Skillcentres.
[5] The figure relates to Great Britain not England.

Mr. Hicks asked the Paymaster General what is the cost of each Manpower Services Commission scheme and the numbers involved in *(a)* the south-west region and *(b)* Cornwall, respectively, in 1985-86 and 1986-87.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 February 1987, c. *54*]: The amounts paid by the Manpower Services Commission to the providers of its principle schemes in the south-west* and in Cornwall in 1985-86 are given, where available, in the following table. The table also gives, where practicable, the numbers helped by those schemes in that year. Additionally the table shows the respective amounts the commission anticipates spending and the numbers it expects to help in 1986-87.

*The Manpower Services Commission south-west region covers the following counties:

Avon
Cornwall
Devon
Dorset
Somerset
Gloucestershire
Wiltshire

	South-West Region				*Cornwall*			
	1985-86		*1986-87*		*1985-86*		*1986-87*	
	Expenditure £ million	*Numbers*	*Anticipated expenditure £ million*	*Anticipated numbers*	*Expenditure £ million*	*Numbers*	*Anticipated expenditure £ million*	*Anticipated number*
YTS	51·055	29,800 starts	56·647	28,800 entrants	3·167	1,994 starts	3·863	1,985 entrants
Adult training	17·448	15,400 starts	19·700	29,967 entrants	1·174	898 starts	1·850	2,377 starts
Technical vocational education initiative	2·968	3,925	4·526	5,425	0·543	584	0·654	750
Work related non-advanced further education	6·891	[1]—	9·467	[1]—	0·550	[1]—	0·910	[1]—
Employment rehabilitation centres	0·300	950	0·243	1,114	No provision in Cornwall			

	South-West Region				Cornwall			
	1985-86		1986-87		1985-86		1986-87	
	Expenditure £ million	Numbers	Anticipated expenditure £ million	Anticipated numbers	Expenditure £ million	Numbers	Anticipated expenditure £ million	Anticipated number
Geographical mobility scheme	0·509	1,005	0·165	972	[2]	225	[2]	257
Disabled persons	Not available on a regional basis							
Enterprise allowance scheme	9·300	5,326 entrants	15·270	9,250 entrants	[2]	1,358 entrants	[2]	1,383 entrants
Voluntary projects programme	0·809	3,760	0·988	5,050	0·052	241	0·045	460
Restart	0·014	1,608 interviews	0·785	73,500 interviews	nil	nil	0·071	7,295 interviews
Schemes administered by MSC on behalf of the Department of Employment								
Sheltered employment	6·492	1,546 employed	6·204	1,594 employed	1·149	194 employed	1·133	214 employed
Community industry	0·685	197	0·730	200	[2]	[2]	[2]	[2]
Community programme	43·000	16,210 entrants	73·000	16,540 [3]entrants	6·000	2,556 entrants	10·000	2,318 [3]entrants

[1] Numbers of students are not held by MSC.
[2] Only available at regional level.
[3] Entrants to the end of December.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Duke of Argyll

46. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland whether, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Falkirk, West on 26 November 1986, *Official Report*, columns *261-3*, about illegal fishing by the Duke of Argyll and his associates, he has had any further response from the Duke of Argyll; and whether the Crown Office will now take action to prosecute.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The trustees of the tenth Duke of Argyll have indicated they do not accept the method of fishing used in the past was necessarily illegal. However, they have given a written undertaking to the effect that the fishing will not be resumed unless and until it can be shown to be within the law.

Scottish Prison Disturbances

47. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he will make a statement on prosecution policy towards those found guilty of offences in disturbances at Scottish prisons.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: There can be no prosecution policy after guilt has been determined. No special prosecution policy obtains in respect of those accused of causing disturbances in Scottish prisons. These are investigated by the procurator fiscal in the same manner as any other offence reported to him.

51. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland how many prosecutions there have been for offences committed during recent disturbances in Scottish prisons; what is the nature of the alleged offences; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Indictments have been served on four persons for trial in the High Court at Peterhead on 23 February in connection with the disturbances at Peterhead prison. A further four persons have been indicted to the High Court at Edinburgh on 2 March on charges arising out of the disturbances at Saughton prison. These matters are now sub judice and further comment would be inappropriate.

Salmon Poachers

48. **Mr. Bill Walker** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland what advice his Department has given to procurators fiscal for the prosecution of salmon poachers.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Circulars are issued from time to time. The most recent of these dealt with the implementation of the Salmon Act 1986.

Travelling People

49. **Mr. Henderson** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if the Secretary of State for Scotland's advisory committee on travelling people has provided the Scottish Law Officers with a list of persons for whom the toleration policy on unauthorised encampment was designed; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: No such list has been provided. However, I am not aware that procurators fiscal have experienced any problems in identifying who would fall within the ambit of the toleration policy.

Dornoch Procurator Fiscal

50. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland what has been the effect on the operation of the sheriff court's office at Dornoch of the decision not to replace the procurator fiscal.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The procurator fiscal for Tain became the procurator fiscal for both Tain and Dornoch on 25 August 1986. Criminal business at Tain and Dornoch sheriff courts has been rearranged accordingly. There have been a number of minor teething troubles, but generally the new arrangements are working satisfactorily. Back-up from the procurator fiscal offices at Dingwall, Inverness and Wick is available should any emergency arise. The situation is being closely monitored by the regional procurator fiscal at Aberdeen.

Legal Aid

52. **Mr. Ernie Ross** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he has had any discussions with the procurators fiscal about the granting of legal aid under the Legal Aid (Scotland) Act 1986.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: discussions have taken place at an official level on the impact the setting up of a new legal aid board will have on the fixing of trials.

Kilmarnock and Ayr (Procurator Fiscal Office)

53. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland what is the current establishment of the procurator fiscal offices at Kilmarnock and Ayr.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The current establishment of the procurator fiscal offices at Kilmarnock and Ayr is 33 and 19½ respectively.

Suspects (Tape Recording)

54. **Dr. Godman** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland what recent discussions he has had with procurators fiscal regarding the tape recording of the questioning of suspects in police stations.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I discussed this matter most recently with procurators fiscal at a meeting of all the senior procurators fiscal in Scotland in November 1986.

State Security

55. **Sir Alex Fletcher** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he has anything to add to his previous statement to the House on 3 February, *Official Report*, column *852* and on 9 February, regarding the relationship between the procurators fiscal and the police in applying for a search warrant; and if he is satisfied with regard to the search of the British Broadcasting Corporation's premises in Glasgow on 31 January that the actions of the procurators fiscal were in accord with that relationship.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The decision as to the operational desirability of the search warrant was for the police. It was in accordance with proper and accepted practice and procedure in Scotland for them to request the procurator fiscal to make an application to the sheriff. In deciding whether to present an application to the sheriff for the search warrant requested it was properly for the procurator fiscal to be satisfied as to the legal justification for the application and in this regard he considered the information to be sworn to by the police and the known attitude of the British Broadcasting Corporation to the requirement of due legal process. He sought to ensure the warrant was sufficient to meet its purposes and it did not go beyond what was required.

Official Secrets Acts

Mr. Dalyell asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he will make a statement on his practice, when considering prosecutions and the issue of warrants in relation to offences under the Official Secrets Acts, on consulting other Ministers about the damage to the public interest caused by a particular disclosure.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: When considering prosecutions under the Official Secrets Acts where there is a legal sufficiency of evidence the Lord Advocate would have regard to the damage to the public interest which has resulted from the disclosure and the effect of a prosecution on the public interest. To this end he may, but is not obliged to, consult any of his colleagues in the Government. It would not be his practice to consult any other Minister when considering applications for search warrants in the course of a criminal investigation.

BBC, Glasgow (Search Warrant)

Mr. Dewar asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he will place in the Library a copy of the Lord Advocate's letter dated 6 February to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden regarding the search warrant against the British Broadcasting Corporation's Glasgow premises.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I shall arrange for a copy of the letter to be placed in the Library of the House.

SCOTLAND

Edinburgh Castle

10. **Sir Hector Monro** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what consultations he has had on the future development of Edinburgh castle; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: In July last year my right hon. and learned Friend invited comments from interested bodies and the public upon the conclusions of a feasibility study, prepared by consultants, of possible improvements to visitor facilities at Edinburgh castle. We are now considering those conclusions in the light of the responses received.

Peterhead Prison

11. **Mr. McQuarrie** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the present position in relation to the award of a contract for the new Peterhead prison; what is the proposed commencement date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Invitations to tender will shortly be issued for the preliminary site works contract for the new prison at Peterhead. The contract for construction is at present programmed to begin in March 1988.

Student Support

12. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next expects to meet the National Union of Students Scotland to discuss financial provisions for students.

Mr. John MacKay: I met representatives of the National Union of Students (Scotland) on 23 January. I will meet them again when they give oral evidence to the ministerial committee which is reviewing student support.

Regional Development Grant

13. **Dr. Godman** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what he estimates will be the outturn figures for regional development grant expenditure in Scotland in the current financial year; and what criteria were used in fixing regional development grant expenditure for 1987-88.

Mr. Lang: The expenditure provision for regional development grant in the current financial year is £171 million gross. The provision for expenditure in 1987-88 has been set after consideration both of outstanding commitments due in that year, arising out of grant already approved, and of the anticipated level of future approvals and claims.

Torness Nuclear Power Station

14. **Mr. Campbell** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will state the latest estimated date for the commissioning of the first set at Torness nuclear power station.

Mr. Lang: The South of Scotland Electricity Board expects that the first reactor will be in commercial operation by October 1987.

Electricity Sales

15. **Mr. Home Robertson** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the timing and size of recent sales of electricity generated in Scotland to the Central Electricity Generating Board.

Mr. Lang: I am advised by the South of Scotland Electricity Board that 500 mw of electricity were contracted to the Central Electricity Generating Board on 12 January 1987; from 13 to 16 January 1000 mw were contracted and from 19 to 23 January 600 mw were contracted, in each case for 12 hours per day.

Sir Norman Macfarlane

16. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met Sir Norman Macfarlane, the chairman of Guinness plc; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend and I had a confidential meeting with Sir Norman Macfarlane and other representatives of Guinness plc on Thursday 22 January. A number of matters were discussed including Guinness's operations in Scotland.

Shipbuilding

17. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current number of people employed in shipbuilding in Scotland; and how this compares with 1979.

Mr. Lang: In 1984, the most recent year for which information is available, the estimated number of people employed in the shipbuilding and ship repair industry in Scotland was 21,800. This compares with 30,600 in 1979. These estimates are from the annual census of production.

Scottish NFU

18. **Mr. Pollock** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has met representatives of the Scottish National Farmers Union in order to discuss the annual review of agriculture; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: The NFU of Scotland was consulted as part of the 1987 annual review of agriculture; I am due to meet representatives of the union on 13 February 1987.

The annual review results show a welcome improvement in Scottish farm incomes from the very low levels experienced in 1985. However, the industry in Scotland has not yet completely recovered from the effects of disastrous weather in 1985.

Afforestation

19. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will undertake a review of the financing procedures and practice of afforestation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans at present to undertake such a review.

Small Firms

20. **Mr. MacKenzie** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many small firms in Scotland, as defined by the Bolton committee, are currently having Government financial assistance withheld from them as a result of the Government's moratorium on regional development grants.

Mr. Lang: I regret that the information is not available in the form requested, since RDG I—that is old style RDG — payments are not categorised into small and large firms. As regards RDG II—that is new RDG—to date no payments have been affected by the recently announced two-month delay in payments.

Caterpillar Tractor Company

21. **Mr. James Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the up-to-date position with the proposed closure of Caterpillar Tractor company at Tannochside, Glasgow; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: On 3 February Caterpillar reconfirmed its decision to close the Tannochside facility. I continue to find the company's decision extraordinary but, given its public stance, I have now arranged for my officials to open discussions with the local management of the company to explore all possibilities for maintaining manufacturing operations and employment at the plant.

Agriculture (Prospects)

22. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent discussions he has had with officers of the National Farmers' Union for Scotland about the prospects for agriculture during the current year.

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. and learned Friend and I regularly meet union representatives to discuss the state of Scottish agriculture. The most recent occasion was on 5 January when I met the union's president, and we will meet again on 13 February.

Granton Gas Works

23. **Mr. Ron Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has received representations from the trade union movement about the closure of Granton gas works.

Mr. Lang: Yes. A letter dated 16 January has been received from the branch secretary of the General, Municipal Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union.

West Fife (Pit Closures)

24. **Mr. Douglas** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on initiatives between his Department and the Scottish Development Agency to combat increased unemployment in West Fife as a result of pit closures.

Mr. Lang: I have asked the Scottish Development Agency to consider the possibility of some form of economic initiative for the West Fife area, involving the local public and private sectors. Initial discussions on this are now under way.

Rate Reform (Crofters)

25. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received concerning the implications for the crofting communities of the proposed reform of the domestic rating system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. and learned Friend has received representations on the matter from the Western Isles islands council, the Crofters Commission, the National Farmers' Union of Scotland, the Scottish Crofters' Union and the Harris council of social service, as well as from a number of individuals.

Housing

26. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what new initiatives he has in mind for the solution of the housing problem in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: We shall continue to pursue those policy initiatives which, since 1979, have succeeded in increasing the percentage of families in Scotland who are owner-occupiers from 35 per cent. to over 42 per cent., and which have seen the completion of 140,000 new homes, the inclusion of 210,000 council homes in modernisation schemes, the halving of the number of houses below the tolerable standard and the trebling of the number of sheltered and amenity dwellings for the elderly and disabled. We shall encourage initiatives to bring empty council housing back into use and to introduce greater diversity of management and tenure into council estates.

Scottish Lithotripter Centre

27. **Mr. Lambie** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he is going to announce the siting of the Scottish lithotripter centre; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: Three health boards have expressed an interest in this matter and my right hon. and learned Friend is still considering the best location to serve patients in Scotland.

Paper Mill, Irvine

28. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received about the funding of the new paper mill at Irvine; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: None other than those made by the hon. Member in connection with the purchase of capital equipment about which I will be writing to him shortly.

Scottish School of Physical Education

29. **Mr. Millan** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what further consideration he has given to the future of the Scottish school of physical education at Jordanhill college of education.

Mr. Rifkind: I refer the right hon. Member to my reply of 14 January, at columns 81-82, to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar).

I have now received and am giving urgent consideration to the views of the three governing bodies concerned.

Unemployment

30. **Mr. Wilson** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what measures he plans to take to reduce unemployment in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: In addition to the Government's overall policies for controlling inflation and stimulating the economy, thereby improving the job prospects for the unemployed, a wide range of employment and training measures is brought to bear on the problem. The Government's continuing commitment to tackling unemployment was emphasised by the additional package of measures announced on 28 January, at columns 337-39, by my right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General. The extension of the YTS guarantee, the introduction nationally of a new job training scheme, the extension of the restart programme, and the expansion of the enterprise allowance scheme will all further enhance the job prospects of the unemployed in Scotland.

CBI (Scotland)

31. **Mr. Steel** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next intends to meet the Confederation of British Industry (Scotland) to discuss the Scottish economy.

Mr. Rifkind: I met representatives of the employment committee of CBI Scotland earlier this week for an informal discussion of matters affecting the Scottish economy. I have as yet no specific plans for further meetings.

Manufacturing Job Losses

32. **Mr. David Marshall** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the total number of job losses in the manufacturing sector in Scotland since May 1979 to the latest available date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: June 1979 is the closest date to May 1979 for which the information requested is available. I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to a question by the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Mr. Hamilton) on 3 February. Business surveys released last month suggest improved prospects for manufacturing orders and output in the early months of 1987, particularly in the case of exports.

Jobs Costs

33. **Sir Russell Johnston** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the average cost per job created by the Highlands and Islands Development Board and the Scottish Development Agency in each of the last five years.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is not available in respect of the activities of the Scottish Development Agency, which are not in general specifically directed at job creation. The information in respect of financial assistance from the Highlands and Islands Development Board is as follows:

Average cost of jobs created and retained (£ at 1986 prices)

Year	*Average cost*
1982	5,539
1983	5,355
1984	7,085
1985	6,500
1986	5,082

Springburn Railway Workshops

34. **Mr. Martin** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on progress with talks between the Scottish Development Agency and British Rail Engineering Ltd. on job creation measures following the rundown of the Springburn railway workshops; and what action his Department is taking to mitigate the social consequences.

Mr. Lang: Good progress continues to be made in the discussions between representatives of the Scottish Development Agency, British Rail Engineering Ltd., local authorities and other interests on the plans for an initiative for the Springburn area, and it is hoped that an agreement will be concluded shortly. While the emphasis of the proposed initiative is likely to be primarily on economic and employment measures, there will clearly also be social benefits.

Local Government Finance

35. **Mr. Craigen** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to meet the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities regarding local government finance matters.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. and learned Friend next plans to discuss local government finance matters with the convention on 27 April.

Community Charge

36. **Mr. Allen Adams** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimate he has made of the number of additional staff which Strathclyde regional council will need to employ to compile the register for the purposes of the proposed community charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: It will be for individual local authorities to consider what staffing and other resources they will need to implement the community charge system.

Oil Industry

37. **Mr. Ernie Ross** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he is taking to mitigate the social consequences of the rundown of the oil industry in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend is concerned over the fall in oil-related employment during the present downturn in offshore activity. The Scottish Development Agency and the Highlands and Islands Development Board are constantly seeking practical means to promote and increase economic activity and the Government are providing the resources necessary to achieve this objective. It is, however, vital that the oil-support industry in Scotland should itself adopt a tough and competitive attitude towards the opportunities for work which do exist, both in the North sea and internationally and also seek to exploit their scarce skills in non-oil related markets.

Labour Statistics

38. **Mr. Robert Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the percentage unemployment rate in the Aberdeen travel-to-work area for 1979 and the current figure.

Mr. Lang: On 11 December 1986, the latest date for which information is available, the unemployment rate in the Aberdeen travel-to-work area was 8·9 per cent. In December 1979 the corresponding figure was 3·7 per cent. The figures are not comparable due to the various changes which have taken place in the compilation of the statistics.

This information is available in the Library.

Aberdeen (Common Good Fund)

39. **Mr. Bruce** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland under what powers he acted in requiring his consent for capital expenditure incurred by the city of Aberdeen be funded from the common good fund.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. and learned Friend's powers to control capital expenditure by local authorities are set out in section 94 of the local government (Scotland) Act 1973. This provides that a local authority must have the consent of the Secretary of State before incurring any liability to meet capital expenses, except where they are financed from current revenue. The definition of capital expenses in section 94(2) includes any expenses of a capital nature which are to be met otherwise than out of current revenue.

Amateur Sports Clubs

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received from bodies representing amateur sports clubs about financial difficulties arising from the payment of high levels of rates.

Mr. Ancram: Representations have been received from the Scottish Sports Council and the Scottish Sports Association. Office bearers of certain sports clubs have also been active in bringing to attention the effect of rates on the financial position of amateur sports clubs generally.

Guinness plc

41. **Mr. O'Neill** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the board of Guinness to discuss its Scottish operations.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend and I met representatives of Guinness, including the chairman and another board member, on Thursday 22 January.

Dalgety Foods

Mr. Robin Cook asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will meet the management of Dalgety Foods to discuss the closure of its potato crisp plant at Broxburn.

Mr. Lang: I have written to the chairman of Dalgety expressing my concern about the adverse impact of the closure on the community in the Broxburn area. I have made it clear that the Government will consider assisting any viable proposal for the future use of the facility.

Department of Registers

43. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about the proposal further to privatise some of the search work carried out for the public by the Department of Registers of Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Representations have been received from the trade union side of the Department of the Registers of Scotland, and from several hon. Members, about the decision to limit the Department's searches of the Register of Sasines and the personal register to areas to which the land register has been extended.

Private search firms already account for more than 90 per cent. of searches in non-land register areas. The Department is under no obligation to offer a search service, and the resources saved will be used to improve property registration services to the public. The Department's other search activities, including the free provision of reports from the land register, are not affected.

Wildlife (Conservation)

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the total number of incidents involving the misuse of poisons or stupefying substances on wildlife which have been reported to his Department in each of the last two years; for each of those totals what was the number of cases which were referred to the police or the procurator fiscal for investigation; and of those investigations, what was the number which resulted in legal proceedings, and the outcome of those proceedings.

Mr. John MacKay: In the years 1985 and 1986, 32 and 27 incidents involving the misuse of poisons or stupefying substances were reported to the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland. The police were involved in four cases in each of the two years. Legal proceedings followed in one case each year; a conviction was obtained only in the 1986 case.

Local Authorities (Personal Social Services)

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what was the total expenditure on local authority personal social services in each of the last six years, broken down in terms of *(a)* pay, *(b)* total current expenditure and *(c)* total capital expenditure;

(2) what was the total expenditure on local authority personal social services in each of the last six years, broken down in terms of *(a)* pay, *(b)* current expenditure and *(c)* capital expenditure.

Mr. John MacKay: The information requested is set out in the following table:

£000s

	1980-81	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*
(a) Pay	166,855	184,261	183,239	199,250	206,783	222,019
(b) Current	217,823	241,073	258,737	276,933	291,574	312,705
(c) Capital	11,788	12,257	13,400	15,976	20,859	20,455
Total (*b* and *c*)	229,611	253,330	272,137	292,909	312,433	333,160

Source: Scottish Local Government Financial Statistics.

New Towns (Manufacturing Jobs)

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the net loss in manufacturing jobs in each of the Scottish new towns since June 1979.

Mr. Lang: The estimated net change in employment in manufacturing plants employing more than 10 people in the Scottish new towns between 1979 and 1985 is given in the table below. These estimates are taken from the Regional Data System. No reliable information is available from this source for plants with less than 10 employees.

Net change in manufacturing employment

Town	
Cumbernauld	−2,200
East Kilbride	−5,200
Glenrothes	−3,000
Irvine	−2,700
Livingston	no change

State Security

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland at what precise time he was informed of the existence of a search warrant in relation to the British Broadcasting Corporation's Glasgow premises; and by whom.

Mr. Rifkind: After the warrant had been granted by the court, on my arrival at the BBC's Glasgow offices on the

evening of Friday 30 January I was informed for the first time by two Strathclyde police officers who had been assigned as a matter of routine to accompany me during my visit to Glasgow that there was likely to be a police operation at the BBC premises the following day. I was given no details of the nature of that operation.

Cows (Slaughter)

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the number of cows which will require to be slaughtered when the EEC milk package is implemented; and what impact he estimates this will have on the beef cattle prices.

Mr. John Mackay: The European Commission has estimated that across the Community up to the spring of next year 500,000 dairy cows may be culled as a result of the agreement reached by the Agriculture Council in December. The impact on the beef market will depend on various factors, including the effectiveness of market management measures for which 435 mecus have been allocated.

Suckler Cow Premium

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is the current delay in the payment of the suckler cow premium; and what action he proposes to take in order to eliminate this delay;

(2) what is the reason for the delay in payment to farmers of the beef cow subsidy; and when the delay will be overcome.

Mr. John Mackay: The closing date for receipt of applications for suckler cow premium (sometimes referred to as beef cow subsidy) in 1986 was 30 September and the Deprtment of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland began processing applications in October that year. Approximately 9,000 applications were received and by the week ending 7 February payment had been made on 7,650 of them. Most of the remaining outstanding cases are those who have not yet responded to the income check which the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland is obliged to make on a random selection of applicants in order to ensure that the condition of the scheme that not less than half of an applicant's annual income is derived from farming is met. For 1986 such a check was made on approximately 30 per cent. of all applicants.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Blood Donors

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the blood transfusion service stopped taking blood from prisoners in penal establishments.

Mrs. Currie: Collection of blood from closed prisons and borstals in England and Wales stopped at the end of 1984 and stopped from the last open prison in 1986.

Benefits

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide figures for the number of people in the Burnley and Pendle constituencies dependent on social security benefits, broken down by category of benefit and age group.

Mr. Lyell: The constituencies of Burnley and Pendle are covered by the Department's local office at Burnley. The latest available information about recipients of various locally administered benefits is as follows:

	Number
Sickness and Invalidity Benefit	6,402
Maternity Allowance	461
Severe Disablement Allowance	750
(all above figures as on 13 January 87	
Supplementary Benefit (as on 10 December 1986)	
a. beneficiaries over pension age	5,958
b. beneficiaries under pension age who are unemployed	5,816
c. other beneficiaries under pension age	4,998

Housing benefit is administered by the local authority and the number of recipients in Burnley and Pendle borough council areas at autumn 1986 (the latest date for which estimates are available) was as follows:—

	Burnley	*Pendle*
Rent rebate recipients	5,060	4,070
Rent allowance recipients	1,780	1,900
Rate rebate recipients	10,765	12,670

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give details of the number of family income supplement recipients for each of the years 1979 to 1986 showing, in each case, the number of recipients estimated to be liable to income tax at the date of their previous claim.

Mr. Major: The information requested is shown in the table:

Total number of Family Income Supplement recipients and those estimated to be liable to income tax at the date of their claim.

Year at April	*Number of recipients*	*Number who are liable for income tax*
		(thousands)
1979	80	65
1980	90	65
1981	105	75
1982	140	110
1983	190	150
1984	205	165
1985	205	145
1986	205	145

All figures have been rounded to the nearest 5,000.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average waiting period for the processing of new supplementary benefit claims by his Department's Brighton offices; and if he will provide details of waiting times for each year since 1979 on a quarterly basis.

Mr. Lyell: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Planning Research

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services pursuant to his Answer of 29 January, *Official Report*, column *373* concerning a study comissioned from Social and Community Planning Research, in what areas of the United Kingdom the pilot study has been carried out; and how much money has been allocated to pay for the full study.

Mr. Major: The sample for the pilot study was taken from people who became unemployed and signed on at the following unemployment benefit offices:

Barnsley A
Basildon A
Bradford D
Chatham B
Farnborough
Folkestone
Forest Hill
Kings Lynn
Leeds B
Liverpool Old Swan B
Mexborough
Maidenhead
Maidstone
Poplar B
Rochdale
Sandbach
Selby
Sheffield C
Stalybridge
St. Marylebone

The estimated expenditure covering fieldwork, staffing and non-departmental computer costs for the full study for the four years, 1986-87, 1987-88, 1988-89, and 1989-90 is £356,500 (at 1986-87 prices).

Diabetics

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to reach a conclusion following his discussions with the British Diabetic Association on the proposed changes in the existing National Health Service supply arrangements for plastic syringes to diabetic patients; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The arrangements for the supply of syringes to diabetics are currently under review.

Government Data Network

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what new interactive, interrogative and batch facilities will accrue to his Department from the connection to the Government data network; and what is the estimated saving to his Department from joining the network.

Mr. Lyell: There are no new plans for interactive, interrogative or batch facilities which depend directly on connection to the Government data network. However, as I explained to the hon. Member on 26 January, at columns *90-91* we will wish to use the facility to transfer the information which is currently exchanged on magnetic tape between ourselves and the Inland Revenue.

Comparative costs and savings cannot be estimated until planning has reached the award of contract stage.

Maternity Payments

Mr. Dixon asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Jarrow constituency received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in the Jarrow constituency are expected annually to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 488 claims to maternity allowance were made at Jarrow and 807 at South Shields, the Department's offices which cover the constituency although the boundaries are not conterminous. It is not possible to predict how many women in Jarrow will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Bagier asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Sunderland, South received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Sunderland, South are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,360 claims to maternity allowance were made at Sunderland, North and 1,041 claims at Sunderland, South , the Department's offices which cover the constituency although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Sunderland, South will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Jack Thompson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Wansbeck constituency received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested. But in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 796 claims to maternity allowance were made at Ashington and 966 at Blyth, the Department's offices which cover the constituency although the boundaries are not conterminous.

Mr. Jack Thompson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Wansbeck constituency are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: It is not possible to predict how many women in Wansbeck will qualify for Statutory Maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Walthamstow received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Walthamstow are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested. But in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,321 claims to maternity allowance were made at Walthamstow, the Department's office which covers the constituency although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Walthamstow will qualify for statutory maternity pay or

maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Eadie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the parliamentary constituency of Midlothian claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in the parliamentary constituency of Midlothian are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the Social Fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Midlothian constituency is covered by the Department's office at Edinburgh South although the local office boundary is not conterminous with the constituency. The number of claims received for maternity grant at the Edinburgh, South office during the calendar year 1986 was 1,684.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Edinburgh, South will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women the in Wentworth constituency claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available and how many women in the Wentworth constituency are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Wentworth constituency is covered by the Department's office at Rotherham North although their boundaries are not conterminous. The number of claims received for maternity grant at Rotherham North local office in the 1986 calendar year was 769.

It is not possible to predict how many women in the Wentworth constituency will qualify for maternity payments from the Social Fund from April 1987.

Mr. Welsh asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Doncaster, North claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in the Donacaster, North constituency are expected to qualify in a year for a maternity payment from the Social Fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Doncaster, North constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Doncaster, East and Doncaster, West although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the two offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Doncaster, East	1,585
Doncaster, West	2,072

It is not possible to predict how many women in the Doncaster, North constituency will qualify for maternity payments from the Social Fund from April 1987.

Mr. Stan Thorne asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in South Ribble claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many in South Ribble are expeced to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The South Ribble constituency is covered by the Department's office at Preston South although their boundaries are not coterminous. The number of claims received for maternity grant in the Preston South local office in the 1986 calendar year was 2,959.

It is not possible to predict how many women in South Ribble will qualify for maternity payments from the Social Fund from April 1987.

Mr. Stan Thorne asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Preston claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many in Preston are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

Preston constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Preston, South and Preston, North although their boundaries are not conterminous with the Preston constituency. The number of claims received for maternity grant in the two local offices in the 1986 calendar year was as follows:

	Number
Preston South	2,959
Preston North	672

It is not possible to predict how many women in Preston will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Cumbernauld and Kilsyth claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Cumbernauld and Kilsyth constituency is covered by the Department's office at Cumbernauld although the local office boundary is not conterminous with the constituency. The number of claims received for maternity grant at the Cumbernauld office during the calendar year 1986 was 1,762.

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Cumbernauld and Kilsyth are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: It is not possible to predict how many women in Cumbernauld and Kilsyth will qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Alyn and Deeside consituency claimed the maternity grant in the last year for

which figures are available; and how many women in Alyn and Deeside are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Alyn and Deeside constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Wrexham, Shotton and Mold although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the three offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Wrexham	1,813
Shotton	662
Mold	497

It is not possible to predict how many women in the constituency will qualify for maternity payments from the Social Fund from April 1987.

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the parliamentary constituency of Birmingham, Erdington, Birmingham, Northfield and Warwickshire, North and West Hertfordshire received maternity allowance in the last two years for which figures are available; and how many women in each of these constituencies are estimated to be eligible to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested. In the 12-monthly periods ending April 1985 and April 1986, the latest years for which figures are available, the following number of claims to maternity allowance were made in each of the Department's offices in the areas covering the constituencies, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

	April 1985	*April 1986*
Birmingham Erdington		
Birmingham Erdington	1,322	1,238
Birmingham Perry Barr	1,027	1,272
Birmingham Northfield		
Birmingham Edgbaston	1,101	1,322
Birmingham Northfield	1,698	1,215
Warwickshire North		
Lichfield	1,519	1,521
Birmingham Erdington	1,322	1,238
West Hertfordshire		
Hemel Hempstead	1,101	1,135

It is not possible to predict how many women in the constituencies will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Eadie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the parliamentary constituency of Midlothian received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in the parliamentary constituency of Midlothian are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested. But in the twelve months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,215 claims to maternity allowance were made at Edinburgh South, the Department's office which covers the constituency although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in the parliamentary constituency of Midlothian will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Wentworth constituency received the maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in the constituency are expected to receive the statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested. But in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 442 claims to maternity allowance were made at Rotherham, North, the Department's office which covers the constituency although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in the Westworth constituency will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Cumbernauld and Kilsyth are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: It is not possible too predict how many women in Cumbernauld and Kilsyth will qualify for statutory maternity or maternity allowance fom April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Cumbernauld and Kilsyth received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested. But in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,183 claims to maternity allowance were made at Cumbernauld, the Department's office which covers the constituency although the boundaries are not conterminous.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in *(a)* the London borough of Newham, *(b)* Slough and *(c)* Watford claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in those constituencies are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants for maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

(a) The London borough of Newham is covered by the Department's offices at Canning Town, Plaistow and Woodgrange Park although their boundaries

are not conterminous with the borough.

(b) The Slough constituency is dealt with by the Department's office at Slough although its boundary is not conterminous with the constituency.

(c) The Watford constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Watford and St. Albans although its boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency.

The number of claims received for maternity grant in each of these offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
(a) Canning Town	612
Plaistow	1,613
Woodgrange Park	1,848
(b) Slough	3,294
(c) Watford	2,271
St. Albans	1,497

It is not possible to predict how many women in those areas will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in *(a)* the London borough of Newham, *(b)* Slough and *(c)* Watford received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many of these are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, the following claims to maternity allowance were made at the Department's offices, which cover the areas in the question although the boundaries are not conterminous:

	Number
London borough of Newham	
Canning Town	273
Plaistow	999
Woodgrange Park	1,101
Slough	
Slough	2,126
Watford	
Watford	1,688
St. Albans	1,056

It is not possible to predict how many women in these areas will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Workington claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Workington are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Workington constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Workington and Carlisle although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the two offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Workington	842
Carlisle	1,462

It is not possible to predict how many women in Workington will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Workington received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Workington are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,042 claims to maternity allowance were made at Carlisle and 640 at Workington, the Department's offices which cover the constituency although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Workington will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) since when myalgic encephalomyelitis has been diagnosable; and if the medical profession in general can diagnose it;

(2) if he has received any reports of faulty diagnosis of myalgic encephalomyelitis; and what steps he proposes to take to assist doctors to diagnose the disease;

(3) if he will give financial support to the Association of Victims of Myalgic Encephalomyelitis to encourage their research and support groups;

(4) how many research studies are being undertaken into the causes and treatment of myalgic encephalomyelitis; and at which hospitals or research centres they are located;

(5) when his Department was first notified of the disease myalgic encephalomyelitis; and what steps he has since taken to further research into its causes and treatment;

(6) what is his estimate of the number of people who suffer from myalgic encephalomyelitis.

Mrs. Currie: The condition known as benign myalgic encephalomyelitis was first described in 1934, and in the 1950s outbreaks occurred in some London hospitals. Despite extensive investigation then, no causal agent was found, and this remains the case. No outbreaks have been reported in recent years, and as the symptom resemble other forms of debilitating illness it is not easy to diagnose single cases or to draw up diagnostic guidance. The Department is not aware of any reports of faulty diagnosis. The Department is always prepared to consider proposals for research projects relating to the provision of health services but no request has been received from the group named. The Department is not currently funding any other research into this condition, but I understand that serological surveillance studies are proceeding at the

regional virus laboratory, Ruchill hospital, Glasgow, with further related work at the Southern General hospital, Glasgow, and separate research at St. Mary's hospital, medical school, London.

Myalgic encephalomyelitis is not a notifiable disease and data on its incidence are not therefore available.

Pensions and Benefits

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will estimate the total amount of pensions and social security benefits unclaimed in the last year by persons entitled to such payments; if he has any information on the part played by inadequate skills of literacy and numeracy in such cases; what steps he has taken to overcome relevant difficulties that may be experienced by potential claimants; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what information is available to his Department on the number of persons entitled to pension or social security benefit whose skills of literacy and numeracy are inadequate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: The Department's general policy is to allow the public to decide, on the basis of clearly stated advice, whether to claim benefits to which they may be entitled. A document design unit ensures that forms distributed nationally are expressed in a language which people with only limited literacy should understand — a fact recognised by the receipt of a number of plain english awards. Contacts are maintained with 300 interested organisations — including adult literacy groups — which often provide valuable suggestions on document design.

On a personal level, local office staff are trained to provide a sympathetic information service. This can be at the office, over the telephone or in the person's own home. More general benefit advice and information is available through the Department's freephone, supplemented by regular local media broadcasts.

The Department spends about £6½ million on media advice, publicity and leaflets. For child benefit and the major contributory benefits, such as retirement pension, it is thought that virtually everyone who is eligible receives the benefit and take-up of one parent benefit is also high amongst those that stand to gain.

Respondents to the "Family Expenditure Survey", from which estimates of unclaimed income-related benefits are obtained, are not asked questions relating to their literacy or numeracy, but there is some evidence to suggest that entitlements are less likely to be claimed when the amount is small. Take-up of supplementary benefit expenditure was 89 per cent. in 1983 implying £615 million was unclaimed. About £35 million in family income supplement went unclaimed in 1981.

First estimates of housing benefit expenditure take-up and more recent estimates for family income supplement should be available shortly.

Disabled Persons

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if doctors' surgeries' improvement grants are available to carry out improvements to the accessibility of surgeries for disabled people; and what guidance has been issued to family practitioner committees on the subject.

Mr. Newton: Family practitioner committees have discretion to make available grants to improve surgeries in a number of ways, including improving accessibility for disabled people. Guidance on eligibility for improvement grants is contained in the statement of fees and allowances payable under the National Health Service general medical services issued to all family practitioner committees and family doctors. The importance of ease of access to premises and movement within them is fully recognised in the minimum standards criteria for surgery rent and rates reimbursement. This too is set out in the statement of fees and allowances.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the committees on which disabled people should be appointed according to section 10 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986.

Mr. Major: Section 10 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 will apply to the following committees:

Social Security Advisory Committee.
Central Advisory Committee on War Pensions.
War Pensions Committees.
Committees attached to bodies constituted under Section 10(2) of the Employment and Training Act 1973 or persons appointed to advise the Secretary of State under S5(2)*(a)* of that Act.
Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee.
Transport Users Consultative Committee.
London Regional Passengers Committee.
Advisory Committee on Telecommunications for Disabled and Elderly People.
Gas Consumers Council.
Electricity Consultative Councils.
Post Office Users' Councils.
Domestic Coal Consumers' Council.
Any local authority committee concerned with matters in which chronically sick and disabled people have special needs.

Young Physically Disabled People

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to how many physically disabled people under 35 years of age are currently attending local authority day centres.

Mr. Major: The information available centrally does not indicate the number of physically disabled people under 35 years of age currently attending local authority day centres.

Information available relates to the number of places in day centres for physically handicapped people under 65 years of age and is published in "Day Centres for the Mentally Ill, the Elderly and the Younger Physically Handicapped at 31 March 1985, England" copies of which are in the Library.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidance he has given to local authorities regarding the provision they should make in day centres for young physically disabled people.

Mr. Major: Circulars LAC 12/70 and LAC 13/74, copies of which are in the Library, give guidance to local authorities on how they should discharge their responsibilities under the National Assistance Act 1948 and the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 to provide day centre facilities for young physically disabled people.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations his Department has received regarding provision in day centres for young physically disabled people.

Mr. Major: No specific representations have been received recently, although the Royal College of Physicians Report "Physical Disability in 1986 and Beyond", published in July 1986 recommended in its survey of services for younger physically disabled people, that there should be adequate day care services.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will ask Sir Roy Griffiths in the course of his overview of community care to make an assessment of the achievements of Support and Housing Assistance for People with Disabilities in providing community care for young disabled people.

Mr. Major: I will ensure that Sir Roy notes this suggestion.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if his Department will undertake a review of day centre services for young physically disabled people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: Future needs for day centre services for physically disabled people are being considered in the context of discussions with local authority associations about the costs of implementing the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986.

Attendance and Mobility Allowances

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people were in receipt of *(a)* attendance allowance and *(b)* mobility allowance at the latest date for which figures are available; and if he will classify the data according to sex and standard age bands.

Mr. Major: The information requested is set out in the following tables:

Table 1: recipients of attendance allowance at 31 March 1986

Age	Male[1]	Female[1]
2-4	8,000	5,000
5-9	13,000	10,000
10-15	15,000	11,000
16-19	8,000	6,000
20-29	16,000	13,000
30-39	12,000	12,000
40-49	11,000	14,000
50-59	17,000	21,000
60-64	17,000	18,000
65-69	19,000	23,000
70-74	25,000	33,000
75-79	23,000	45,000
80 and over	39,000	148,000
All ages[2]	224,000	361,000

[1] Because attendance allowance is administered by local offices as well as the 2 central offices, the figures quoted are not precise counts but are statistical estimates, rounded to the nearest thousand.

[2] Rounding means that these totals do not correspond to the sum of the individual figures for each age group.

Table 2: Recipients of Mobility Allowance at 30 January 1987

Age	Male	Female
5-9	4,444	3,742
10-14	4,764	3,904
15-19	6,283	5,334
20-24	6,930	5,822
25-29	6,503	5,758
30-34	6,453	6,603
35-39	8,928	9,654
40-44	11,311	12,626
45-49	14,585	15,714
50-54	22,095	22,490
55-59	35,093	32,809
60-64	54,921	43,646
65-69	44,141	34,570
70 and over	5,229	4,768
TOTALS	231,680	207,440

Table 3: Recipients of Mobility Allowance under the Mobility Allowance (Vehicle Scheme Beneficiaries) Regulations 1987 at 30 January 1987

Age	Male	Female
16-19	2	3
20-24	8	6
25-29	212	136
30-34	674	418
35-39	1,137	760
40-44	1,177	846
45-49	1,107	841
50-54	1,312	861
55-59	1,704	1,062
60-64	2,248	1,211
65-69	2,385	1,206
70-74	1,942	958
75-79	1,248	687
80-84	432	394
85 and over	176	162
TOTALS	15,764	9,551

Wheelchair Service

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will extend the wheelchair service to include the provision of occupant controlled outdoor powered wheelchairs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: We are at present considering whether the Department's wheelchair service should include the provision of dual purpose occupant controlled powered wheelchairs. Those considerations will include occupant controlled outdoor powered wheelchairs. I hope to be able to announce a decision in due course, together with other matters relating to the wheelchair service.

Mobility Allowance

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will amend the mobility allowance regulations to ensure that no elderly disabled people who are currently in receipt of the allowance are deprived of it when they reach the age of 75 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: The limit of age 75 for the payment of the allowance will not affect any recipients before November 1989 and we shall consider whether the legislation should be amended rather nearer that time.

Methaemoglobinaemia

Mr. Willie Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a table showing the regional incidence of methaemoglobinaemia over the last 10 years.

Mrs. Currie: This information is not available as there is no requirement to report cases of methaemoglobinaemia, and they are not identifiable in routinely collected health statistics.

However, it is an extremely rare condition. There has been no response to DHSS requests to medical practitioners in 1976 and 1981 for notification of any confirmed cases of infantile methaemoglobinaemia. Indeed, we know of only some 14 cases attributable to nitrate in drinking water in the past 36 years, and these were mostly suspected rather than proven. The last reported and confirmed case was in 1972.

AIDS

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what estimate he has made of the number of people in the area covered by the West Midlands regional health authority who are known to have the AIDS virus; and how many within this total are estimated to be haemophiliacs who have been given the AIDS virus through blood products.

Mr. Newton: For the West Midlands region the communicable disease surveillance centre figures record four current cases of clinical AIDS, and 262 positive tests for HIV antibody. Records are not held centrally showing by region the number of haemophiliacs included in these categories.

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what specific funds have been allocated to the West Midlands regional health authority for the provision of counselling services at district level for haemophiliacs who have been found to be carrying the AIDS virus; what is the present level of such provision; and what plans there are to improve the service to meet need.

Mr. Newton: Health authorities provide haemophilia care through a network of haemophilia centres. Six of these centres are designated haemophilia reference centres.

Since December 1985 additional allocations of £60,000 have been made to each HRC specifically for AIDS counselling, because of the particular burden they bear. there is no HRC in the west midlands. A further £280,000 has been allotted for 1987-88 but the basis for distribution is still under consideration.

The provision of counselling services at other haemophilia centres is a matter for the local health authority to consider in the light of local needs and priorities.

Meningococcal Infections

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list the research projects currently in progress into meningococcal infections;

(2) what plans he has for further research into meningococcal infections;

(3) how much money has been spent by his Department on *(a)* research into and *(b)* publicity and health education regarding meningococcal infections in (i) the last year and (ii) the last five years for which figures are available;

(4) if he will take steps to encourage early diagnosis of meningococcal infections and an increase in public awareness of the disease and its symptons;

(5) if he will add all meningococcal infections, and in particular meningococcal septicaemia to the list of notifiable diseases; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Retirement Age

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services to what extent the costs of establishing a voluntary retirement age of 60 years for both men and women would be offset by a reduction in unemployment and other benefits.

Mr. Major: After taking account of savings of about £1·6 billion in unemployment and other benefits, the net cost of establishing a common minimum pension age of 60 for both men and women would be about £3 billion in public expenditure, on our best estimate.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average age at which *(a)* men and *(b)* women retire from work in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. and learned Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Hard-to-heat Designations

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the number of hard-to-heat designations made to council tenants in the borough of Brighton for each year since 1983; and if he will break down the figures by month for each year.

Mr. Major: No heating systems have been designated in the borough of Brighton as being disproportionately expensive to run.

Hospitals (Cheshire)

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to increase the average daily number of available beds in hospitals in Altrincham and Sale, Cheshire.

Mrs. Currie: The management and planning of health services locally is a matter for district health authorities. The hon. Member may therefore wish to contact the chairman of Trafford district health authority or of the North Western regional health authority on this matter.

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to ensure that funds are made available immediately to enable the transfer of patients and staff from Denzell hospital, Altrincham, to St. Anne's hospital, Altrincham.

Mrs. Currie: The allocation of resources to individual district health authorities is a matter for regional health authorities, which are best placed to make the necessary judgments in the light of local circumstances. The hon. Member may therefore wish to contact the chairman of the North Western regional health authority on this matter.

Neasden Hospital

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many of the nurses and other National Health Service staff evicted from their homes at Neasden hospital in December are now in National Health Service accommodation elsewhere; and by whom the additional costs to these residents are being borne.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 21 January 1987, c. *622*]: Brent district health authority does not maintain a record of evictions but believes that there have been only three from Neasden hospital since 1979. These were of former employees whose contracts with the health authority had ended, and none occurred within the last two years.

Breast and Cervical Cancer

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what arrangements are made in the Eccles constituency, the city of Salford, the greater Manchester and the North West region for cervical cancer smear tests for women up to the age of 30 years, 30 to 40 years, 40 to 50 years, 50 to 60 years and over 60 years of age; and if he will provide the figures for these tests and these age groups for 1970, 1975, 1980, 1985 and any later figures; what new proposals on these tests have been made by the North West health authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 3 February 1987, c. *583*]: Services for testing operate throughout the North Western region. The location of testing laboratories and the number of tests carried out by each in 1975, 1980 and 1985 is as follows:

	1975	*1980*	*1985*
Lancaster District Health Authority			
Lancaster Moor hospital	2,628	3,195	4,844
Blackpook, Wyre and Fylde District Health Authority			
Blackpool Victoria hospital	4,658	6,255	10,779
Preston District Health Authority			
Preston Royal infirmary	3,094	7,383	7,160
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley District Health Authority			
Blackburn Royal Infirmary	6,745	8,976	13,442
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale District Health Authority			
Burnley general hospital	4,311	5,160	6,510
West Lancashire District Health Authority			
Ormskirk and District general hospital	2,913	3,057	3,760
Bolton District Health Authority			
Bolton general hospital	7,117	8,263	12,969
Bury District Health Authority			
Bury general hospital	7,716	5,365	7,469
North Manchester District Health Authority			
North Manchester general hospital	3,245	4,523	4,160
Central Manchester District Health Authority			
St. Mary's hospital	17,034	12,954	15,322
South Manchester District Health Authority			
Wythenshawe hospital	1,333	2,245	2,814
Christie hospital and Holt Radium Institute	183 ,303	220,029	252,123
Withington hospital	3,612	—	—
Oldham District Health Authority			
Oldham and District general hospital	9,318	10,402	11,312
Rochdale District Health Authority			
Birch Hill hospital	—	—	11,801
Rochdale infirmary	6,352	9,563	—
Salford District Health Authority			
Hope hospital	2,714	4,034	4,295
Stockport District Health Authority			
Stepping Hill hospital	4,076	5,681	8,760
Tameside and Glossop District Health Authority			
Tameside general hospital	7,021	7,584	13,060
Trafford District Health Authority			
Altrincham general hospital	811	911	—
Wigan District Health Authority			
Royal Albert Edward infirmary	5,087	6,953	7,946
North Western Regional Health Authority			
Total	283,088	332,533	398,526

Information is not held centrally on the age distribution of patients tested or on number of tests done by individual laboratories in 1970, but the regional total for that year was 192,515 tests.

All district health authorities in the North Western region will have computerised patient call-up and recall systems by April 1988.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Agricultural Support

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was *(a)* the overall cost and *(b)* the net cost to the Exchequer of support to United Kingdom agriculture in each year from 1960 to 1986 in actual and real terms; and if he will show each set of figures as a percentage of the gross domestic product.

Mr. Jopling: I refer my hon. Friend to the following published sources which are available in the Library:

(a) The costs of agricultural support to United Kingdom agriculture in the years from 1960-61 to 1986-87 are shown in the annual review and determination of guarantees White Papers as follows:

Years	*Source*
1960-61 to 1967-68	1969 Cmnd. 3965 Appendix V —Table A
1968-69 to 1971-72	1973 Cmnd. 5254 Table 24
1972-73 to 1975-76	1977 Cmnd. 6703 Table 25
1976-77 to 1978-79	1981 Cmnd. 8132 Table 25
1979-80 to 1982-83	1984 Cmnd. 9137 Table 28
1983-84 to 1985-86	1987 Cmnd. 67 Table 28
1986-87 (forecast)	

(b) Gross domestic product for the years up to 1984-85 are given at pages 9 and 10 of the Economic Trends Annual Supplement 1986. For the years 1985-86 and 1986-87 this information is given in table 2.5 of the Financial Statement and Budget Report 1986-87.

(c) Retail price indices at pages 116 and 117 in the Economic Trends Annual Supplement 1986 may be used to convert figures from earlier years to current prices.

Agricultural Land

Mr. Steen asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many acres of agricultural land including rough grazing have been taken out of agricultural use in each of the last five years;

(2) how many acres of agricultural land including rough grazing have been recorded in each of the last five years as going out of agricultural use and then becoming dormant, derelict or vacant, in public ownership; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Surplus Food

Dr. McDonald asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish in the *Official Report* how much of the promised supplies of European Commission surplus food has already been distributed in the United Kingdom, and to Thurrock in particular; how much more remains to be distributed; what steps are being taken to speed up distribution in the United Kingdom and to Thurrock; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: My most recent information is that 640 tonnes of butter and 19 tonnes of beef have been released from intervention stores in the United Kingdom. As I said in my reply earlier today milk and milk products are now available to charitable organisations from the commercial market. The actual distribution of all these foodstuffs, including distribution in Thurrock, is a matter for those organisations. The eventual total uptake of the various products will depend on their requirements, and I am not yet in a position to give estimates. My Department and the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce are in constant touch with the organisations to ensure that distribution is as speedy and efficient as possible.

Beef

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will ensure that any surplus beef which may be produced following the period of the EEC milk package does not go into intervention; and what plans he has for the disposal of the surplus.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, in view of the 13 per cent. reduction on the intervention price of beef on 6 April, he will press the other member states in the EEC for a substantial reduction in the green pound before that date.

Mr. Jopling: The reform to the beef regime agreed at the December Agriculture Council provide for reduced reliance on intervention and greater reliance on production premia as a means of supporting the beef sector. Intervention prices will, in future, more closely reflect market price levels. But in the United Kingdom it is the beef variable premium scheme, rather than intervention, which provides the main means of production support and we have secured continuation of the scheme until the end of 1988. In addition, our producers have already had their support level improved as a result of the 6 per cent. devaluation of the green rate for beef and will benefit from adjustments to harmonise steer and bull intervention prices.

I am considering the question of the future level of the green pound in the context of the forthcoming price fixing.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to prevent further agricultural products from being placed into storage, particularly in the beef sector.

Mr. Jopling: The Government generally believe that intervention arrangements applicable to the various EC commodity regimes should operate as a buyer of last resort and not as a normal sales outlet.

I am pleased that the decisions taken at the December Agriculture Council on reforms to the beef regime represent progress in this direction, and place less emphasis on intervention as a means of underpinning producers' returns.

Quotas

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to introduce quotas for other agricultural products; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Agriculture Council

Mr. Maclennan asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the outcome of the meeting of the Council of Agriculture Ministers on 9 and 10 February.

Sir Peter Mills asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Council of Agriculture Ministers' meeting held in Brussels on 9-10 February; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I represented the United Kingdom at the meeting of the Council of Agriculture Ministers in Brussels on 9 and 10 February.

The Council had before it the detailed regulations for implementing the December decisions on beef, milk and socio-structures.

The Council agreed the implementing measures on beef.

On milk, there were differences of view about how the intervention system should be changed and about the rules for paying compensation for temporary suspensions of quota. I insisted that the arrangements agreed must be consistent with the intentions of the December agreement.

A regulation amending the rules relating to the financing of a major disposal of butter stocks was agreed. This provides for the cost of a disposal programme to be financed over the years 1989 to 1992. This proposal was endorsed by the Council in December.

On socio-structures, the Council was unable to reach agreement, particularly on the rules relating to early retirement and to extensification of production.

Discussions on milk and socio-structures will be resumed at an additional Council meeting on 23 February.

The Council endorsed arrangements for a further year which give the Commission powers to implement obligatory distillation of wine. Agreement was also

reached (with the United Kingdom abstaining) on a measure which changes the arrangements in Ireland for paying grants on pigmeat marketing and processing, without however, increasing the total allocation of aid to Ireland.

DEFENCE

DROPS

Sir Ian Gilmour asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will specify the technical shortcomings found in Boughton's 1982 detachable rack off-loading pick-up system proposals; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will specify precisely which of his Department's stated requirements for detachable rack off-loading pick-up system the Boughton 1982 detachable rack off-loading system proposal for MMLC detachable rack off-loading pick-up system met less well than the Scammell MMLC; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will specify precisely which of his Department's stated requirements for detachable rack off-loading pick-up system the Boughton 1982 detachable rack off-loading system proposals for IMMLC detachable rack off-loading pick-up system met less well than the Foden IMMLC; and if he will make a statement;

(4) if he will specify precisely which of his Department's stated requirements for detachable rack off-loading pick-up system the Boughton 1982 proposals for the LMLC trailer met less well than the Craven Tasker Trailer; and if he will make a statement;

(5) if he will specify precisely which of his Department's stated requirements for detachable rack off-loading pick-up system the Boughton 1982 flatrack proposals met less well than Marshalls; and if he will make a statement;

(6) precisly which of his Department's 1982 stated detachable rack off-loading pick-up system requirements the Boughton LHS proposals, as submitted to Scammell for incorporation into its MMLC, met less well than Multilift Mark 2; and if he will make a statement;

(7) precisely which of his Departments 1982 detachable rack off-loading pick-up system requirements the Boughton LHS proposals, as submitted to Scammell for incorporation into its MMLC proposals, met less well than Powell Duffryn; and if he will make a statement;

(8) precisely which of his Department's 1982 stated detachable rack off-loading pick-up system requirements the Boughton LHS proposals, as submitted to Scammell for incorporation into its MMLC, met less well than Multilift 4; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Boughton's DROPS proposals were found to be technically inferior to those of the successful competitors in a number of areas. As I have indicated previously to my right hon. Friend, 15 January 1987 at column 308, I cannot disclose details of equipments tendered competitively by firms or the Department's assessments of them.

Sir Ian Gilmour asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the percentage increase between the production cost estimate submitted in 1982 for Scammell's MMLC detachable rack off-loading pick-up system chassis cab and the firm price for Scammell's MMLC now contracted; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is the percentage increase between the production cost estimate submitted in 1982 for Foden IMMLC detachable rack off-loading pick-up system chassis cab and the firm price for Foden's IMMLC now contracted; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The fixed prices secured from Foden and Scammel for production are lower in real terms than the production cost estimates it submitted in the 1982-83 competition.

Sir Ian Gilmour asked the Secretary of State for Defence precisely what quantities of *(a)* MMLC detachable rack off-loading pick-up system, *(b)* IMMLC detachable rack off-loading pick-up system, *(c)* flatracks, *(d)* trailers, *(e)* rail transfer equipment and *(f)* simplified RTE are included in arriving at the combined contract value of £220 million announced on Friday 5 December; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not normal practice to disclose exact details of the number of equipments ordered for operational use by the Services. However, as I announced to the House on 5 December, at column 840, the DROPS programme will cover some 2,000 vehicles and ancillary equipment.

Sir Ian Gilmour asked the Secretary of State for Defence what were the economic grounds for ruling out Boughton's in the 1983 detachable rack off-loading pick-up system selection; if there is any particular reason for the use of the term economic; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The term "economic" refers to the programme costs indicted by the fixed and budgetary price estimates provided by Boughtons in the competition. These were considerably higher than those of the other competing firms.

Sir Ian Gilmour asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) in what respect his Department's detachable rack off-loading pick-up system selection team in 1983 found Boughton's technical proposal lacking in completeness or less complete than its competitors; and if he will make a statement;

(2) which of the proposals of the detachable rack off-loading pick-up system contenders in 1983 was adjudged by his Department's team to be superior in system appreciation and why; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Boughton submission in the 1982-83 competition was judged to show a good appreciation of the requirements, being ranked joint second with two other contenders. It was judged less satisfactory than those of other contenders in terms of completeness, being more restricted in the range of vehicles and equipments offered and options.

Sir Ian Gilmour asked the Secretary of State for Defence if the chosen detachable rack off-loading pick-up system LMLC solutions of MMLC and trailer for use on roads meets road transport requirements while fully laden on roads in either the United Kingdom or Germany; if it is able to carry as great a load within such requirements as the Boughton proposal rejected by his Department; if legality was an argument advanced for the rejection of Boughton's in 1983; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None of the competitive proposals for a fully laden DROPS LMLC trailer combination could meet peacetime construction and use

regulations in the United Kingdom or Germany. Legal considerations were not paramount in the selection process for these combinations.

Merchant Ships (Design)

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Defence what efforts are made by his Department to ensure that at the design stage of merchant ships features are incorporated which would make the ship of military value in the event of requisition; what fiscal incentives are given; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: While the MOD would welcome the incorporation of such features in merchant ships at the design stage, the many competing pressures on defence resources have prevented the necessary funding from being made available.

United States Forces

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the military construction projects at installations in the United Kingdom used by United States forces, which he has been advised will take place in 1988.

Mr. Stanley: I understand from the United States authorities that the following military construction projects at the relevant installations will continue or be completed during the United States fiscal year 1988 (1 October 1987 to 30 September 1988):

Station and Project

RAF Alconbury
- Alter accommodation for enlisted personnel
- Physiological support
- Communications upgrade
- Base operations facility
- Aircraft maintenance facilities
- Chemical warfare protection
- Security enhancement

RAF Bentwaters
- Water storage and distribution
- Vehicle maintenance complex
- Communications upgrade
- Accommodation for unaccompanied enlisted personnel
- Shopping centre
- Open Mess
- Married quarters

RAF Chicksands
- Water distribution system
- Accommodation for unaccompanied enlisted personnel

RAF Croughton
- Telecommunications facility

RAF Fylingdales
- Satellite communications ground terminal

RAF Greenham Common
- High frequency facility
- Open mess
- Married quarters

RAF Lakenheath
- Gymnasium
- Security enhancement
- Middle school addition
- Auto hobby shop

RAF Martlesham
- Communications upgrade

RAF Mildenhall
- Accommodation for unaccompanied enlisted personnel
- Jet fuel storage

RAF Oakhanger
- North European tracking system

RAF Upper Heyford
- Alter accommodation for unaccompanied enlisted personnel
- Communications upgrade
- Elementary school
- Married quarters

RAF Upwood
- Elementary school

RAF Welford
- Munitions inspection facility

The commencement of construction work on the following projects in fiscal year 1988 will depend on funding being approved by United States Congress:

Station and Project

RAF Alconbury
- Add to water storage
- Squadron operations building chemical warfare equipment
- Install fire suppression system

RAF Bentwaters
- Medical logistics storage
- Security police operations facility
- Alter accommodation for unaccompanied enlisted personnel
- Office accommodation
- Squadron operations building chemical warfare protection

RAF Chicksands
- Communications upgrade

RAF Croughton
- Alter/add to water shortage and distribution system

RAF Edzell
- Operational buildings

RAF Fairford
- Communications upgrade
- Noise suppressor
- Jet fuel shortage
- Alter/add to physical fitness facility

RAF Greenham Common
- Arts and crafts centre

RAF Lakenheath
- Post office
- Combat arms range
- Base supply storage
- Accommodation for unaccompanied enlisted personnel
- Base operations building
- Control tower
- Composite medical facility

RAF Molesworth
- communications squadron facility

RAF Upper Heyford
- office accommodation
- alter/add to vehicle maintenance facility

RAF Welford
- air based ground defence munitions storage

West Ruislip
- Gymnasium

RAF Wethersfield
- communications upgrade
- medical logistics storage

RAF Woodbridge
- supply warehouse

Additionally, the following NATO funded projects will be in construction for the United States forces in fiscal year 1988:

RAF Abingdon
- POL (petroleum, oil and lubricants) storage

RAF Alconbury
- avionics facility
- sensor maintenance facility
- jet fuel storage
- weather shelter
- warehouse
- POL truck shelters

RAF Benson
parking platforms
POL storage

A&AEE Boscombe Down
POL storage

RAF Fairford
POL storage

RAF Odiham
POL storage
parking platforms

RAF Sculthorpe
jet fuel storage
ammunition storage igloos
missile maintenance facility

RAF Upper Heyford
missile maintenace facility

RAF Waddington
jet fuel storage
missile checkout facility

Service Children's Schools, Germany

Mr. Hargreaves asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the present cost of employing staff to supervise duties at service children's schools in Germany during the current industrial dispute.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: During the current industrial dispute in Germany an extra 157 lunchtime supervisors are being employed in service children's schools at a cost of 1,750 DM per day. At the garrison accounting rate of 2·75 DM = £1 this is a daily cost of £636·36.

The extra cost since the beginning of term on Tuesday 6 January until Friday 6 February 24 days is therefore some £15,273.

Project Definition

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether, in any defence project since 1981, expenditure originally authorised or incurred under the heading of project definition has been subsequently attributed to either of the other two categories set out in his answer of 6 February;

(2) what is his practice regarding the attribution of project research costs to more than one project definition budget;

(3) if he will define the term project definition used in respect of the £10 million threshold for referral to the Comptroller and Auditor General in relation to the categories of expenditure referred to in his answer of 6 February.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The definition of "Project Definition" given in my right hon. Friend's answer of 6 February is the one used for deciding whether projects appear in the major projects statement. This does not include research costs. Project definition is a distinct stage for which separate approval is required: expenditure on that stage is separate from expenditure on full development or production.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what arrangements he makes to supply to the Comptroller and Auditor General information on significant projects of a national security nature where the project definition cost does not exceed £10 million and where the £250 million threshold is not expected to be exceeded;

(2) whether he has supplied to the Comptroller and Auditor General information on all projects of a national security nature where the project definition costs exceeded £10 million but where the projects' costs were not expected to, or did not, exceed £250 million.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are no defence projects which are not available for audit by the National Audit Office.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Defence if, further to his answer of 6 February, he will list those matters discussed with Sir Frank Cooper at the occasions referred to in the course of 1986.

Mr. Younger: I do not recall discussing any specific matters with Sir Frank Cooper.

Sir Frank Cooper

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions Sir Frank Cooper telephoned his Department during 1986; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Younger: The information requested is not available as records are not kept of all telephone calls received by my Department.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 12 February 1987

WALES

Horticultural Development Council

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the work of the Horticultural Development Council in Wales during 1986.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The first financial year of the Horticultural Development Council does not end until 30 September 1987. The council is not expected to report to Ministers on its work before then.

Annual Review of Agriculture

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* the corresponding tables for Wales to those published in the "Annual Review of Agriculture 1987", Cm. 67 as tables 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 20, 21, 22 and 26.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

YTS

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of those leaving YTS schemes in each training division area in Wales *(a)* entered employment, *(b)* entered further education, and *(c)* were subsequently unemployed; and what are the corresponding figures for each year since the scheme's inception.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Information is not available in the precise form requested. Since April 1985, 100 per cent. surveys of the destination of YTS leavers have been undertaken three months after youngsters leave the scheme. Surveys prior to that date were of a 15 per cent. sample only.

A comparison between the latest figures available and those for the same period a year earlier are shown in the following table:

	Entered Employment (Per cent.)		*On a full-time course (Per cent.)*		*Unemployed (Per cent.)*	
	April-July 1986	*April-July 1985*	*April-July 1986*	*April-July 1985*	*April-July 1986*	*April-July 1985*
Gwent	50	52	2	1	32	32
Dyfed and West Glamorgan	52	47	4	3	30	37
Mid and South Glamorgan	56	45	2	1	32	43
Clwyd, Gwynedd and Powys	59	55	3	3	29	29
Wales	55	50	3	2	31	36

TVEI

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what funds have been made available by his Department specifically to ensure teaching of the technical and vocational educational initiative schemes through the medium of Welsh in each year since the scheme's inception.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The technical and vocational educaton initiative is funded by the Manpower Services Commission in response to bids from local education authorities. To date no specific funding has been provided for the provision of TVEI through the medium of Welsh, though a number of LEAs have used general TVEI funding to develop Welsh medium or bilingual courses.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what funds have been made available to secure the provision of Welsh-medium in-service teacher training to support the technical and vocational education initiative in Wales in each year since the inception of the scheme.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The in-service teacher training scheme related to the technical vocational and education initiative is funded by the Manpower Services Commission. TRIST is an interim scheme introduced in advance of the passing of the Education (No. 2) Act. This Act provides for a new, more widely drawn scheme, to be operated by the Department from April 1987.

A total of £70,000 has been made available through the TRIST arrangements for a collaborative project under which six local education authorities are commissioning Welsh-medium teacher training materials in the new technologies. A further £10,000 has been approved for the dissemination of this material.

Apart from this, much of the funding made directly available to local education authorities for TRIST is being used to promote Welsh-medium teacher training, especially in Gwynedd, whose allocation is £150,000 for the five-term duration of the TRIST scheme ending in March 1987. Further funds are now being made available for the general dissemination of the TRIST experience to ensure its continuity within the new Welsh Office in-service teacher training arrangements. Wherever possible this material is being translated into Welsh.

Jobcentres

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales which jobcentres in Wales have been closed since 1979, and which have been newly opened during the same period; and whether there are plans to make further closures or to open new centres.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Since 1979 two jobcentres in Wales have closed, two have opened and four have merged with neighbouring jobcentres:

Closed	Opened	Merged
Llandovery	Caldicot	Swansea (Castle Street) with Swansea (Grove House)
Bethesda	Abergele (part time)	Cardiff (St. Mary Street) with Cardiff (The Friary)
		Treforest Industrial Estate with Pontypridd
		Bridgend Industrial Estate with Bridgend

Source: MSC Wales.

Two new jobcentres are planned, for Cardiff and Blaina. There are no plans to close any further jobcentres.

Voluntary Projects Programme

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many unemployed people have taken part in the voluntary projects programme in Wales in each year since its inception.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Available information relates to financial years and is as follows:

Financial year	Voluntary project programme participants
1982-83 (part year only)	1,421
1983-84	5,335
1984-85	6,167
1985-86	4,913
1986-87 (to December 1986)	6,601

Source: MSC Wales.

These totals will include a small number of employed supervisory staff.

Rescue Archaeology

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how much money has been allocated by his Department for rescue archaeology in Wales in each financial year since 1978-79; and what is the estimted expenditure for 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Since 1980-81 the money allocated by the Department to the archaeological trusts responsible for rescue archaeology in Wales is as follows:

	£
1980-81	295,301
1981-82	321,751
1982-83	352,161
1983-84	350,000
1984-85	367,000
1985-86	392,000
1986-87	450,000
1987-88	480,000
1988-89	—

The figures for 1978-79 and 1979-80 are not available. The figures provided for 1987-88 are still subject to parliamentary approval, while those for 1988-89 have not yet been determined.

MSC Schemes

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how much has been spent by his Department on each of the various Manpower Services Commission schemes in Wales in each year since their inception; and what is the projected expenditure for 1986-87.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Expenditure on Manpower Services Commission schemes in Wales was not separately identified before 1978-79. The information requested is shown in the following table:

Year	Youth Opportunities Programme/Youth Training Scheme	Training Opportunities Schemes/Adult Training Programme	Enterprise Allowance Scheme	Voluntary Projects Programme	Restart Programme
	£ million	£ million	£ million	£ million	£ million
1978-79	4·802	7·244	—	—	—
1979-80	9·580	6·599	—	—	—
1980-81	16·481	6·734	—	—	—
1981-82	26·100	5·854	—	—	—
1982-83	33·187	5·612	0·361	0·015	—
1983-84	38·126	6·260	1·671	0·288	—
1984-85	43·684	11·893	4·989	0·753	—
1985-86	45·471	11·844	7·291	0·978	—
1986-87 (Projected)	50·207	12·690	9·500	1·025	1·381

Labour Statistics

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many people in each *(a)* travel-to-work area and *(b)* parliamentary constituency in Wales have been unemployed for (i) six months or less, (ii) between six months and a year, *(iii)* between one and two years and (iv) over two years; what proportion they represent of the work force; and what are the corresponding figures and proportions for each year since 1979;

(2) how many people in each *(a)* parliamentary constituency and *(b)* travel-to-work area in Wales between the ages of 16 years and 21 years are (i) unemployed, (ii) in full-time education and (iii) on Government-sponsored training schemes; what proportion each category represents of the population of that age group in those areas; and what are the corresponding figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

Water Supplies

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what financial assistance is available from his department to local authorities in Wales to assist them in ensuring adequate water supplies to the public.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Grant-aid at the rate of 35 per cent. of eligible expenditure is available through the Rural Water Supplies and Sewerage Acts 1944 to 1971 for the first time provision of mains water and sewerage facilities in rural areas in respect of projects requisitioned by local authorities.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what funds have been made available for conversion from common water supply systems to separate supply pipe systems through the Welsh water authority since 1979.

Mr. Mark Robinson: No specific funds have been made available by central Government to the Welsh water authority for the conversion of common water supply systems to separate supply pipe systems. Details of the authority's expenditure on such schemes is not held centrally; I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Gentleman directly.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has as to how many homes in each district health authority area in Wales which were previously supplied with water by a common supply pipe have had a separate supply pipe installed under the common supply pipe scheme.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Such information is not held centrally. I have asked the chairman of the Welsh water authority to write direct to the hon. Gentleman.

Historic Buildings Council

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to receive the next annual report of the Historic Buildings Council for Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The latest published report of the Historic Buildings Council was laid before Parliament in October 1986. A further report is expected later this year.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many people were accepted as homeless by each local authority in Wales in 1986; and what are the corresponding figures for each year since 1979;

(2) how many homeless persons were housed by each of the Welsh housing authorities in Wales in each year since 1979; and what proportion of those accepted as homeless in each area they represent.

Mr. Mark Robinson: [*pursuant to the reply*, 22 January 1987, c. *683-84*]: The information requested is shown in the following tables:

	1979			*1980*			*1981*			*1982*		
	Persons accepted	*Persons housed*	*Per cent.*	*Persons accepted*	*Persons housed*	*Per cent.*	*Persons accepted*	*Persons housed*	*Per cent.*	*Persons accepted*	*Persons housed*	*Per cent.*
Aberconwy	151	99	66	203	153	75	159	144	91	130	100	77
Alyn and Deeside	301	274	91	250	233	93	205	185	90	237	227	96
Arfon	80	80	100	59	43	73	50	34	68	55	44	80
Blaenau Gwent	333	281	84	361	290	80	388	295	76	464	362	78
Brecknock	69	38	55	114	67	59	86	33	38	157	35	22
Cardiff	690	616	89	1,410	1,121	80	973	835	86	1,053	940	89
Carmarthen	187	114	61	160	83	52	152	99	65	127	72	57
Ceredigion	94	73	78	102	98	96	92	91	99	103	97	94
Colwyn	55	49	89	40	40	100	42	35	83	72	65	90
Cynon Valley	898	854	95	1,018	987	97	965	914	95	985	897	91
Delyn	175	149	85	151	122	81	264	209	79	240	210	88
Dinefwr	49	49	100	34	13	38	35	31	89	108	79	73
Dwyfor	138	133	96	60	55	92	106	80	76	74	64	87
Glyndwr	56	28	50	54	44	82	63	39	62	39	26	67
Islwyn	189	175	93	175	153	87	159	144	91	68	62	91
Llanelli	133	105	79	100	72	72	140	79	56	179	112	63
Lliw Valley	113	113	100	129	129	100	134	134	100	140	140	100
Meirionnydd	369	137	37	489	131	27	235	88	37	145	108	75
Merthyr Tydfil	454	344	76	392	314	80	272	191	70	238	143	60
Monmouth	515	250	49	380	243	64	532	422	79	434	350	81
Montgomeryshire	124	96	77	110	78	71	125	107	86	89	86	97
Neath	481	389	81	583	480	82	624	536	86	n/a	n/a	n/a
Newport	864	483	56	1,110	505	46	1,358	673	50	1,300	643	50
Ogwr	338	211	62	343	236	69	517	424	82	736	667	91
Port Talbot (Afan)	170	167	98	133	122	92	94	88	94	112	106	95
Preseli	135	95	70	164	129	79	130	116	89	97	78	80
Radnor	19	19	100	38	36	95	45	45	100	14	14	100
Rhondda	569	529	93	834	798	96	1,164	1,125	97	1,049	1,010	96
Rhuddlan	237	228	96	139	127	91	172	167	97	257	230	90
Rhymney Valley	534	528	99	720	720	100	510	510	100	284	284	100
South Pembrokeshire	143	119	83	188	149	79	181	159	88	202	114	56
Swansea	1,604	337	21	1,838	700	38	2,820	1,041	37	1,887	905	48
Taff-Ely	390	307	79	253	212	84	200	188	94	188	180	96
Torfaen	1,049	749	71	978	688	70	723	583	81	790	512	65
Vale of Glamorgan	620	601	97	749	696	93	636	619	97	1,314	1,300	99
Wrexham Maelor	235	162	69	471	344	73	353	260	74	212	188	89
Ynys Mon	137	137	100	83	83	100	33	33	100	26	26	100

Note: Homelessness data by number of persons for Neath in 1982 are not available.

	1983			1984			1985			1986 January-September		
	Persons accepted	Persons housed	Per cent.	Persons accepted	Persons housed	Per cent.	Persons accepted	Persons housed	Per cent.	Persons accepted	Persons housed	Per cent.
Aberconwy	99	64	65	167	102	61	74	51	69	97	81	84
Alyn and Deeside	251	217	87	239	208	87	427	321	75	304	244	80
Arfon	61	55	90	38	31	82	62	62	100	30	26	87
Blaenau Gwent	459	343	75	453	346	76	444	387	87	368	268	73
Brecknock	152	58	38	134	84	63	217	78	36	130	43	33
Cardiff	730	660	90	862	819	95	1,646	1,572	96	1,455	1,343	92
Carmarthen	192	80	42	136	78	57	218	110	51	117	75	64
Ceredigion	149	142	95	203	126	62	149	142	95	97	86	89
Colwyn	55	45	82	60	57	95	71	71	100	64	60	94
Cynon Valley	1,207	1,069	89	959	836	87	840	791	94	726	688	95
Delyn	197	158	80	255	198	78	297	242	82	260	214	82
Dinefwr	31	31	100	67	61	91	104	92	89	82	76	93
Dwyfor	69	65	94	124	116	94	126	106	84	97	85	88
Glyndwr	37	37	100	52	39	75	64	50	78	43	37	86
Islwyn	118	101	86	143	119	83	139	129	93	108	105	97
Llanelli	219	149	68	213	171	80	227	180	79	271	215	79
Lliw Valley	119	116	98	204	201	99	158	158	100	157	157	100
Meirionnydd	159	120	76	106	101	95	106	92	87	111	76	69
Merthyr Tydfil	253	203	80	232	165	71	225	184	82	140	105	75
Monmouth	475	382	80	447	376	84	717	560	78	518	436	84
Montgomeryshire	83	72	87	58	38	66	52	37	71	62	59	95
Neath	1,016	855	84	963	823	86	806	620	77	587	487	83
Newport	1,218	486	40	1,199	569	48	1,513	535	35	925	371	40
Ogwr	599	514	86	448	352	79	826	541	66	1,259	857	68
Port Talbot (Afan)	160	141	88	226	209	93	164	136	83	233	183	79
Preseli	96	87	91	78	62	80	148	138	93	97	92	95
Radnor	19	19	100	34	34	100	54	54	100	18	18	100
Rhondda	852	817	96	479	470	98	317	294	93	231	225	97
Rhuddlan	268	262	98	204	179	88	242	234	97	181	169	93
Rhymney Valley	418	418	100	344	344	100	629	539	86	497	443	89
South Pembrokeshire	230	144	63	280	142	51	224	88	39	119	69	58
Swansea	1,416	678	48	1,396	594	43	762	678	89	475	435	92
Taff-Ely	158	150	95	176	164	93	186	167	90	212	200	94
Torfaen	675	479	71	421	222	53	431	296	56	692	530	77
Vale of Glamorgan	896	874	98	726	708	98	570	552	97	334	333	100
Wrexham Maelor	238	178	75	439	111	25	411	220	54	440	199	45
Ynys Mon	44	44	100	54	54	100	50	50	100	62	62	100

EMPLOYMENT

Community Programme

Mr. Leighton asked the Paymaster General how many participants there were on the community programme in 1986; and how many are anticipated for the current year.

Mr. Lee: In the 12 months to 12 December 1986, the latest date for which statistics are available, there were 307,405 entrants to the community programme.

In 1987, we expect that the community programme will continue to provide opportunities for around 300,000 people.

Nuclear Safety

Mr. Strang asked the Paymaster General if he will list for each of the last five years the amount of money spent by the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate on assessing emergency plans and emergency plan exercises.

Mr. Trippier: This information is not readily available. I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy in the House Library.

Mr. Strang asked the Paymaster General if he will list the persons employed by the nuclear installations inspectorate who have been involved in the assessment of emergency plans for nuclear power stations; if he will list their area of expertise, qualifications and previous employment; and if he will list any outside consultants employed by the nuclear installations inspectorate in assessing emergency plans, giving in each case their area of expertise.

Mr. Trippier: It is not the policy of the Health and Safety Executive to make public personal details of staff or outside consultants employed by Her Majesty's nuclear installations inspectorate and who may be involved in the assessment of emergency plans for nuclear power stations. Information on the expertise and so on of inspectors and outside consultants will be found in the Health and Safety Executive's publication "The Work of Her Majesty's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate", a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

The inspectorate uses its own staff to assess emergency plans.

Professional and Executive Recruitment

Mr. Wigley asked the Paymaster General how many people have been placed in jobs in Wales by Professional and Executive Recruitment in each year since its establishment; and during each of those years *(a)* how many people from outside Wales were placed in jobs in Wales, *(b)* how many people from Wales were placed in jobs in Wales and *(c)* how many people from Wales were placed in jobs outside Wales.

Mr. Lee: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

PRIME MINISTER

President Reagan

Q34. **Dr. Godman** asked the Prime Minister if she has any plans to meet President Reagan in the near future.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to meet President Reagan in the near future.

Fraserburgh

Q47. **Mr. McQuarrie** asked the Prime Minister if she will pay an official visit to Fraserburgh.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Engagements

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 February.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 February.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 February.

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 February.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Prime Minister what representations she has received from the leader of the Alliance party in Northern Ireland regarding the conditions attached to that party's support for the Anglo-Irish agreement.

The Prime Minister: The leader of the Alliance party, Mr. Cushnahan, wrote to me on 26 November 1986 setting out his party's views on a number of matters relating to the Anglo-Irish Agreement. I sent him a full reply on 15 December. The correspondence has been published. Copies of both letters are being placed in the Library.

Nuclear Accidents

Mr. Strang asked the Prime Minister, pursuant to her reply of 18 December 1986, *Official Report*, column *612*, in the event of a nuclear accident in Britain, which member of the Government would take the lead in co-ordinating Government action.

The Prime Minister: Responsibility for co-ordinating Government action in the event of a nuclear accident in the United Kingdom would depend on the circumstances and locality of the accident. The relevant Ministers are the Secretaries of State for Energy, Defence, Scotland and Transport.

Mr. Beith asked the Prime Minister if, in the light of recommendation *6(a)* of the report on the Sizewell public inquiry by Sir Frank Layfield, concerning a review by the Health and Safety Executive of the extent of the area covered by emergency plans, and, pursuant to her reply to the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) on 18 December, *Official Report*, column *612*, she will place in the Library copies of any post-Chernobyl review papers relating to *(a)* the adequacy of the areas covered by existing emergency plans for nuclear sites and *(b)* the costs or practicability of extending the areas covered by emergency plans for nuclear sites; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) on 18 December 1986.

DEFENCE

Tactical Missile System

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about United Kingdom involvement in plans for a new tactical missile system.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I shall answer shortly.

Swynnerton Range

Mrs. Golding asked the Secretary of State for Defence who has tendered for the range at Swynnerton near Stone; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Following evaluation of eight competitive tenders, a contract for the provision of support services at the Proof and Experimental Establishment at Cold Meece near Swynnerton was placed with RCA Ltd. on 1 February 1987.

Armoured Production

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will consider establishing a European research development unit to harmonise and economise on armoured production; and if he will make a astatement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No. For the present this aim is best served by continuing to work through our existing machinery for promoting international collaboration. This machinery includes the independent European group, the NATO conference of national armaments directors, and our various bilateral arrangements with NATO Allies, in all of which we are working actively to increase collaboration.

Defence Projects

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will provide to the Comptroller and Auditor General within the framework agreed for provision of information on projects the sums to date expended under *(a)* project definition, *(b)* development and *(c)* manufature of the Zircon project.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave in 11 February 1987.

Squadron Leader Hare

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Defence what action he is taking to restrain Squadron Leader Hare from making unauthorised statements to the press; and what disciplinary action has been taken with regard to unauthorised statements to the press by Royal Air Force officers in the course of the last month.

Mr. Freeman: "Queen's Regulations (RAF)" contain provisons governing not only contacts with the press but also the correct procedure to be followed by officers who wish to state a complaint. Squadron Leader Hare has been interviewed and reminded of these. Unauthorised statements to the press by Royal Air Force officers are unusual; it has not been necessary to take any disciplinary action in the course of the last month.

Royal Air Force

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total number of Royal Air Force pilots short of establishment.

Mr. Freeman: The Royal Air Force at present has sufficient pilots to fill cockpits; at 1 January 1987 it was 19 short of the overall requirement for trained pilots.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many pilots applying for premature early retirement from the Royal Air Force have been removed from flying duties in each of the past three years.

Mr. Freeman: Since October 1986, it has been the policy to review the future employment of pilots in flying appointments who have applied for premature voluntary release in order that the RAF does not invest further valuable experience and expensive training on those who have indicated a wish to leave. However, each case is considered on its merits in the light of the service interest. As a result of this policy, since 1 October 1986, 11 pilots have been posted to and are now serving in ground appointments.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many pilots and navigators in the Royal Air Force qualified for, and capable of, flying duties of the rank of *(a)* pilot officer, *(b)* flight lieutenant, *(c)* squadron leader and *(d)* group captain are at present engaged in non-flying duties.

Mr. Freeman: The number of pilots and nagivators, by rank, qualified and capable of flying duties who, on 1 January 1987, were posted to non-flying duties was:

	Pilots	*Navigators*	*Total*
Group Captain	98	29	127
Wing Commander	235	113	348
Squadron Leader	296	330	626
Flight Lieutenant	154	196	350
Flag Officer	2	3	5
Pilot Officer	0	0	0
Total	785	671	1,456

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many pilots indicated a wish to apply for premature early retirement and then withdrew their applications on being informed that if they continued with their application they would be removed from flying duties in each of the past three years.

Mr. Freeman: Officers are not required to explain their reasons for withdrawing PVR applications. However, since October 1986 when the policy to consider posting from flying appointments officers who apply to PVR was introduced, five pilots have withdrawn their applications.

Pensions

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North on 2 February, *Official Report*, column *516*, he will state the number of service men and women who received lump sums or pensions under the armed forces pension scheme for each year since the scheme came into operation.

Mr. Freeman: It is not possible to provide the information requested without disproportionate cost.

Royal Navy (Drugs)

Mr. Robert Atkins asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he is satisfied with the anti-drug enforcement measures currently in use in the Royal Navy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The Royal Navy has a comprehensive set of measures to combat drug abuse, as do the other two services. Extensive and regular education is given, and active steps are taken to uncover possible abuse. All suspicions and allegations are investigated thoroughly, and where there is sufficient evidence the case is brought to trial either by the naval authorities or the civil courts. The sentences awarded by naval authorities are severe, nearly always involving a period in dentention and often dismissal from the service. Administrative discharge is considered where trial is inappropriate or following a civil conviction. Counselling is arranged for all offenders whether discharged or retained. These measures are regularly reviewed and updated.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Universities (Grants)

Mr. Brandon-Bravo asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will announce the recurrent grants allocated to universities for the academic year 1987-88 by the University Grants Committee, along with the provisional allocations for future years.

Mr. Walden: The University Grants Committee's initial allocation of recurrent grant to universities in 1987-88, along with provisional indications of the basic distribution for 1988-89 and 1989-90, is shown in the table. Copies of the general letter of guidance that the chairman of the UGC has sent to all universities have been placed in the Library. The general letter will be followed in about a week's time by an institutional annex about student numbers and funding for individual universities. These annexes will also be placed in the Library.

The total grant distributed by the UGC as announced in the table does not include items which it is the UGC's practice to allocate separately, such as local authority rates, the overseas research student awards scheme and the committee's small central reserve. Nor does it include provision which is to be allocated separately in respect of certain initiatives, some of which were referred to in my right hon. Friend's announcement on 6 November 1986 at columns 487-91, in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key).

The total recurrent grant available to the UGC in 1987-88 is £1,432 million, of which £150 million will be distributed later in addition to the amounts shown in the table.

University or college	Basic distribution 1987-88 £ million	Recurrent grant 1987-88 £ million	Provisional basic distributions 1988-89 £ million	1989-90 £ million
Aston	15·298	15·66	15·489	15·655
Bath	14·481	14·70	15·482	16·383
Birmingham	39·085	39·99	40·066	40·979
Bradford	15·310	15·69	15·704	16·071
Bristol	31·566	31·92	33·355	34·978
Brunel	13·480	13·61	13·801	14·098
Cambridge	45·905	47·03	48·195	50·287
City	11·843	11·96	12·010	12·156
Durham	17·601	17·95	17·684	17·761
East Anglia	15·073	15·33	14·598	14·393
Essex	9·037	9·24	9·333	9·611
Exeter	16·407	16·59	17·175	17·879
Hull	14·726	15·04	15·014	15·277
Keele	8·586	8·67	8·513	8·494
Kent	11·496	11·82	12·165	12·772
Lancaster	14·288	14·48	14·729	15·145
Leeds	44·085	44·60	45·114	46·067
Leicester	18·936	19·18	19·616	20·252
Liverpool	38·756	39·24	39·662	40·501
London Business School	1·901	1·92	1·777	1·718
London University	248·100	253·33	258·137	267·414
(of which Imperial College)	31·634	32·40	32·506	33·323
Loughborough	19·469	20·50	20·549	21·530
Manchester Business School	1·122	1·13	0·942	0·855
Manchester	49·982	51·33	52·184	54·211
U.M.I.S.T.	17·270	17·51	17·739	18·177
Newcastle	32·628	33·23	33·060	33·437
Nottingham	28·986	29·58	30·135	31·200
Oxford	46·602	47·42	48·578	50·402
Reading	19·534	19·73	19·985	20·402
Salford	13·532	14·76	13·993	14·426
Sheffield	32·569	34·13	33·246	33·867
Southampton	27·210	28·07	28·871	30·372
Surrey	13·449	13·90	13·865	14·257
Sussex	15·275	15·53	16·147	16·939
Warwick	19·968	20·89	21·396	22·678
York	12·406	12·78	13·294	14·091
Total England	995·962	1,018·44	1,031·603	1,068·735
Aberystwyth UC	10·343	10·46	10·496	10·632
Bangor UC	11·095	11·60	10·924	10·862
Cardiff UC	17·409	17·60	17·664	17·889
St. David's Lampeter	2·046	2·08	2·118	2·186
Swansea UC	13·761	14·21	13·928	14·072
U.W.C.M.	7·093	7·22	7·410	7·702
U.W.I.S.T.	8·968	9·07	9·289	9·589
Welsh Registry	2·315	2·32	2,391	2,461
Total Wales	73·030	74·56	74·220	75·393
Aberdeen	22·467	22·74	22·029	21·856
Dundee	15·062	15·25	14·305	13·959
Edinburgh	45·504	46·59	46·235	46·890
Glasgow	46·439	47·69	48·188	49·817
Heriot-Watt	11·247	11·78	11·759	12·229
St. Andrews	11·561	11·69	11·797	12·013
Stirling	8·290	8·38	8·369	8·434
Strathclyde	24·438	25·29	25·477	26·436
Total Scotland	185·008	189·41	188·159	191·634
Total Great Britain	1,254·000	1,282·41	1,293·982	1,331·762

Schools (Finance)

Mr. Hind asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish the guidelines supplied to shire county education authorities on applying for capital grants in the financial year 1987-88.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend does not make capital grants to local education authorities. The Department's letter of 30 June 1986, a copy of which I have placed in the Library of the House, invites all local education authorities to submit information about their capital expenditure plans for 1987-88 as a basis for the formulation of expenditure allocations for that year, and gives guidance about the form in which that information should be supplied.

Chancellors School

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from pupils and parents regarding the future of Chancellors school, Brookmans Park; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has received no such representations.

Trafford

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will meet representatives of Trafford education committee and the Salford Roman Catholic diocese to discuss the reorganisation of secondary education in Trafford.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has received no request for such a meeting.

Secondary Schools (Substandard Places)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Yeovil on 9 February, *Official Report*, column *27*, concerning recent information on substandard places in secondary schools, what comparable information is available from responses made by local education authorities in other years since 1979; if he will place copies in the Library of each circular letter sent by his Department in any year since 1979 requesting information on substandard secondary places or schools; if he will publis in the *Official Report* a table similar to that given in his reply of 9 February, showing figures for the earliest year since 1979 for which such figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

TRANSPORT

M1 (Telephones)

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many unserviceable telephones are there on the M1 motorway service stations between London and Wakefield; when they were reported faulty; and when they will be made serviceable.

Mr. Moore: On 6 February, 46 of the 147 public telephones provided at motorway service areas on M1 were out of order. The 46 included telephones from which 999 calls could continue to be made. Some of the faults were reported more than two weeks ago.

Provision and maintenance of the telephones is the responsibility of service area operators in association with British Telecom. I look to them to have the necessary repairs carried out as soon as practicable.

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Transport when telephone number 830185 on the Rothersthorpe service station on the M1 southbound between Wakefield and London was reported as unserviceable; and when it will be repaired.

Mr. Moore: This is a matter for the operator of the Rothersthorpe motorway service area (Blue Boar). I understand that the telephones are checked daily, and faults reported almost immediately. I also understand BT gives high priority to repairing public telephones in motorway service areas.

Cars (Change of Ownership)

Mr. Iain Mills asked the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of car owners changing cars notify change of ownership to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The DVLC register relates to vehicle keepers rather than owners. In 1986 some 8 million changes of keepership were notified to the centre, the number of such changes which were not notified is unknown, but is thought to be relatively small.

Private Hire Vehicles

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport pursuant to his reply of 26 January, *Official Report*, column *2*, in which respects the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 is not achieving its intended purpose so far as it relates to licensed private hire vehicles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I hope to discuss this question with my hon. Friend shortly.

M1 Service Stations

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Transport on what date the 1986 annual inspection was carried out on all the service stations on the M1 between London and Wakefield; and if he will identify individually each service station by name and date.

Mr. Moore: Inspections were last made at motorway service areas on the M1 as follows:

Service Area	*Date*
Woolley Edge	7 July 1986
Woodall	24 July 1986
Trowell	27 November 1986
Leicester Forest East	27 November 1986
Watford Gap	10 October 1986
Rothersthorpe	10 October 1986
Newport Pagnall	27 July 1986
Toddington	5 November 1986
Scratchwood	30 October 1985

A further inspection of Scratchwood will be made soon.

Transportation of Hazardous Goods

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what representations he has received on the minimum weight exemption level under the transportation of hazardous goods regulations after 1 April 1987;

(2) what representations he has received regarding the permitted designs of refrigerated lorries following the 1 April implementation of the transportation of hazardous goods regulations;

(3) if he will take steps to publicise the position of vehicles such as refrigerated lorries following the implementation of the transportation of hazardous goods regulations on 1 April;

(4) how many currently operating vehicles will be excluded from British roads following the implementation of the transportation of hazardous goods regultations on 1 April.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: New regulations — The Road Traffic (Carriage of Dangerous Substances in Packages etc) Regulations — come into effect on 6 April 1987. They will not exclude any vehicles, nor contain any provisions specifically related to refrigerated vehicles. I have received no representations on the new provisions.

If the hon. Gentleman has a particular point in mind, perhaps he could write to me.

Light Dues

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will list information available to him on which maritime member states of the European Community charge users light dues; and, in each case, to which categories of users the charge applies.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Within the EC member states light dues are charged in Greece, the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom. I have no information about the scope of the charges in Greece, but in the Republic of Ireland I understand they are levied on the same categories of use as in the United Kingdom, although the rates may differ from time to time. The categories of use that are subject to charges in the United Kingdom at present are set out in the Merchant Shipping (Light Dues) Regulations 1981: I have laid a copy in the Library. My right hon. Friend announced on 5 February that he was considering extending light dues liability to the larger fishing vessels.

BAA (Shares)

Mr. Hayes asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about arrangements for employees to acquire shares in the offer for sale of BAA plc, formerly British Airports Authority.

Mr. Moore: It is our intention that BAA employees should have every encouragement to take a stake in their company when it is privatised. Special arrangements will therefore be made as follows.

Most BAA employees will be eligible for about £100 worth of free shares at the time of the flotation. In addition, the Government will provide two free shares for each share purchased by an employee, up to a maximum of about £400 worth of free shares for £200 purchased. All employees and pensioners of BAA will be able to apply on a priority basis for shares at the offer price.

ENVIRONMENT

Private Flats

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he now proposes to introduce legislation to strengthen the rights of residents of private flats and to give effect to the other recommendations of the Nugee committee.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. Friend hopes to introduce this legislation within the next few weeks.

Safety Glass

Mr. Moate asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish available statistics for recent years indicating the number of deaths and injuries caused in the home or factories through accidents involving people walking into or falling through ordinary glass doors and windows; and what encouragement is being given to the use of safety glass.

Mr. John Patten: According to the home accident statistics collected by the Department of Trade and Industry, there were four fatal accidents involving glass in the home in 1983 (the last year for which complete figures are available). Three involved glass doors and one a window pane. In 1985 there were 27,000 non-fatal home accidents (16,000 involving glass doors and 11,000 involving windows) recorded as requiring hospital treatment.

The Health and Safety Executive's records show no cases of fatal accidents in factories from 1981 to 1985 involving glass doors and windows (other than skylights). Separate figures are not readily available for injuries involving glazing.

The British standard code of practice on glass and glazing, which gives guidance on the use of safety glass, is being revised. If the general safety requirement proposed in the Consumer Protection Bill now before Parliament becomes law, the Government intend to approve this code of practice.

Mr. Moate asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress is being made with regard to the inclusion in building regulations of the increased use of safety glass in doors and windows; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: A consultative document on the review of the building regulations issued on 15 December 1986 proposes that a requirement should be added to the regulations requiring safety glazing in doors and low-level glazing in new building work subject to the regulations.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Environment further to his answer of 5 February, *Official Report*, column *773*, about the board of the London Docklands Development Corporation, whether any nominations have been received for these vacancies.

Mr. John Patten: Yes. A nomination has been received from the London borough of Tower Hamlets.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Environment further to his answer of 5 February about the board of the London Docklands Development Corporation, how long these three vacancies have been outstanding.

Mr. John Patten: Two of these vacancies have been outstanding since May 1986 and one since November 1984.

Disabled People (Housing)

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will extend to the occupants of rented wheelchair housing owned by charitable housing associations the right to qualify for a transferable discount; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: Transferable discounts were provided to help certain housing association tenants who would have had the right to buy were their landlord not a charity. Wheelchair housing is exempt from the right to buy and hence excluded from the discount scheme.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many units of wheelchair housing have been constructed by local authorities and by housing associations in England in each of the last five years; and, of these, how many have contained two or more bedrooms;

(2) how many units of mobility housing have been constructed by local authorities and by housing associations in Eengland in each of the last five years; and, of these, how many have contained two or more bedrooms.

Mr. Tracey: Completions of wheelchair (previously referred to as "specially designed") dwellings and of mobility dwellings in the years up to 1985 appear in table 6.7*(b)* of "Housing and Construction Statistics, 1975-1985" and provisional figures of the first three quarters of 1986 in table 1.6*(b)* of the quarterly "Housing and Construction Statistics" No. 27. Copies are in the Library.

Information on the numbers of bedrooms in those dwellings is not collected by the Department.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many improvement grants have been made for the adaptation of houses to meet the needs of disabled people in each of the last five years; and what has been the value of these;

(2) how many intermediate grants have been made for the adaptation of houses to meet the needs of disabled people in each of the last five years; and what has been the value of these.

Mr. Tracey: The number of improvement and intermediate grants paid and the amounts paid in the years up to 1984 appear in table 7.5*(a)* of "Housing and Construction Statistics, 1975-1985" and the 1985 figures and provisional figures of the first three quarters of 1986 are in table 2.17*(a)* of "Housing and Construction Statistics" No. 27. Copies are available in the Library.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the eligible expense limit for improvement grants for adaptation of houses to meet the needs of disabled people; how long it has been at this level; and if he has any plans to increase it.

Mr. Tracey: The limits were set in May 1983 and are £13,800 in Greater London and £10,200 elsewhere. There is no evidence that they are causing serious difficulties and there are at present no plans to increase them. However, it is open to local authorities to apply to the Department for approval of a higher eligible expense limit, if there are exceptional reasons.

Capacitors (Health Hazards)

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will take steps to advise users of capacitors containing polychlorinated-biphenol to replace them in view of their toxicity and non-biodegradebility;

(2) what advice he gives on the safe disposal of capacitors containing polychlorinated-biphenol.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall answer these questions shortly.

Lancaster House (Conference)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why he has cancelled the booking of Lancaster House, London by the services of the European Parliament, Luxembourg for a conference from 9 to 12 February; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) on Monday 9 February, at column 125.

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the conditions for booking Lancaster House which apply to the eight political groups of the European Parliament; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The rule governing the use of Lancaster House under successive Governments is that a Government Minister must be involved in any meeting held there.

Housing Management Courses

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what further steps the Government have taken, following their announcement in the last two years of funding for studentships at the London School of Economics and Sheffield polytechnic, to encourage the development of new housing management courses eligible for similar support.

Mr. John Patten: Following negotiations between the Department, the Institute of Housing, the University of Salford and Salford College of Technology, a new full-time, two-year, postgraduate course in housing studies will be launched at Salford next autumn. It will meet the necessary professional criteria.

My right hon. Friend intends to provide funding, through the ESRC, for 15 studentships a year for this course. A contribution will also be made towards setting-up and development costs.

The studentships will provide for maintenance and fees in the first year and for fees only in the second year, when the students are on placement.

This initiative is particularly welcome because of the close co-operation between the university and the college of technology, which will be reflected in the inauguration of the Salford centre for housing studies by HRH Duke of Edinburgh tomorrow.

We are continuing to discuss the scope for launching further suitable courses with educational institutions in Newcastle, Bristol and Birmingham.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Labour Statistics

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will estimate how many persons were employed in each region and in Scotland and Wales by *(a)* British Shipbuilders and *(b)* British Steel in June 1979; and how many are now employed.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Timesharing

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has as to the introduction by the Spanish Government of legislation to ban timeshare touts from the streets of Spain; and if he will introduce similar legislation for the United Kingdom.

Mr. Howard: I have no information about proposed Spanish legislation specifically to control timeshare salesmen but I understand that several British companies operating in Spain have already decided to modify their selling methods. I have no plans at present to introduce such legislation in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Michael Cocks asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what timeshare developers have requested supplies of the consumer leaflet called "Your Place in the Sun"; and which have indicated that they will be issuing the leaflet to their customers.

Mr. Howard: Heavy demand for the leaflet has precluded detailed recording or analysis of the requests, many of which are made by telephone. I will, however, write to the right hon. Member shortly.

Mr. Michael Cocks asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many timeshare developers' offers of gifts he has referred to the Advertising Standards Authority; and what was the adjudication in each case.

Mr. Howard: I regret that the information requested is not readily available but I will write to the right hon. Member as soon as possible.

ENERGY

Plutonium

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will publish a table of *(a)* the yearly production, *(b)* the cumulative total and *(c)* the proportion of total electricity source plutonium reprocessed at Sellafield and produced at Hinkley Point A since it was commissioned.

Mr. Goodlad: During the period 1979-80 to 1985-86 the spent fuel discharged from Hinkley Point A and dispatched to Sellafield contained an estimted 2,190 kg of plutonium. The estimated plutonium content of the spent fuel despatched from the CEGB's stations in the same period is 12,597 kg.

Euratom

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the agreement between Her Majesty's Government and Euratom regarding access by Euraton inspectors to reprocessing lines; and what is the current position regarding access by Euratom inspectors to *(a)* civil, *(b)* military and *(c)* co-processing facilities.

Mr. Goodlad: I refer to the reply given to my hon. friend the Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean) on 4 June 1986, at columns *594-95*. Euratom inspectors now have continuous right of access to all civil nuclear material reprocessed at Sellafield. Civil nuclear material is additionally reprocessed at Dounreay where Euratom inspectors have had right of continuous access since the United Kingdom joined the European Economic Community in 1973.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Energy on how many occasions and on what dates Euratom inspectors have visited nuclear power stations since 1979 to carry out inspections of reprocessing facilities under the headings *(a)* civil, *(b)* military and *(c)* co-processing; and if he will name the facilities involved.

Mr. Goodlad: Information about individual visits by Euratom inspectors to Sellafield and Dounreay over this period could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

House Coal

Mr. Woodcock asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what was the size of the domestic market for house coal in Yorkshire in 1984, 1985 and 1986;

(2) what is the average annual consumption of house coal in those homes in the United Kingdom which use house coal for heating.

Mr. David Hunt: House coal was supplied to the domestic market in Yorkshire as follows:

	tonnes
1983-84	430,000
1984-85	290,000
1985-86	390,000

Figures for calendar years are not available.

The estimated average annual consumption of house coal in homes in the United Kingdom using house coal for heating is 2·75 million tonnes.

Mr. Woodcock asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what tonnage of house coal was supplied as concessionary coal in 1984, 1985 and 1986;

(2) what is the annual tonnage of coal supplied to miners as concessionary fuel in each National Coal Board area.

Mr. David Hunt: The provision of concessionary coal is a matter for British Coal and governed by agreements between them and the mining unions. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Diesel Fuel

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Energy what discussions have taken place with the major oil companies with a view to altering the British standard for diesel fuel in the winter months to prevent waxing-up.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The specification for diesel fuel sold in the United Kingdom is determined by the British Standards Institution. It is currently being amended, and will be issued for public comment in the near future.

Nuclear Power Stations

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will place in the Library copies of the essential services emergency plans for each nuclear power station in Britain.

Mr. Goodlad: The detailed emergency plans for each civil nuclear site have been, or are about to be, published by the operators. Copies will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his reply of 10 December 1986, *Official Report*, column *196*, for what reasons papers connected with the reviews of emergency plans for nuclear power stations are confidential.

Mr. Goodlad: The Department's working papers are subject to the usual confidentiality rules.

Nuclear Safety

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what statistical demographic criteria, for each type of nuclear reactor, are used in Her Majesty's nuclear installations inspectorate's assessment of the safety of sites for nuclear power stations; if he will publish a list showing for each existing nuclear power station *(a)* the relevant limiting criteria compared with *(b)* the actual population figures in each case; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when public safety siting criteria for nuclear installations were last changed or updated; what information on such safety criteria has been published by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Energy, in the light of recommendation 6(a) of the report on the Sizewell public inquiry by Sir Frank Layfield, concerning a review by the Health and Safety Executive of the extent of the area covered by emergency plans, what demographic criteria are satisfied for safety purposes by the site at Sizewell; what is the maximum number of persons likely to be affected by evacuation measures taken in accordance with *(a)* the existing emergency plan for the present nuclear site and *(b)* the emergency plan currently considered appropriate with the proposed pressurised water reactor on that site; what is the relevant maximum radius of evacuation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: My right hon. Friend has a quasi-judicial role in respect of the Central Electricity Generating Board's application to construct Sizewell B. It would not be proper for him to comment on the inspector's report, including any recommendation, before he has taken his decision.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) whether ambulance staff have participated in the exercise at the local emergency plan at Chapel Cross, Sellafield, Wylfa, Trawsfynydd, Oldbury, Berkeley, Hinkley Point, Winfrith, Dungeness, Bradwell and Sizewell; and, in each case where units were involved, if he will list which ones participated;

(2) if he will list for each of the following power stations what studies have been made of the problems of evacuating all low mobility groups in the event of a worst case atomic accident at Chapel Cross, Sellafield, Wylfa, Trawsfynydd, Oldbury, Berkeley, Hinkley Point, Winfrith, Dungerness, Bradwell, Sizewell and Hartlepool; and if he will also list for each study the geographical area covered;

(3) what specialist equipment, including personal dosimeters, radiac survey meters and decontamination meters are available for ambulance staff at: Chapel Cross, Sellafield, Wylfa, Trawsfynydd, Oldbury, Berkeley, Hinkley Point, Winfrith, Dungeness, Bradwell and Sizewell, respectively; and in each case what training staff have received;

(4) what training has been given to ambulance staff to deal with a major accident at each of the following nuclear installations: Chapel Cross, Sellafield, Wylfa, Trawsfynydd, Oldbury, Berkeley, Hinkley Point, Winfrith, Dungeness, Bradwell, Sizewell and Hartlepool.

Mr. Goodlad [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 January 1987, c. *402*]: All nuclear sites operated by the Central Electricity Generating Board, Atomic Energy Authority and British Nuclear Fuels in England and Wales have their own ambulance services which participate in exercises of local emergency plans. It is unlikely that a reference accident at a civil nuclear site would require the services of the NHS ambulance service.

Circulars HC(85)24, and WHC(85)34 in Wales, nevertheless require health authorities, who manage the ambulance service locally, to ensure that all ambulance staff are made aware of the contingency plans at civil nuclear sites and how they fit in with health authorities major accident plans.

NHS ambulance services have participated in exercises at Wylfa, Trawsfynydd, Oldbury, Berkeley, Hinkley Point,

Dungeness, Bradwell and Sizewell, and have been alerted to their possible involvement by the police during exercises at Sellafield and Winfrith. Site emergency plans provide in all areas where NHS ambulance service personnel are required to enter contaminated areas that they should be under the direct supervision of qualified staff, and that dosimeters and professional health physics assistance and decontamination equipment would be provided to any such visiting service by site management.

Arrangements for the evacuation of the public, including low mobility groups, are the responsibility of the police.

Emergency planning at Chapelcross is the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Scotland.

NCB (Manpower)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many persons were employed by the National Coal Board in June 1979 in each region and in Scotland and Wales; and how many are now employed.

Mr. David Hunt: Information on total employees is not available in the form requested. The number of men on colliery books at end-June 1979 and end-December 1986 was as follows:

Area	*June 1979*	*December 1986*
Scottish	21,007	4,828
North East	33,766	15,219
North Yorks	31,701	18,530
South Yorks	33,555	16,499
North Derbyshie	12,115	7,722
Notts	33,952	23,538
South Midland	13,294	7,876
Kent	3,024	959
Western	23,172	12,829
South Wales	27,273	11,007
Total	232,859	119,007

British Gas

Sir Trevor Skeet asked the Secretary of State for Energy if, further to his answer of 12 December 1986, *Official Report*, column *244*, he will provide further information on the costs of the British Gas flotation.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: As a result of a considerable reduction in the amount of commission expected to be paid to brokers and financial intermediaries, the cost of the sale to the Exchequer in 1986-87 is now expected to be approximately £10 million less than the figure given in my right hon. Friend's answer of 12 December at column *244*.

The projected cost to the Exchequer in the year of the flotation will therefore be £154 million. The corresponding spring supplementary estimate for these costs, which will be presented shortly, is for a total of £208 million. The difference represents transfers of funds within Government, principally stamp duty and VAT, which are not a cost to the Exchequer.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Licensing

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the number of on and off-licences in England and Wales broken down by such categories as his records permit;

(2) if he will list in respect of each bench of licensing magistrates the number of applications granted for occasional permissions in respect of the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Waddington: Information on the total number of on and off-licensed premises at 30 June 1986 is published in tables 1 and 2 of "Liquor Licensing Statistics, England and Wales, July 1985-June 1986" (Home Office Statistical Bulletin, 37/86). Corresponding figures for each bench of licensing magistrates and figures for occasional permissions granted in the period July 1985-June 1986 are given in the associated supplementary tables. Both publications are in the Library. The only other reliable information available relates to the number of garages-petrol stations with off-licences, 212 of which were recorded at 30 June 1986.

Houses in Multiple Occupation

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when his Department first announced that a code of guidance setting out a national advisory standard for means of escape in houses in multiple occupation was being prepared; when he most recently published "A Draft Guide to Means of Escape in Certain Houses in Multiple Occupation"; to what proportion of houses in multiple occupation that guide would apply; and when he intends to issue a national advisory standard on means of escape for all houses in multiple occupation.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Preparation of the code was announced by the then Home Secretary on a written answer on 17 December 1980. A draft version of the guide, on which comments were invited, was published on 27 February 1986. It is estimated that the guide could be applied to around 60 per cent. of houses in multiple occupation in England and Wales. We are at present reviewing the scope and the content of the draft in the light of comments received and hope to issue a revised version later this year. Further consideration will then be given to the need for guidance on other types of HMOs not covered by the draft guide or existing guides.

Police Discipline (Access to Witnesses)

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department pursuant to his reply of 30 January, *Official Report*, c. *408*, to the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds, how long he expects to spend on consideration of the judgment of the High Court before reaching a decision as to whether to draw his judgment to the attention of all chief constables of police.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We intend to issue certain amendments to the guidance to chief officers on complaints and discipline procedures later this year after consultation with the police staff associations, including the Police Federation. We shall take account of the judgment in the Connah case further in the course of that consultation.

Animal Welfare

Mr. Iain Mills asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has received representations from

the People's Dispensary for Sick Animals and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals about controls on the sale of puppies.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We received a number of representations last year about the sale of puppies, but none recently from the People's Dispensary for Sick Animals or from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. The Pet Animals Act 1951 provides for controls over the sale of pets, including puppies, from pet shops, and the Breeding of Dogs Act 1973 provides for the licensing of establishments where dogs are bred for sale.

National Marriage Guidance Council

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to increase his Department's grant to the National Marriage Guidance Council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We hope to be able, next year, to maintain the grant to the NMGC at the present level, with some increase in recognition of inflation.

Immigration

Mr. Randall asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many interviews have taken place per month at Humberside airport in respect of applications for permanent entry to Britain under the immigration rules; and how many officers are involved.

Mr. Waddington: None.

Data Networks

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if there are any plans to make use of private consultants in relation to *(a)* the Government data network system and *(b)* the police national computer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hurd: The procurement of a Government data network is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Private consultants are used from time to time in relation to the Police National Computer in particular specialised areas, but only where the necessary expertise is not available within my Department. There are no plans for the use of private consultants in any other circumstances.

Domestic Crime Prevention

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will report the findings of his Department's crime prevention unit working in the Surrey constabulary area on what effect cost has in influencing whether the public fit domestic security devices.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The study is not yet complete but preliminary results are available. These indicate, subject to verification, that some 10 per cent. of the sample of 262 householders gave cost as the reason for not implementing the security recommendations made by police crime prevention officers.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what success his Department's standing conference on crime prevention through its working group on residential burglary has had in devising a low-cost security package to protect residential dwellings.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Home Office standing conference on crime prevention working group on residential burglary succeeded in devising a low-cost security package which is described in a leaflet they have produced. This has been well received; almost 1·5 million copies are now in circulation, mainly in inner city areas.

State Security

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis about the total cost to public funds of the police raid on the British Broadcasting Corporation's premises in Glasgow on 31 January and 1 February.

Mr. Hurd: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the additional cost to the Metropolitan Police of executing the search warrant for the BBC premises in Glasgow is estimated at about £2,500. The cost to Scottish police forces is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Nuclear Safety

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library a copy of each police emergency plan for each nuclear power station in Britain.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand that detailed emergency plans for each civil nuclear site have been, or are about to be, published by the operators. Any more detailed plans specific to the police are a matter for individual chief constables and copies are not held centrally.

Bail Hostels

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any proposals for the provision of additional bail hostels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: There are no immediate proposals to provide new hostels. Not only bail hostels, but combined probation and bail hostels, and all probation hostels, make places available for persons on bail. In England and Wales there is a total of 102 approved hostels with over 1,800 places. During the last 12 months, 22 additional places have been provided by expanding existing hostels. In 1986 average occupancy was 78·7 per cent. of the approved number of places. There thus appears to be no general shortage of places and the Home Office has no present evidence of serious difficulties in finding places locally. We are co-operating with the Association of Chief Officers of Probation, however, in research to establish more certainly the need for such accommodation and the position is kept under constant review.

Remand Prisons

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any proposals for the reduction of overcrowding in remand prisons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: In the last year we have converted one training prison to a local prison and remand centre and we

have introduced units for untried prisoners into three more establishments. Further such changes are planned. In addition we are creating extra places at a number of establishments for untried prisoners, in some cases by reducing their sentenced population. We are also considering further changes to the catchment areas served by particularly overcrowded establishments.

In the longer term, the prison building programme includes seven new local prisons and one new remand centre. Furthermore, a high proportion of the additional places planned in the existing establishments will be in local prisons or remand centres.

Mafia

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what evidence exists of the activities of the Mafia organisation within the United Kingdom; and if he will raise at the next meeting of the relevant EEC Minister the question of the alleged financing of that organisation through abuse of the common agricultural policy.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It would not be in the public interest to comment on operational police matters relating to the Mafia organisation. Any evidence of criminal activities by members of the Mafia would, of course, be investigated in the normal way.

Deportations

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will estimate the number of people in each of the last three years for which figures are available who were deported from the United Kingdom using *(a)* British Airways and *(b)* other airlines by name.

Mr. Waddington: The available records cover the period from April-December 1984, 1985 and 1986 and relate to payments of accounts for removals at public expense from the United Kingdom following refusal at a port, under deportation powers or as an illegal entrant.

Bookings are made through British Airways or another British airline whenever possible. The number of accounts paid in the relevant period was as follows:

	British Airways	*Other Airlines*
1984 (April-December)	576	248
1985	1,128	223
1986	1,680	130

I regret that the other information requested is not readily available.

AIDS

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, as part of the campaign to reduce the spread of AIDS, there are any plans to issue free condoms to prisoners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: There are no plans to do so.

SCOTLAND

Domestic Violence

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he is considering any new measures to deal with the problem of domestic violence in the light of the report by the Women's National Commission entitled "Violence Against Women", a copy of which has been sent to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Though none of the recommendations in this report was directed specifically to my right hon. and learned Friend, action consistent with the measures recommended by the Women's National Commission is taking place in Scotland. For example, the subject of domestic violence, with particular reference to the Matrimonial Homes (Family Protection) (Scotland) Act 1981, now features prominently in training programmes for police officers both at the Scottish police college and within all Scottish police forces and revised guidelines to Chief Constables on the operation of the Act were issued last November by my noble and learned Friend, the Lord Advocate. Research has been commissioned to assess the operation of the 1981 Act, and in the light of the findings, which will be published, we shall consider the need for any further action. We continue, too, to give financial assistance through the urban programme and grants to voluntary bodies to assist in the provision of refuges for women and children and in the operation of victim support schemes.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with police authorities about *(a)* training, *(b)* procedures and *(c)* information, liaison and referral systems in relation to police duties with regard to incidents of domestic violence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Matters relating to the training of police officers at the Scottish police college are kept under continuing review on behalf of my right hon. and learned Friend by the board of governors and other committees at the Scottish Police College on which the Scottish Home and Health Department, the police associations and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities are all represented. Training on the subject of domestic violence and related procedural matters, with particular reference to the Matrimonial Homes (Family Protection) (Scotland) Act 1981, now features prominently in courses at the college and in training programmes mounted by the Scottish police forces; and this has been given added emphasis by the revised guidelines on the Act which were issued recently by my noble and learned Friend, the Lord Advocate. The police service is fully aware of the value of victim support schemes and co-operates fully in their operation.

Rape

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many reported cases of rape there have been in Scotland in each of the last five years.

Mr. Lang: The available information relates to cases recorded by the police. The figures for the last five years for which data are available are as follows:

Recorded Cases of Rape, Scotland, 1981-85

Year	*Number*
1981	170
1982	131
1983	139
1984	224
1985	248

Stobhill General Hospital, Glasgow

Mr. Martin asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* printed postcards and *(b)* personal letters he has received against the proposed closure of the maternity unit at Stobhill general hospital, Glasgow; and how many signatures on petition forms he has received.

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. and learned Friend has received over 9,600 printed postcards and 205 individual letters about the proposed closure of the maternity unit at Stobhill General. Six petitions containing some 23,300 signatures have also been received.

Gaelic Language

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the most up to date figures available for the level of per capita support for the promotion of the Gaelic language; and if he will detail the basis and method of calculation for arriving at that figure.

Mr. John MacKay: Excluding possible Scottish Arts Council grant to promote Gaelic arts bodies and using the 1981 census figures for the number of Gaelic speakers the approximate per capita spend for the current financial year is £5·42 net of specific grants to education authorities and £8·45 including those grants. The breakdown of funding for the promotion of Gaelic in 1986-87 is as follows:

	£
National Voluntary Organisations (including Database Research Project)	141,000
Gaelic Books Council	58,250
Direct funding by Highlands and Islands Development Board	242,400
Consultative Committee on the Curriculum	6,100
Specific Grants to Education Authorities	250,000
	697,750

The 1981 census shows the number of Gaelic speakers as 82,620.

EC (Food Stores)

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much butter and beef from the European Economic Community's intervention food stores in Dundee is to be released in the current scheme to help the needy; and what further plans he has to distribute such foodstuffs on an all-year basis.

Mr. John MacKay: The amount of food being released from stores and distributed is dependent on the needs established by the charitable organisations. The present European Community scheme ends on 31 March 1987, and I am not aware of any plans to extend it.

AIDS

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what procedures govern the giving of consent by *(a)* prisoners and *(b)* detained patients to being tested for AIDS; and what information is given to them on the outcome of such tests.

Mr. John MacKay: If the doctors caring for a prisoner or a patient detained in hospital because of mental disorder consider that a test for the presence of HIV antibodies is necessary, the individual would first be counselled on the significance and implications of the test and his or her informed consent would be required before it could be carried out. The prisoner or patient would be informed of the result of the test and given further counselling whether this was positive or negative. The procedures relating to the testing of prisoners for HIV antibodies are outlined in guidelines issued by the Scottish Home and Health Department to prison medical officers on 10 October 1986, which amplified earlier guidance given on this subject. Updated guidelines on the testing of all other patients were issued by the Department to all doctors on 12 December 1986.

Auctioneers (Registration)

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will introduce legislation to make the registration of auctioneers obligatory.

Mr. Lang: No.

Mentally Ill People (Services)

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to change his Department's policy on services for the mentally ill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Moray (Mr. Pollock) on 22 January at column 1663.

Alternative Land Use

Mr. Bill Walker asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any specific plans to help farmers in Scotland find alternative use for marginal land; and what proposals he has to support pony trekking and pony breeding.

Mr. John MacKay: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given by my right hon. and learned Friend on 11 February to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn). Details of the new diversification scheme have still to be settled and will be the subject of consultation. Pony trekking is an area which may be considered.

Nuclear Safety

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether ambulance staff have participated in the exercise of the local emergency plan at each of Dounreay, Torness and Hunterston; and in each case where units were involved, if he will list which ones participated.

Mr. John MacKay [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 January 1987, at column *396-97*]: Local ambulance units have participated in exercises to test the emergency plans at Torness and Hunterston. The ambulance service has not yet participated in any such exercises at Dounreay, though the service is fully aware of its role under the emergency plan.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for Dounreay, Hunterston and Torness what studies have been done on the problems of evacuating all low mobility groups in the event of a worst case atomic accident; and if he will also list for each study the geographical area covered.

Mr. Lang [*pursuant to the reply*, 19 January 1987, c. *397*]: Within the framework of the emergency plans which must be prepared by the operators of civil nuclear installations in Scotland and of their own related contingency plans, the police are responsible for the evacuation of the areas around these installations. I understand from the chief constables of the forces concerned that their contingency plans for evacuation of the population in the event of a large scale emergency take account of the problems of evacuating low mobility groups.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list what specific equipment, including personal dosimeters, radiac survey meters and decontamination meters are available for ambulance staff at: Dounreay, Torness and Hunterston, respectively; and in each case what training staff have received.

Mr. Lang [*pursuant to the reply*, 19 January 1987, c. *397*]: All civil nuclear sites operated in Scotland by the South of Scotland Electricity Board, the Atomic Energy Authority, and British Nuclear Fuels have their own medical services.

External ambulance services entering a site would be under the supervision of the trained site staff. Dosimeters and professional health physics assistance and decontamination equipment would be provided to any such visiting service by site management.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what training has been given to ambulance staff to deal with a major accident at Dounreay, Hunterston and Torness respectively.

Mr. John MacKay [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 January 1987, c. *396-97*]: Ambulance service staff generally are trained in major accident procedures. Staff who may be involved at Dounreay and Hunterston are aware of the precautions to be taken in accidents involving radioactivity. Staff who may be involved at Torness are receiving appropriate training, in advance of the commissioning of the power station.

Public Bodies (Appointments)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all the public bodies for which he is responsible on which the consideration of the appointment or co-option of a person with knowledge of disability is a statutory requirement; if he will name the persons so appointed or co-opted on each body; and if he will indicate which of those persons is a person with a disability.

Mr. Rifkind [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 January 1987, c. *576*]: By virtue of section 14 the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970, I am required, when making appointments to the Scottish Electricity Consultative Councils, to have regard to the desirability of including one or more persons with experience of work among, and the special needs of, disabled persons. This consideration is borne in mind when appointments are made, but no individual member of the Councils has so far been appointed solely by virtue of it. Records of whether persons appointed are disabled or not are not maintained, but I am aware that disabled persons have been and are included in the membership of the councils. There are no similar statutory requirements for the other bodies to which I make appointments.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Parliamentary Contributory Pension Fund

Sir David Price asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will publish a revised and accurate version of the 1973 booklet entitled "Parliamentary Contributory Pension Fund."

Mr. Biffen: Production of a revised edition of the 1973 booklet has been hindered by a succession of amendment Acts and instruments.

There is available a leaflet which describes the pension arrangements for Members, Ministers and office-holders. The leaflet is designed to comply with the requirements of the Occupational Pension Schemes (Disclosure of Information) regulations 1986 (SI 1986 No. 1046). Other leaflets, dealing in more detail with specific aspects of the pension arrangements, are being drafted with the intention of creating a booklet in loose-leaf format. This will facilitate the speedy replacement of out-dated material.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Republic of Ireland (Embassy)

20. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from the Government of the Republic of Ireland concerning the alleged surveillance of the Irish embassy by the British security services.

Mr. Renton: None.

Austria (AIDS Testing)

Mr. Robert B. Jones asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made by Her Majesty's Government to the Austrian Government concerning British subjects who are proposing to work in Carinthia and who will have to undergo AIDS testing.

Mr. Eggar: We have made no such representations. We understand, however, that the Austrian Federal Government do not intend to introduce a requirement for such testing.

Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the work of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council since the conclusion of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, in view of the commitment made by the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach in paragraph 10 of their joint communiqué issued at Hillsborough on 15 November 1985.

Mr. Eggar: The Intergovernmental Conference established by the Anglo-Irish Agreement was set up within the framework of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council. There have been a number of meetings at all levels under the auspices of the council since the conclusion of the agreement. In addition, the co-ordinating committee met in July 1986.

Geneva Conventions

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why the United Kingdom has not ratified the 1977 first and second additional protocols to the Geneva conventions of 1949; whether there is any intention to review the decision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: We support the aim and spirit of the additional protocols which we signed in 1977. The present position is that we are consulting with our NATO partners but I am not able to say when we may proceed with ratification.

Mafia

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will raise at the next meeting of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation the issue of the alleged use of falsified accounts in respect of that organisation to enable the Mafia organisation to secure European Economic Community funds for the delivery of fruit juice to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation headquarters in Naples; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: If my hon. Friend can supply details of the alleged use of falsified NATO accounts we will, of course, look into the matter.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Corporation Tax

Mr. Wainwright asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total amount of agreed losses currently available for offsetting profits in respect of liability to corporation tax; and what was the comparable figure 12 months ago.

Mr. Norman Lamont: We estimate that the total of these losses (excluding the public sector) has stood at some £25 billion to £30 billion in recent years and that the amount is now reducing by some several billions of pounds a year. These estimates are extremely tentative.

Mr. Wainwright asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he will answer the question about corporation tax from the hon. Member for Colne Valley which was due for answer on 28 January last.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I regret the delay in answering this question. It is being answered today.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will state the number of jobs *(a)* in total and *(b)* as full-time equivalent that have been subject to denationalisation since 1979-80.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The total number of jobs which have been transferred to the private sector as a result of privatisations since 1979 is around 600,000. Information about the number of full-time equivalent jobs which this total represents is not centrally available.

Central Office of Information (Cash Limit)

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he is proposing any further change to the Central Office of Information cash limit for 1986-87.

Mr. Brooke: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class XIX vote 1 will be increased by a further £54,023,000 from £97,977,000 to £152,000,000. The increase will be offset by reimbursements by the clients of the Central Office of Information and will therefore not add to the planning total of public expenditure. The running costs of the department have decreased by £1,439,000 due to improved efficiency and a change in the pattern of business involving some shifts from high resources to low resource areas of the COI.

Higher Rate Taxpayers

Mr. Marlow asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the number of higher rate taxpayers as a proportion of the population for each county in England and Wales.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to the reply*, 9 February 1987, c. *137*]: Estimates for individual counties are subject to considerable uncertainty. The latest available estimates for English regions and for Wales are as follows:

Taxpayers[1] liable to tax at higher rates as a percentage of total taxpayers[1]

	1984-85 per cent.
English regions	
North	2·6
Yorkshire and Humberside	3·0
North West	3·3
East Midlands	3·2
West Midlands	3·0
East Anglia	3·9
South East	6·8
South West	3·3
Wales	3·0

[1] Counting husband and wife as one.

Film Industry

Mr. Janner asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he is prepared to consider similar Inland Revenue write-off proposals for the British film industry as exist in other major western film-producing countries; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 February 1987]: The film industry is taxed on broadly the same lines as other businesses and we do not believe that films should be subject to a different system of taxation, but we have introduced into this system some special measures where they can be justified by the special nature of the film industry. These include alternative systems for writing off expenditure on films. Broadly, this expenditure can be written off either over the income-producing life of the film or against income as it accrues on a pound for pound basis. We have no plans to change this treatment. Alternatively, capital allowances may be available in some circumstances in respect of capital expenditure on a British film.

Incomes

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will detail the proportions of pre-tax and post-tax increases paid to the top 1 per cent., 2 per cent., 3 per cent., 4 per cent., 5 per cent., 10 per cent., 20 per cent., 30 per cent., 50 per cent. and 75 per cent. of taxpayers in 1978-79 and the latest available year; and what this represents in money terms;

(2) if he will detail the proportions of pre-tax and post-tax increases, including national insurance contributions, paid to the top 1 per cent., 2 per cent., 3 per cent., 4 per cent., 5 per cent., 10 per cent., 20 per cent., 30 per cent., 50 per cent. and 75 per cent. of taxpayers in 1978-79 and the latest available year; and what this represents in money terms.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his replies*, 20 January 1987 c. *470* and 23 January 1987 c. *781*]: Information is available to provide estimates of earning levels at the top 5 per cent., 10 per cent., 25 per cent., 50 per cent. and 75 per cent. of the earnings distribution. I regret that reliable estimates of earnings above the top 5 per cent. point are not available and that the other specified points in the distribution could be calculated only at disproportionate cost. The table below shows the annual percentage increases in pre-tax and post-tax earnings for a married man at the specified levels of earnings at April 1978 and April 1986. The earnings levels are those for males (all occupations) paid at adult rates with pay unaffected by absence. It is assumed that the wife has no earnings. Income tax has been calculated using the regimes for the financial years commencing in the appropriate Aprils. Contracted-in rates of national insurance contributions have been assumed.

Earnings level	*Top 5 per cent.*	*Top 10 per cent.*	*Top 25 per cent.*	*Top 50 per cent.*	*Top 75 per cent.*
Percentage changes between April 1977 and April 1978					
Gross earnings	13·4	13·6	13·0	13·4	12·2
Earnings after tax	15·1	15·2	14·6	15·0	14·0
Earnings after tax and NIC	14·1	14·2	13·6	14·0	13·1
Percentage changes between April 1985 and April 1986					
Gross earnings	9·4	8·3	7·7	7·1	6·7
Earnings after tax	10·3	9·2	8·5	7·7	7·2
Earnings after tax and NIC	10·6	9·3	8·5	7·8	7·2
Cash changes between April 1977 and April 1978 (£ per week)					
Gross earnings	17·70	15·36	11·63	9·56	7·04
Earnings after tax	14·56	12·80	10·07	8·50	6·67
Earnings after tax and NIC	12·80	11·04	8·64	7·34	5·79
Cash changes between April 1985 and April 1986 (£ per week)					
Gross earnings	33·50	24·50	17·40	12·30	8·90
Earnings after tax	27·81	20·81	15·07	10·91	8·10
Earnings after tax and NIC	26·01	19·01	13·50	9·81	7·30

NORTHERN IRELAND

Republic of Ireland

14. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what subjects he discussed at his last meeting with representatives of the Government of the Republic of Ireland.

15. **Mr. Stuart Bell** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last met the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Ireland; and what discussions he proposes to have with him before 17 February on the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. Tom King: My last meeting with an Irish Minister was with the Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Justice at a meeting of the Intergovernmental Conference on 8 December. The matters discussed then are referred to in the joint statement issued after the meeting, a copy of which I have placed in the Library. I have no plans to meet Mr. Barry before 17 February.

Public Representatives (Co-operation)

16. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what co-operation and contact he now enjoys with public representatives in the Province; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Tom King: I enjoy regular and useful contact with public representatives from the Alliance and Social Democratic and Labour parties. It is a matter of regret that Unionist representatives choose not to pursue with us those issues which are important to the future development of Northern Ireland.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

17. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a further statement on the Sampson report on matters concerning the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

19. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he now plans to publish the recommendations of the Sampson report, in whole or in part; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tom King: As I told the House on 15 January, I propose to make a statement to Parliament at the earliest appropriate time on any aspects of the report that fall within my responsibility.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

18. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the progress of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. Tom King: Steady progress has continued to be made, not least on security co-operation. I remain of the view that the agreement offers us a good opportunity for the people of Northern Ireland. It is capable of helping all —and it will harm the legitimate interests of no one.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Wildlife (Poisons)

Dr. David Clark asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the total number of incidents involving the misuse of poisons or stupefying substances on wildlife which have been reported to his Department in each of the last two years; for each of those totals, what was the number of cases which were referred to the police for investigation; and, of those investigations, what was the number which resulted in legal proceedings and the outcome of those proceedings.

Mr. Donald Thompson: In the year October 1984 to September 1985, 65 incidents involving misuse of pesticides were confirmed, 37 of these being referred to the police. One prosecution resulted, the farmer concerned being prosecuted under section 8 of the Protection of Animals Act 1911 and section 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, with a fine of £20 in each case.

In the year October 1985 to September 1986, 67 incidents involving the misuse of pesticides were confirmed, 28 of these being referred to the police. No prosecutions resulted.

Food Aid

Mr. Colvin asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what is his definition of needy people for the purposes of the distribution of free food from United Kingdom intervention stocks;

(2) if he will make a statement on the procedure to be adopted, and by whom, for assessing the eligibility of needy people for free food from United Kingdom intervention stocks.

Mr. Jopling: The Community legislation provides that the food shall be made available through charitable organisations to the most needy. Assessment of eligibility is for the charitable organisations themselves, but the Government have indicated that they regard the term "most needy" as covering people in receipt of supplementary benefit and family income supplement, and those who are homeless, living in hostels, attending feeding centres, receiving meals-on-wheels or very disadvantaged in other ways.

Mr. Colvin asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the procedure to be used by applicants for free food from United Kingdom intervention stocks to be made available to needy people.

Mr. Jopling: Any person who feels that he or she may qualify to receive free food should get in touch in the first instance with the local branch of one of the charitable organisations listed in the answer that I gave on 29 January to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes).

Mr. Colvin asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what help will be given by his Department to charitable organisations before introducing to the United Kingdom the European Economic Community's recently announced free food for needy people scheme.

Mr. Jopling: My Department held discussions with the charitable organisations before introducing the arrangements and subsequently. I am not aware of any outstanding request for help.

Mr. Colvin asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further action he intends to take to publicise the free food for needy people European Economic Community scheme.

Mr. Jopling: As a result of the Government's public statements through the various media, knowledge of the arrangements appears already to be widespread among those concerned. I intend to make further public statements as required.

Mr. Colvin asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he intends to take to modify the recently introduced free food for needy people European Economic Community scheme in the light of representations he has received.

Mr. Jopling: I have decided to reduce the minimum amount applying to releases of beef from intervention stores. With immediate effect, the minimum amount will be reduced from 1 tonne to 0·25 tonne.

Mr. Colvin asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what help will be given by his Department to charitable organisations for drawing from intervention, bulk-breaking, packaging and distributing free food for needy people under the recently announced European Economic Community scheme.

Mr. Jopling: The European Commission is making payments available at a flat rate per tonne for re-packing foodstuffs into small amounts where necessary and for transporting them to charitable organisations' distribution points. Costs of further distribution to individual recipients are for the charitable organisations themselves.

Mr. Colvin asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many tonnes of United Kingdom intervention stocks of food he has estimated will be handed out as free food for the needy under the recently announced European Economic Community scheme.

Mr. Jopling: I am not yet in a position to estimate how much butter and beef from United Kingdom intervention stores will be required by charitable organisations up to 31 March 1987.

Mr. Colvin asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if the recently announced European Economic Community scheme for free food for the needy will be extended beyond the present expiry date of 31 March.

Mr. Jopling: I am not aware that any such proposal is contemplated by the Commission.

Mr. Colvin asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will remove the condition that food provided under the European Economic Community free food for needy people scheme may only be distributed to beneficiaries as a cooked meal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: The Community legislation provides for free distribution of beef only in the form of prepared

meals. It is not open to the United Kingdom to vary this condition, but it does not apply to the other foodstuffs covered by these arrangements.

Mr. Colvin asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many beneficiaries there have been to date of the recently announced free food for needy people European Economic Community scheme.

Mr. Jopling: This information is not available.

Mr. Colvin asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he had with food producers' organisations before introducing to the United Kingdom the European Economic Community's recently announced free food for needy people scheme.

Mr. Jopling: Prior discussion with food producers' organisations was not necessary. My Department is, however, in constant touch with organisations in the food industry and this has allowed consultation on a number of points relating to the arrangements for distribution of free food.

Mr. Madden asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what persons in the United Kingdom are entitled to receive free beef and butter as a result of the recent European Economic Community agreement; what arrangements have been made in Bradford to distribute beef and butter; what action has been taken to publicise this scheme and to help those eligible; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave yesterday to the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) and the replies that I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin).

Sir Peter Mills asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has held further discussions with charitable organisations about the European Community arrangements for free distribution of food to the most needy.

Mr. Jopling: Yes. In the light of these discussions, the Government have extended these arrangements to cover provision through the charitable organisations concerned of milk, cheese, semi-skimmed milk, buttermilk and concentrated butter. With effect from 6 February, the charitable organisations are in a position to buy these products on the United Kingdom commercial market. The products must in all cases be of Community origin. The Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce, which is administering the arrangements, will make payments from Community funds to cover the full cost of purchase and delivery to a central distribution point.

The charitable organisations and the Government have agreed that the Community arrangements for distribution of sugar and flour milled from bread-making wheat cannot appropriately be operated in the United Kingdom.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will designate west Berkshire as an environmentally sensitive area.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Horses (Botulism)

Mr. Hickmet asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, what, further to his reply of 6 February, *Official Report*, column *846*, is the scientific advice available to him on the prognosis for a horse which contracts botulism; what steps he is taking to ensure that no further cases arise in Devon and Cornwall; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The prognosis in affected horses is poor and there is no specific therapy. Mildly affected horses may recover with supportive therapy such as mild laxatives and intravenous glucose saline. Practising veterinary surgeons in Devon and Cornwall have been made aware by the Ministry's veterinary investigation service that a clinical diagnosis of botulism has been made in the area.

Mr. Hickmet asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether, further to his reply of 6 February, *Official Report*, column *846*, investigations are being made into whether horses which have died or been destroyed in recent months in Devon and Cornwall from hitherto unknown or differently diagnosed causes contracted botulism; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Ministry is not undertaking any special investigations into the cause of death or destruction of horses in Devon and Cornwall in recent months. However, the Ministry's veterinary investigation centres will continue to provide a diagnostic service to private practitioners.

Mr. Hickmet asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, further to his reply of 6 February, *Official Report*, column *846*, he will state the nature, type and description of the fodder being analysed; how many other horses have been fed fodder of a similar nature from the same source; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The fodder being analysed is conserved grass in bags. One other horse in the stable where two horses were clinically diagnosed as having botulism was fed with the fodder and to date has remained clinically normal.

Mr. Hickmet asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, further to his reply of 6 February, *Official Report*, column *846*, from which feed merchant the fodder came which was fed to the two horses which contracted botulism; what steps he has taken to ensure that the fodder is withdrawn from the market and that horse owners are warned of the potential dangers of the fodder concerned; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: It would not be appropriate to name the feed merchant. However, the practising veterinary surgeon has reported that he has notified the company of this incident and told them that samples of fodder from the premises concerned are being analysed. Because of the nature of this disease and the negative test results obtained so far, it would not be appropriate to consider advising the feed merchant or horse owners about this matter.

Mr. Hickmet asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what were the sources of information for the information as to *(a)* the location and *(b)* the fate of the two horses referred to in his answer of 6 February, *Official Report*, column *846*.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The information in relation to the location and fate of the two horses was obtained from the practising veterinary surgeon dealing with this case.

Mr. Hickmet asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, further to his reply of 6 February, *Official Report*, column *846*, what have been the results of the diagnosis of the specimens and fodder referred to; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Interim test results on post mortem material and fodder are negative.

Mr. Hickmet asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, further to his reply of 6 February, *Official Report*, column *846*, how many recorded cases of botulism in horses there have been in England and Wales in the last two years; what were the causes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: No cases of botulism have been recorded by Ministry laboratories in England and Wales in the last two years.

Mr. Hickmet asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, further to his reply of 6 February, *Official Report*, column *846*, what assumptions he is using in ascertaining the cause of horses contracting botulism in the case of the two horses concerned.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Botulism is a well recognised syndrome in horses in a number of countries and investigations into the disease have been carried out. Clostridium botulinum is an organism which occurs in the soil. In certain conditions it is able to multiply and produce a toxin in grass silage. Clinical signs develop when the toxin is ingested and absorbed from the intestine into the blood stream.

Mafia

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will raise at the next meeting of the Agricultural Council the substantial payments allegedly made from European Economic Community funds for the bogus export of non-existent fruit juice from Sicily as a means of financing the Mafia organisation; if he will take immediate steps to ascertain the precise amount of public funds involved; and if he will further seek to ensure that further such frauds are prevented;

(2) if he will take steps to deduct from the United Kingdom's European Economic Community contribution that part of common agricultural policy expenditure which relates to the provision of common agricultural policy funds to the Mafia organisation in Sicily for the claimed delivery of non-existent fruit juice to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation headquarters in Naples and other alleged customers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Milk Quotas

Mr. McLoughlin asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many farms in the United Kingdom have milk quotas *(a)* over 2 million litres, *(b)* between 1,999,999 litres and 750,000 litres, *(c)* between 749,999 litres and 500,000 litres, *(d)* between 499,999 litres and 300,000 litres, *(e)* between 299,999 litres and 200,000 litres and *(f)* under 200,000 litres, respectively.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Headage Payments

Mr. McLoughlin asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has as to in which other European Economic Community countries headage payments are made on dairy cows on farms that fall within less-favoured areas.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Cattle (Tuberculosis)

Mr. McLoughlin asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give details of those parishes to be deleted from the list of parishes with a recent history of cattleherds with tuberculosis breakdowns of badger origin.

Mr. Donald Thompson: A full review has been carried out and my right hon. Friends the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretary of State for Wales have agreed that the revisions below should be made to reflect the position at 1 January this year.

Parishes deleted from the list of "badger problem" parishes

Cornwall	Quethiock
Blisland	Roche
Breage	St. Breock
Calstock	St. Erme
Cury	St. Hilary
Duloe	St. Neot
Egloskerry	St. Wenn
Kenwyn	Towednack
Lesnewth	Tresmeer
Morvah	Withiel
Mullion	
North Petherwin	*Devon*
Perran Zabuloe	Woodland

In the past, badger control operations in these parishes have proceeded automatically. In future, badger control operations may be undertaken in these parishes only by my Department after reference to the consultative panel on badgers and tuberculosis.

No parishes have been added to the list.

A full list of the problem parishes, taking account of the above deletions, is being made available in the Library of each House.

Agricultural Land

Mr. Steen asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many acres of agricultural land including rough grazing have been taken out of agricultural use in each of the last five years.

Mr. Donald Thompson [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 February 1987]: For England, the estimated net loss of agricultural land to other uses for the five years to June 1985 was as follows:

Five-year average ending in June	*Net area lost (Thousand hectares)*
1981	16
1982	16
1983	14
1984	13
1985	14

Five-year averages are used because data for single years are not reliable.

Mr. Steen asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many acres of agricultural land including rough grazing have been recorded in each of the last five years as going out of agricultural use and then becoming dormant, derelict or vacant, in public ownership; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 February 1987]: The information requested is not available.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give *(a)* the daily mean temperature and *(b)* the weekly mean temperature for the weather stations used by his Department for the week beginning Sunday 25 January.

Mr. Major: The Department receives information from the Meteorological Office in respect of seven-day periods beginning each Monday. The information requested for the week commencing Monday 26 January is as follows:

Weather Station	*Daily averages*							*Weekly Average*
	Monday	*Tuesday*	*Wednesday*	*Thursday*	*Friday*	*Saturday*	*Sunday*	
Scotland								
Aberdeen Airport	2·7	3·0	2·1	1·9	1·4	−1·4	−1·4	1·2
Dumfries	2·7	2·3	0·7	1·0	0·3	−3·5	−2·6	0·1
Edinburgh Airport	2·3	1·4	1·0	1·6	1·8	−1·5	−2·6	0·6
Eskdalemuir (Galashiels)	0·7	0·1	−0·6	−0·7	−1·7	−4·9	−3·0	−1·4
Fort William	3·5	1·9	−0·2	1·9	1·3	−0·6	1·5	1·3
Glasgow Airport	1·2	1·4	−1·1	−1·1	0·8	−4·2	−2·5	−0·8
Kinloss (Inverness)	3·6	3·1	2·9	1·5	2·8	2·1	0·7	2·4
Kirkwall	3·4	2·9	2·4	2·5	3·6	4·8	2·4	3·1
Lerwick	1·3	1·1	−0·1	1·7	3·1	5·1	3·2	2·2
Leuchars (Dundee)	2·3	2·7	2·5	1·9	0·8	−0·5	−2·0	1·1
Machriphanish (Campbeltown)	5·0	2·7	1·4	1·1	3·5	0·8	3·4	2·5
Prestwick (Ayr)	2·5	1·9	−0·1	−0·3	2·0	−1·1	0·5	0·8
Stornoway	2·9	3·1	1·7	3·0	3·3	4·1	4·9	3·3
Whithorn	3·2	2·1	1·2	1·3	1·5	0·2	0·7	1·5
Wick	2·0	2·7	2·3	1·1	1·8	1·2	2·7	1·9
England								
Aughton (Liverpool)	4·4	0·8	1·4	2·1	−0·5	−0·9	−0·2	1·0
Bedford RAE	3·4	1·3	2·4	−0·9	−3·0	−2·9	−1·6	−0·2
Binbrook (Hull)	3·1	1·4	1·8	1·9	−1·3	−2·3	−1·2	0·5
Birmingham Airport	3·5	0·7	2·8	−0·6	−2·3	−4·2	−2·6	−0·4
Blackpool Airport	4·3	0·2	2·6	1·3	−1·7	−2·8	−1·1	0·4
Boscombe Down (Sarum)	3·3	2·2	2·6	0·4	−1·9	−1·4	−0·3	0·7
Boulmer (Berwick)	3·9	3·0	2·7	2·1	2·6	−0·6	−1·3	1·8
Bournemouth Airport	4·0	3·9	2·5	0·1	−0·8	−2·5	−1·0	0·9
Bristol	4·7	3·9	4·0	1·7	0·0	0·1	1·3	2·2
Brize Norton (Oxford)	3·9	1·9	2·1	0·1	−1·8	−2·3	−1·7	0·5
Carlisle	2·9	0·8	0·0	0·4	1·4	−2·9	0·1	0·4
Chivenor (Barnstable)	4·0	4·1	4·0	2·6	1·3	1·2	3·4	2·9
Coltishall (Norwich)	4·0	2·5	2·9	0·4	−1·8	−1·7	−1·8	0·6
Coningsby (Boston)	3·1	1·9	2·5	1·4	−1·9	−2·7	−3·1	0·2
Culdrose (Penzance)	3·4	4·8	4·2	4·7	2·9	4·2	5·9	4·3
East Hampstead	3·6	2·5	1·6	−0·4	−1·5	−2·3	−1·9	0·2
Eskmeals (Whitehaven)	3·4	1·5	0·2	1·1	1·2	−1·6	0·1	0·8
Exeter	3·5	3·7	3·6	1·4	0·2	0·0	1·3	1·9
Finningley (Sheffield)	3·5	2·2	3·2	3·3	−2·5	−4·0	−2·9	0·4
Gatwick Airport (Guildford)	3·9	2·8	2·1	−0·8	−1·9	−2·3	−1·8	0·3
Heathrow Airport (London)	4·7	3·4	3·1	1·5	−0·8	−0·4	0·2	1·7
Herstmonceux (Brighton)	3·9	2·9	2·8	1·3	−1·0	−0·8	−0·2	1·3
Honington (Bury St. Edmunds)	2·6	1·4	1·8	−0·5	−2·0	−2·6	−1·8	−0·2
Leeds WC	3·8	2·9	3·0	3·4	−1·2	−3·2	−2·7	0·9
Leeming (Newcastle)	3·5	2·7	2·8	1·7	−2·0	−3·4	−3·0	0·3
Lyneham (Chippenham)	3·1	1·7	1·8	−0·3	−2·3	−1·9	−0·6	0·2
Manchester Airport	4·4	1·1	2·3	2·4	0·1	−0·5	−0·2	1·4
Manston (Dover)	2·7	1·9	1·9	2·1	−1·4	−0·9	−1·2	0·7
Marham (Kings Lynn)	2·5	1·4	2·0	−0·3	−1·2	−2·2	−1·2	0·1
Mount Batten (Plymouth)	4·0	4·0	3·7	3·6	2·7	3·3	4·5	3·7
Okehampton	0·8	1·2	0·2	−0·2	−2·2	0·2	3·2	0·4
St. Mawgan (Truro)	3·2	4·1	3·0	3·1	2·3	2·3	5·0	3·3
Shawbury (Shrewsbury)	4·2	1·4	0·8	−0·6	−2·6	−4·0	−2·5	−0·5

Weather Station	Daily averages							Weekly Average
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	
Southampton Weather Centre	4·9	4·2	3·9	2·4	0·1	0·2	1·0	2·4
Stansted	2·5	1·6	1·6	0·7	−2·1	−1·6	−1·6	0·1
Tynemouth (Sunderland)	3·9	3·1	2·7	2·9	0·4	−1·4	−0·6	1·6
Walnall (Derby)	4·1	1·4	1·7	2·3	−1·7	−2·5	−1·3	0·6
Wattisham (Ipswich)	2·5	1·4	1·6	0·1	−2·0	−1·2	−1·3	0·2
Whitby Coastguard	3·7	2·7	2·8	2·4	−0·1	0·3	0·9	1·8
Wyton (Cambridge)	3·1	1·5	2·6	−0·3	−2·0	−3·2	−1·5	0·0
Yeovilton (Yeovil)	3·5	3·2	2·5	−0·7	−0·9	−2·3	−0·4	0·7
Wales								
Aberporth (Aberystwyth)	4·7	2·3	3·0	1·7	0·5	1·6	3·0	2·4
Brawdy (Pembroke)	4·2	3·3	2·0	0·6	0·0	0·2	3·1	1·9
Cilfynydd (Merthyr Tydfil)	3·4	2·2	2·4	1·8	−1·1	−0·7	0·5	1·2
Mumbles (Swansea)	4·4	4·2	3·8	2·5	0·9	1·9	3·2	3·0
Rhoose (Cardiff)	3·3	3·0	2·4	0·6	−0·9	−1·3	0·7	1·1
Trawsfynydd (Dolgellau)	3·9	1·8	1·5	0·9	−0·5	1·3	0·3	1·3
Valley (Caernarfon)	6·1	4·1	2·7	1·8	0·9	0·2	1·8	2·5

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many applications in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* Britain for severe weather payment have come from persons not on supplementary benefit; and what proportion of these are now being processed with a view to checking entitlement to supplementary benefit.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much was spent by his Department on advertising the availability of exceptionally severe weather payments *(a)* in 1986 and *(b)* so far in the current year in: (i) Scotland, (ii) Strathclyde and (iii) Greenock and Port Glasgow.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Members have a reply as soon as possible.

Queen Elizabeth II Hospital, Welwyn Garden City

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has received any representations regarding ward closures at Queen Elizabeth II hospital, Welwyn Garden City; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: We have received five representations about the ward closures at Queen Elizabeth II hospital, Welwyn, including one each from my hon. Friends the Members for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Murphy), for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) and for Bedfordshire, South-West (Mr. Madel). Two letters addressed to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister were also passed to this Department for reply. The East Hertfordshire health authority will be considering reopening the wards in the light of its 1987-88 budget.

Maternity Payments

Mr. Jack Thompson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Wansbeck constituency claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in the Wansbeck constituency are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Wansbeck constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Ashington and Blyth and their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the two offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number of claims
Ashington	1,127
Blyth	1,367

It is not possible to predict how many women in the Wansbeck constituency will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Miss Boothroyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the metropolitan borough of Sandwell claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in that same borough are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The metropolitan borough of Sandwell is covered by the Department's offices at West Bromwich and Smethwick and their boundaries are not conterminous with the metropolitan borough of Sandwell. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant at West Bromwich and Smethwick during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
West Bromwich	2,051
Smethwick	2,398

It is not possible to predict how many women in the metropolitan borough of Sandwell will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in *(a)* Dundee and *(b)* Tayside claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in (i) Dundee and (ii) Tayside are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

(a) Dundee is covered by the Department's offices at Dundee, East and Dundee, West. The number of claims received for maternity grant in these two local offices in the 1986 calendar year was as follows:

	Number
Dundee, East	1,940
Dundee, West	1,091

(b) Tayside is covered by the Department's offices at Arbroath and Perth in addition to the Dundee offices. The number of claims received in those two local offices in the 1986 calendar year were as follows:

	Number
Arbroath	360
Perth	415

It is not possible to predict how many women in (i) Dundee and (ii) Tayside will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. McCartney asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Clydebank and Milngavie constituency claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Clydebank and Milngavie constituency are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Clydebank and Milngavie constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Clydebank and Glasgow (Maryhill) and their boundaries are not conterminous witht the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the two offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Clydebank	545
Glasgow (Maryhill)	1,103

It is not possible to predict how many women in the Clydebank and Milngavie constituency will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in each of the three Wolverhampton constituencies claimed maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in each constituency are expected to qualify each year for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The three Wolverhampton constituencies are covered by the Department's offices at Wolverhampton, North and Wolverhampton, South and their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituencies. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the two offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Wolverhampton North	2,066
Wolverhampton South	2,072

It is not possible to predict how many women in each constituency will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Dixon asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Jarrow constituency claimed maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in the Jarrow constituency are expected to qualify annually for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Jarrow constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Jarrow and South Shields and their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant at Jarrow and South Shields during the calendar year 1986 were as follows

	Number
Jarrow	735
South Shields	1,207

It is not possible to predict how many women in Jarrow will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Bagier asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Sunderland, South claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Sunderland, South are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

Sunderland South constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Sunderland South and Sunderland North although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in the two local offices in the 1986 calendar year were as follows:

	Number
Sunderland South	1,442
Sunderland North	2,097

It is not possible to predict how many women in Sunderland South will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the London borough of Newham claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in the London borough of Newham are expected to qualify each year for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The London borough of Newham is covered by the Department's offices at Canning Town, Plaistow and Woodgrange Park although their boundaries are not conterminous with the London borough of Newham. The

numbers of claims received for maternity grant in those three local offices in the 1986 calendar year were as follows:

	Number
Canning Town	612
Plaistow	1,613
Woodgrange Park	1,848

It is not possible to predict how many women in the London borough of Newham will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the London borough of Newham received a maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in the London borough of Newham are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance each year after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 273 claims to maternity allowance were made at Canning Town, 999 claims at Plaistow and 1,101 claims at Woodgrange Park, the Department's offices which cover the constituency although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in the London borough of Newham will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in north-west Leicestershire received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in north-west Leicestershire are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance annually after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,470 claims to maternity allowance were made at Loughborough, the Department's office which cover the constituency although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in north-west Leicestershire will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Faversham received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Faversham are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance annually after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 986 claims to maternity allowance were made at Sittingbourne, the Department's office which covers the constituency although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Faversham will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Pendry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Tameside and Glossop received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available 1,054 claims to maternity allowance were made at Hyde, 1,170 claims at Ashton-under-Lyne and 790 at Manchester Openshaw, the Department's offices which cover the constituency although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Tameside and Glossop will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Pendry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Tameside and Glossop claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available and how many are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

Tameside and Glossop are included in the areas covered by the Department's offices at Hyde, Ashton-under-Lyne and Manchester Openshaw. The number of claims received for maternity grant in the three local offices in the 1986 calendar year was as follows:

	Number
Hyde	1,584
Ashton-under-Lyne	443
Manchester Openshaw	678

It is not possible to predict how many women in Tameside and Glossop will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Strathclyde region, *(c)* Glasgow district and *(d)* Shettleston constituency, claimed the maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many are expected annually to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: In the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, the following numbers of claims to maternity allowance were made at the Department's offices which cover the areas in the question:

	Numbers
(a) Scotland	46,613
(b) Strathclyde region	21,112
(c) Glasgow district	7,891

	Numbers
(d) Shettleston constituency	
Glasgow Dalmarnock	137
Glasgow Parkhead	900

It is not possible to predict how many women in these areas will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Crewe and Nantwich received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Crewe and Nantwich are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,573 claims to maternity allowance were made at Crewe, the Department's office which covers the constituency although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Crewe and Nantwich will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Sheffield, Central received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Sheffield, Central are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance in each year after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, the following claims to maternity allowance were made at the Department's offices which cover the constituency although the boundaries are not conterminous:

	Number
Sheffield North-East	790
Sheffield South-East	810
Sheffield North-West	1,142
Sheffield South-West	1,180

It is not possible to predict how many women in Sheffield, Central will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Mikardo asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the city of Westminster received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in the city of Westminster are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance in each year after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, the following numbers of claims to maternity allowance were made at the Department's offices which cover the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous:

	Number
Euston	639
Paddington	696
Cricklewood	489
Chelsea	[1]
Westminster	[1]

[1] Claims for these offices are dealt with at Aldershot out-station. A total of 2,999 claims were dealt with at that office, but that total includes claims proper to other offices.

It is not possible to predict how many women in the city of Westminster will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Mikardo asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the London borough of Tower Hamlets claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in the London borough of Tower Hamlets are expected to qualify annually for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The London borough of Tower Hamlets is covered by the Department's offices at Hackney, Poplar and Stepney although their boundaries are not conterminous with the London borough of Tower Hamlets. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in these three local offices in the 1986 calendar year were as follows:

	Number
Hackney	1,374
Poplar	1,287
Stepney	1,011

It is not possible to predict how many women in the London borough of Tower Hamlets will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Mikardo asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the London borough of Tower Hamlets received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in the London borough of Tower Hamlets are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance in each year after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 670 claims to maternity allowance were made at Poplar, 267 at Stepney and 866 at Hackney, the Department's offices which cover the borough, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in the London borough of Tower Hamlets will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Blair asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Sedgefield constituency claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Sedgefield are expected to qualify annually for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Sedgefield constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Bishop Auckland and Darlington and their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant at Bishop Auckland and Darlington during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Bishop Auckland	1,237
Darlington	1,704

It is not possible to predict how many women in Sedgefield will qualify for maternity payments from the Social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Blair asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Sedgefield constituency received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Sedgefield are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance in each year after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,171 claims to maternity allowance were made at Bishop Auckland and 1,067 at Darlington, the Department's offices which cover the constituency although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Sedgefield will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Randall asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Luton, South received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Luton, South are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance in each year after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,879 claims to maternity allowance were made at Luton, the Department's office which covers the constituency although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Luton, South will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Randall asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Luton, North claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Luton, North are expected to qualify annually for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Luton, North constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Luton and Dunstable. Although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant at the Luton and Dunstable offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Luton	3,029
Dunstable	1,690

It is not possible to predict how many women in Luton North will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Randall asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Luton, North received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Luton, North are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance in each year after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,879 claims to maternity allowance were made at Luton and 1,247 at Dunstable, the Department's offices which cover the constituency although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Luton North will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Randall asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Kingston upon Hull, West claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Kingston upon Hull, West are expected to qualify annually for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Kingston upon Hull, West constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Kingston upon Hull, West and Kingston upon Hull, East although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant at the Kingston upon Hull, West and Kingston upon Hull, East during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number of claims
Kingston upon Hull, East	3,443
Kingston upon Hull, West	2,862

It is not possible to predict how many women in Kingston upon Hull, West will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Randall asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Kingston upon Hull, West received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Kingston upon Hull, West are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance each year after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,929 claims to maternity allowance were made at Hull, East and 1,927 at Hull, West, the Department's offices which cover the constituency although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Kingston upon Hull, West will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Anderson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Swansea, East claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

Swansea, East constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Swansea and Morriston although their boundaries are not conterminous. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in those two local offices in the 1986 calendar year were as follows:

	Number
Swansea	1,937
Morriston	1,073

It is not possible to predict how many women in Swansea, East will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Miss Boothroyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the metropolitan borough of Sandwell received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in that same borough are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,280 claims to maternity allowance were made at West Bromwich and 1,346 at Smethwick, the Department's offices which cover the borough of Sandwell, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in the metropolitan borough of Sandwell will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in *(a)* Dundee and *(b)* Tayside received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in (i) Dundee and (ii) Tayside are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, the following number of claims to maternity allowance were made at the Department's offices which cover the areas of the question, although the boundaries are not conterminous:

	Number
(a) Dundee	
Dundee East	998
Dundee West	841
(b) Tayside	
Dundee East	998
Dundee West	841
Perth	1,003
Arbroath	703

It is not possible to predict how many women in Dundee and Tayside will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Clelland asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in *(a)* Tyne Bridge and *(b)* Newcastle, Central constituencies received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in each of the said constituencies are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, the following numbers of claims to maternity allowance were made at the Department's offices which cover the constituencies, although the boundaries are not conterminous:

	Number
(a) Tyne Bridge	
Newcastle St. James'	992
Newcastle East	983
(b) Newcastle Central	
Newcastle East	983
Newcastle St. James'	992
Newcastle West	975

It is not possible to predict how many women in the two constituencies will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. James Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Scotland received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Motherwell, North constituency are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the twelve months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 46,613 claims to maternity allowance were made in Scotland.

It is not possible to predict how many women in the Motherwell constituency will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Stockport parliamentary constituency and in Denton and Reddish received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Stockport and Denton and Reddish are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Informaton is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, the following numbers of claims to maternity allowance were made at the Department's offices which cover the constituencies although the boundaries are not conterminous.

	Number
Stockport	
Stockport, North	1,393
Stockport, South	1,409
Denton and Reddish	
Stockport, North	1,393
Stockport, South	1,409
Hyde	1,054
Ashton-under-Lyne	1,170

It is not possible to predict how many women in Stockport and Denton and Reddish will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Burnley and Pendle constituencies received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Burnley and Pendle are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,714 claims to maternity allowance were made at Burnley, the Department's office which covers the areas, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Burnley and Pendle will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Anderson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (i) how many women in Swansea, East received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available and (ii) how many are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,340 claims to maternity allowance were made at Swansea and 735 at Morriston, the Department's offices which cover the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Swansea, East will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Newport, East received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many such women are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,658 claims to maternity allowance were made at Newport, the Department's office which covers the constituency although the boundaries are not comterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Newport, East will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Cynon Valley received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many such women are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 761 claims to maternity allowance were made at Pontypridd and 489 at Aberdare, the Department's offices which cover the constituency although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Cynon Valley will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Monklands, West claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Monklands, West are expected to qualify in a year for a maternity payment from the social fund after April.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Monklands, West constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Coatbridge, Cumbernauld and Glasgow Springburn although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The number of claims received for maternity grant in each of the three local offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Coatbridge	804
Cumbernauld	1,762
Glasgow (Springburn)	927

It is not possible to predict how many women in Monklands, West will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Greenock and Port glasgow constituency claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Greenock and Port Glasgow are expected to qualify annually for a maternity payment from the Social Fund after April.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Greenock and Port Glasgow constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Greenock and Port Glasgow although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the two local offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Greenock	1,137
Port Glasgow	468

It is not possible to predict how many women in Greenock and Port Glasgow will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Edinburgh, Central received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,434 claims to maternity allowance were made at Edinburgh West and 839 claims at Edinburgh City, the Department's offices which cover the constituency although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Edinburgh Central will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Edinburgh Central claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Edinburgh Central constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Edinburgh City and Edinburgh West although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the two local offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Edinburgh City	325
Edinburgh West	1,821

It is not possible to predict how many women in Edinburgh Central will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the constituency of Edinburgh, East received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 927 claims to maternity allowance were made at Edinburgh East, 736 claims at Edinburgh North and 839 claims at Edinburgh City, the Department's offices which cover the constituency although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Edinburgh East will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Edinburgh, East constituency claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Edinburgh, East constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Edinburgh, East, Edinburgh City and Edinburgh North although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the three local offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Edinburgh East	1,398
Edinburgh City	325
Edinburgh North	1,050

It is not possible to predict how many women in Edinburgh, East will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Tinn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Langbaurgh received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Langbaurgh are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,299 claims to maternity allowance were made at Middlesbrough, 595 claims at Eston and 656 claims at Redcar, the Department's offices which cover the constituency although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Langbaurgh will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Tinn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Langbaurgh claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Langbaurgh are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Langbaurgh constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Eston, Middlesbrough and Redcar although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the three local offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Eston	1,016
Middlesbrough	2,472
Redcar	1,006

It is not possible to predict how many women in Langbaurgh will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Monklands, West received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Monklands, West are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 495 claims to maternity allowance were made at Coatbridge, 1,183 claims at Cumbernauld and 744 claims at Glasgow, Springburn, the Department's offices which cover the constituency although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Monklands, West will qualify for statutory maternity pay

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Greenock and Port Glasgow constituency received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Greenock and Port Glasgow are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance annually after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 830 claims to maternity allowance were made at Greenock and 309 at Port Glasgow, the Department's offices which cover the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Greenock and Port Glasgow will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Thurrock claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Thurrock are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Thurrock constituency is covered by the Department's office at Grays although its boundary is not conterminous with the constituency. The number of claims received for maternity grant in Grays local office during the calendar year of 1986 was 1,810.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Thurrock will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Thurrock received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Thurrock are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,257 claims to maternity allowance were made at Grays, the Department's office which covers the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Thurrock will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Leeds metropolitan district received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in the Leeds metropolitan district are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986,the latest year for which figures are available, the following claims to maternity allowance were made at the Department's offices which cover the area, although the boundaries are not conterminous:

	Number
Leeds Central	957
Leeds North	1,396
Leeds North West	1,137
Leeds South	636
Leeds West	1,070

In addition, very small parts of the district council were dealt with at offices at Castleford, Harrogate, Rothwell, York and Pontefract, but information about the number of claims in those offices relating to the district council area could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

It is not possible to predict how many women in the Leeds metropolitan district will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Leeds metropolitan district claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in the Leeds metropolitan district are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Leeds metropolitan district council area is covered by the Department's offices at Leeds East, Leeds West, Leeds North-West, Leeds North and Leeds South. The number of claims for maternity grant received at those five offices during the calendar year 1986 was as follows:

	Number
Leeds East	1,815
Leeds West	1,710
Leeds North West	1,791
Leeds North	2,239
Leeds South	1,040

In addition, very small parts of the district council area are dealt with at offices at Castleford, Harrogate, Rothwell, York and Pontefract but it is not possible to identify which claims at those offices relate to the district council area, other than at disproportionate cost.

It is not possible to predict how many women in the Leeds metropolitan district will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many women in South Derbyshire received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in South Derbyshire are expected to receive each year statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987;

(2) how many women in Derby, North received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Derby, North are expected to receive each year statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987;

(3) how many women in Derby, South received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Derby, South are expected to receive each year statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,233 claims to maternity allowance were made at Derby, Beckett street and 1,551 at Derby, London road, the Department's offices which cover all three constituencies although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in South Derby, North and in Derby, South will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Stretford constituency claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Stretford are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Stretford constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Rusholme, Chorlton and Sale, although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The number of claims for maternity grant received at those three offices during the calendar year 1986 was as follows:

	Number
Rusholme	1,116
Chorlton	899
Sale	2,447

It is not possible to predict how many women in Stretford will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Stretford constituency received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Stretford are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 681 claims to maternity allowance were made at Manchester Rusholme, 498 claims at Manchester Chorlton and 1,766 at Manchester Sale, the Department's offices which cover the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Stretford will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Patchett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Barnsley, East constituency claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund annually after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Barnsley, East constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Barnsley East and Goldthorpe although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the two local offices during the calendar year of 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Barnsley East	1,445
Goldthorpe	375

It is not possible to predict how many women in Barnsley, East will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Birth Statistics

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many births there were in Bradford in the last year for which figures are available.

Mrs. Currie: During 1985, there were 7,581 live births and 48 stillbirths to mothers whose usual residence was in the Bradford metropolitan district.

Ambulance Service

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will tabulate in the *Official Report* the patient journeys made by the London ambulance service, non emergency provision for each of the quarters in 1986, as set out and in the categories in his written answer of 6 November 1986, *Official Report*, column *599-600*, showing for each figure for the fourth quarter and annual totals, respectively, the percentage increase or decrease on the equivalent figures for 1984.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is not yet available.

I shall let the hon. Member have a further reply as soon as possible.

Mentally Ill and Handicapped People

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the objectives, priorities and achievements of Her Majesty's Government's policy towards mentally ill and handicapped people since 1983.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Benefits

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services according to the latest available data, how many claims for supplementary benefit have taken more than 14 days to process before initial payment in each Department of Health and Social Security office *(a)* in London and *(b)* in each region outside London in the latest period for which figures are available; and what proportion of first claims for supplementary benefit at that time each of these figures represents.

Mr. Lyell: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 2 February at column *553*. The information which was subsequently placed in the Library is the closest available information to that which he has now requested.

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will review the limits on supplementary benefit payments for boarders and people in residential care and nursing homes; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: We have recently completed a full review of the supplementary benefit limits for ordinary board and lodging accommodation and residential care and nursing homes. The review took into account information about charges and costs from DHSS local offices and other sources. We intend to publish in due course a report from management consultants Ernst and Whinney on the movement of costs specific to residential and nursing homes, as well as research reports by Kent and York universities on charges in these homes as they relate to our limits. Our review has also paid particular attention to representations from hon. Members and interested organisations and individuals.

The evidence showed that there is no case for a general increase in the limits. However, our review did point to four specific areas where additional help for people in residential care and nursing homes would be particularly welcome. We propose to increase the limits selectively, in accordance with those findings, to take effect at the same time as the general uprating of benefits in the week beginning 6 April 1987.

First, we propose to increase the limit for people in residential care homes for elderly people from £125 to £130. This compares with a level of £110 in April 1985 —an increase of approaching one fifth over two years.

Secondly, the new higher limit for very dependent elderly people or blind people in residential care homes which we introduced last July will be increased from £140 to £145. This limit permits significant allowance to be made for real variations in the needs of people in residential care homes not just for the elderly but also for the mentally ill and drug and alcohol abusers.

Thirdly, strong representations have been made to us on behalf of younger physically handicapped people in residential care homes, many of whom have very high needs for care. We propose to increase the limit which applies to them by £10 to £190.

Finally, we are increasing the limit for people in nursing homes for the elderly from £170 to £175. This means that the limits for these homes will have increased by more than one quarter in two years.

Taken together, the changes that we propose will continue to enable reasonable charges to be met in homes during the coming year, in which we expect to receive the proposals of the joint working party between central and local government which is due to report by Easter on the harmonisation of funding arrangements for residential care in the longer term.

AIDS

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what co-ordination there is between member countries on AIDS research within the World Health Organisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The World Health Organisation has set up a network of collaborating centres in member countries to undertake research on various aspects of prevention and control of AIDS. In addition the organisation's special programme on AIDS is to have a research and development component which will assist in co-ordinating the international multidisciplinary research effort into the disease.

Abortions

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women came to England and Wales from other European countries for abortions in the latest year for which figures are available; and if he will classify them by country of origin.

Mr. Newton: The available information is given in the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys publication "Abortion Statistics" series AB12 published October 1986, a copy of which is in the Library.

Councillors (Allowances)

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received about the financial loss suffered by some local authority councillors because of the interaction between their invalidity benefit and allowances paid for their council work; and what action he proposes to resolve the problem.

Mr. Major: There has been growing concern about the dilemma facing councillors dependent on invalidity benefit. Even if those councillors chose not to draw the allowance paid for each attendance on council duties, current rules mean that they may lose all their benefit as soon as the allowances for which they are ordinarily eligible exceed £25·50 a week. This is the maximum amount that someone is allowed to earn from work medically considered desirable while still fulfilling the basic benefit condition of incapacity for work. The same rules apply also to sickness benefit and severe disablement allowance, but with invalidity benefit in particular the financial loss can be considerable.

Experience shows that people with long-term sickness or disability can give valuable services as councillors even though they cannot undertake normal employment. It would be wrong if they were deterred by the rules of the benefit system from contributing to local democracy as elected representatives. These criticisms have been put to us by right hon. and hon. Members from all parts of the House and we take them seriously. We have decided that the rules must be changed in this special case.

We propose that in future councillors receiving sickness benefit, invalidity benefit or severe disablement allowance should not automatically lose all their weekly benefit (or, as happens in some cases at present, their benefit for the particular days worked) once their council allowances exceed £25.50. Instead, so long as a councillor remains eligible for the benefit on grounds of incapacity, it will be reduced pound for pound once allowances exceed £25.50. This change requires primary legislation, and we will make the necessary amendments to the Social Security Act 1975 at the first available opportunity. However, since we do not wish to deter candidates from standing for the local authority elections in May, I wish to make it clear now that we shall introduce new procedures in local offices to ensure that, to the extent that it is possible within existing legislation, the effect of the proposed new statutory arrangements will be achieved by ex gratia payments. This will take effect from early May.

Heart Disease

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the latest figures for the total costs of coronary heart disease to the community broken down into medical, social and economic categories.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 6 February 1987, c. *866*]: Comprehensive information on the social and economic cost of coronary heart disease to the community is not collected centrally. The impact on employment, social security and social and voluntary services is so diverse that a reliable national estimate cannot be made. The only information that I can give the hon. Member is based on estimates, breaking down the latest cost available by diagnostic group, which suggest that in 1984-85 the cost of coronary heart disease to the National Health Service was about £250 million.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 13th February 1987

DEFENCE

Hercules Tacamo

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Defence if any United Kingdom forces routinely use the US Navy's EC-130 Hercules Tacamo airborne aircraft for communications; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: United Kingdom forces do not use the US Navy's EC-130 Hercules Tacamo airborne aircraft for communications.

Boddam Island

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to establish defence facilities at Boddam Island in the Chagos Archipelago.

Mr. Stanley: Under the terms of the 1966 exchange of notes between the United Kingdom and the United States, the whole of the British Indian Ocean territory is available for defence purposes. We have no plans to establish any defence facilities on Boddam Island.

Sir John Moore's Barracks

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Defence what investigations are being undertaken into allegations of bullying in the junior leaders infantry battalion at Sir John Moore's barracks, Shorncliffe.

Mr. Freeman: A board of inquiry was convened to look into certain allegations concerning the battalion, and its report is under consideration.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many suicides have occurred since 1983 among recruits to the junior leaders infantry battalion at Sir John Moore's barracks, Shorncliffe.

Mr. Freeman: Between 1983 and 1986 there were none. The cause of the death of a junior soldier which occurred on 29 January 1987 has still to be determined.

Heysel Stadium (Riots)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Defence if disciplinary proceedings are still pending against any members of the armed forces in connection with their alleged part in the riots in the Heysel stadium in Brussels in May 1985; if any members of the armed forces were arrested by the Belgian police in connection with the riots but not proceeded against by the United Kingdom military authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: There are no members of the armed forces among those accused of offences in connection with the riot at the Heysel stadium.

Royal Navy (Drugs)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence what checks and searches are made on men and officers on boarding and disembarking Royal Navy vessels, in particular for drugs.

Mr. Freeman: As part of normal disciplinary procedures, men returning on board ships may be searched by the gangway staff. Random, occasional checks of baggage were carried out by ship's regulating staff to ensure that dutiable or prohibited goods are not landed. When HM ships return from abroad the normal customs procedures apply. Where there is any suspicion that drugs may be involved the RN special investigation squad undertakes a search.

Royal Navy (Ports of Call)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence what ports have been visited by HMS Ark Royal, HMS Wilton, HMS Hubberston, HMS Iveston, HMS Bronington and HMS Bossington in the last 18 months.

Mr. Stanley: Full records of visits by HM ships to United Kingdom ports are not generally retained. However, in the time available, the following information can be provided.

	Ports
HMS Ark Royal:	Hamburg, Amsterdam, Lisbon, New York, Fort Lauderdale, Norfolk VA, Gibraltar, Souda Bay, Marseilles;
HMS Wilton:	Delfzijl, Leixoes, Rouen, Jersey;
HMS Hubberston	Aarhus, Bremerhaven, Wemeldinge, Leixoes, Ystad, Guernsey;
HMS Iveston:	Aarhus, Bremerhaven, Ystad, Rosyth, Grimsby, Southend, Guernsey, Bristol, Liverpool;
HMS Bronington:	Aarhus, Bremerhaven, Leixoes, Ystad, Hull, Jersey;
HMS Bossington:	Aarhus, Bremerhaven, Leixoes, Ystad, Jersey, Ipswich, Bristol.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence what ports HMS London and HMS Juno visited in their last year of active service.

Mr. Stanley: Full records of visits by Her Majesty's ships to United Kingdom ports are not generally retained. However, in the time available, the following information can be provided.

HMS London paid off in March 1982. During her last full year of operational service, she made the following port visits:

Antwerp
Bremen
Ponta Delgada
Fort Lauderdale
Roosevelt Roads

Records of home visits during this period are no longer held.

HMS Juno is still part of the operational fleet. During the past 12 months, she has made the following port visits (base port not included):

Ponta Delgada
Antwerp
Bayonne
Leixoes
Bermuda
Eastbourne

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many drug offences have been recorded on board Royal Navy vessels in the last 18 months for which figures are available.

Mr. Freeman: I shall reply shortly.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will order an immediate investigation into drug use and trafficking on Royal Navy vessels.

Mr. Freeman: The recent press allegations about drug abuse and trafficking on board Her Majesty's ships are being investigated.

Bombs (Transportation)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the guidelines adhered to by his Department regarding the transportation of bombs.

Mr. Stanley: The transportation of military explosives, including bombs, by road, rail and sea is governed respectively by regulations contained in Statutory Instruments SI 1977 Nos. 888-890.

So far as nuclear weapons are concerned, the regulations applied by my Department are at least as stringent as those governing movements of civil radioactive material, which were set out by my hon. Friend the then Under-Secretary of State for Transport on 25 July 1983 at column 289.

Zircon Project

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether all expenditure so far incurred on project Zircon has been separately and specifically identified as such for the purposes of the scrutiny of his Department's accounts by the Comptroller and Auditor General; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Yes.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Five Star Developments

Mr. Michie asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has completed his consideration of the report concerning Torvinstyle Properties Ltd., trading as Five Star Developments; what action he proposes to take; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Information obtained concerning Torvinstyle Properties Ltd. remains under consideration.

Mailing Lists

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will introduce legislation to require all providers of mailing lists to subscribe to the Mailing Preference Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I recognise the value of the Mailing Preference Service to those individuals who wish to restrict the amount of unsolicited mail that they receive. Whilst I would encourage all providers of mailing lists to subscribe to the service, I have no plans to introduce legislation which would require them to do so.

Guinness plc

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has yet been informed by his Department's inspectors about the possible commission of criminal offences in relation to the Guinness takeover of Distillers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: It would not be in the public interest to give detailed information on the progress of this investigation.

Science and Technology Grants

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will specify the number of claims made for various science and technology grants to his Department during each year since 1979; and which of these claims were received from small companies.

Mr. Pattie: I will reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

International Telecommunications Union (Orbital Slots)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) when Her Majesty's Government last filed an orbital slot with the International Telecommunications Union;

(2) if he will place in the Library examples of data filed with the International Telecommunications Union in connection with orbital slots.

Mr. Butcher: I will reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Teachers (Recognition)

Mr. Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many teachers have recorded criminal convictions apart from motoring offences;

(2) how many teachers are currently approved by the Department of Education;

(3) how many teachers, as a result of recorded criminal convictions, have had their recognition either suspended or withdrawn by his Department.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information on the total number of recognised teachers is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Seven have had their recognition withdrawn and the continued recognition of a further three is currently being considered. Sixteen with convictions for offences considered not so serious as to warrant withdrawal of recognition currently hold teaching posts in grant-aided schools.

Moslem Community

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the estimated size of the Moslem community in Northern Ireland; what facilities exist for burials in accordance with the rites of the Moslem religion; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: In the 1981 census the number of persons in Northern Ireland who stated their religion to

be Mohammedan was 608. Responsibility for burials in Northern Ireland rests with district councils. I understand that none of the councils concerned provides burial facilities in accordance with the rites of the Moslem religion.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Calderstones Comprehensive School, Liverpool

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what consideration he has given to the disturbance of the children's education at Calderstones comprehensive school, Liverpool, following the proposed closure of the Morrison wing of that school;

(2) what consideration he has given to the timing of the proposals to close the Morrison wing of Calderstones comprehensive school.

Mr. Dunn: Arrangements for the disposal of the Morrison wing are entirely a matter for the Liverpool LEA.

English Language (A-level)

Mr. Robert Atkins asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what guidance he gives to boards as to the standards of spelling, syntax and use of the English language which should be required in A-level examinations.

Mrs. Rumbold: None. The GCE boards are independent bodies wholly responsible for the content and conduct of A-level examinations.

Nursery Education

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received regarding the provision of nursery education.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Select Committee on Education, Science and the Arts, in its report on achievement in primary schools, made some recommendations about nursery education, which the Government are considering, and the British Association for Early Childhood Education has asked to see my right hon. Friend about aspects of the education of under-fives.

School Population

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of the school population in each of the years 1978 to 1986, inclusive, attended *(a)* public schools, *(b)* direct grant and other fee-paying schools and *(c)* local education authority schools.

Mr. Dunn: Information on independent schools cannot be readily classified into public schools and other independent schools. The proportion of the school population in England in each of the years 1978 to 1986 who attended independent schools, direct grant schools and local education authority maintained schools was as follows:

January	*Independent schools* per cent.	*Direct grant schools*[1] per cent.	*Local education authority schools*[2] per cent.
1978	4·5	1·3	94·2
1979	4·7	1·2	94·1
1980	4·9	1·1	94·0
1981	6·0	0·1	93·9
1982	6·1	0·1	93·8
1983	6·2	0·1	93·7
1984	6·4	0·1	93·5
1985	6·5	0·1	93·4
1986	6·6	0·1	93·3

[1] Including direct grant nursery schools and non-maintained special schools.
[2] Maintained nursery, primary, middle, secondary and special schools.

Teachers (Pensions)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will allow teachers to include their national service years in calculation of their pension arrangements if their entry into the teaching profession was delayed by national service.

Mrs. Rumbold: No. My right hon. Friend has no intention of altering the present arrangements whereby teachers, in common with all other public servants, can count their national service for pension purposes only if it interrupted pensionable service.

Youth Organisations

Mr. Wainwright asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the total amount he expects to be spent in the current year in grants to national voluntary youth organisations; and what is expected to be the comparable amount in 1987-88.

Mr. Dunn: In the current financial year it is expected that grants to national voluntary youth organisations will total £2,546,180. Overall expenditure for 1987-88 has not yet been agreed.

"Bangladeshis in Britain"

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he intends to publish a response to the parts of the Home Affairs Committee report "Bangladeshis in Britain", relating to education; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government will be responding to all the Committee's recommendations in due course.

Science Budget

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the distribution of the science budget for 1987-88.

Mr. Walden: Having considered the recommendations of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils (ABRC), my right hon. Friend has decided that the science budget for 1987-88 should, subject to approval by Parliament of the Estimates in due course, be allocated as follows:

1987-88	£ million cash
Agricultural and Food Research Council	52·69
Economic and Social Research Council	24·24
Medical Research Council	133·47
Natural Environment Research Council	71·27
Science and Engineering Research Council	350·25
British Museum (Natural History)[1]	17·56
Royal Society	6·92
Fellowship of Engineering	0·64
Science Policy Studies (ABRC)	0·10
	657·14

[1] Including expenditure of £5·4 million by the Property Services Agency on behalf of the museum.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Police (Searches)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Attorney-General what criteria the Director of Public Prosecutions uses, when suggesting lines of inquiry to the police, to determine the desirability of searches of particular premises belonging to individuals or organisations; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General: The advice given to the police by the Director of Public Prosecutions will be such as seems to him, upon the relevant facts known to him at the time, to be desirable for the purposes of the relevant police investigation.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Clerkenwell Road (Break-in)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on the break-in at 27 Clerkenwell road, London, on the night of 26-27 January; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that on 27 January 1987 Mr. Sayed Hussain, an accountant, reported a break-in at his office at 27 Clerkenwell road, London. Mr. Hussain was initially unable to confirm that anything had been stolen but subsequently alleged that some documents had been removed. No arrests have been made and Mr. Hussain has now asked the police to cease their inquiries.

Refugees

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people who have applied for political asylum and refugee status since 1979 have been refused; and, of these, how many have been granted exceptional leave to remain.

Mr. Waddington: Figures for applications, grants and refusals (with separate figures for those refused asylum but granted leave to remain on exceptional grounds) for 1979 to 1985 were published in tables 1 and 5A-5F of Home Office Statistical Bulletin "Refugee Statistics, United Kingdom, 1985" (Issue 12/86). It is hoped to publish corresponding figures for 1986 by the end of April.

Deportation

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people in each of the last three years were charged with an offence and acquitted and were subsequently removed from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waddington: The information requested is not available. However, no person would be removed from the United Kingdom because of a criminal charge of which he had been acquitted.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many convicted people in each of the last three years were subsequently deported without a court recommendation.

Mr. Waddington: The information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many convicted people were also recommended for deportation by the courts in each of the last three years.

Mr. Waddington: The number of persons subject to court recommendations to deport were published for the years 1975 to 1985 in table 20 of "Control of Immigration: Statistics, United Kingdom 1985" (Cmnd. 9863). Corresponding numbers for the first three quarters of 1986 were published in table 14 of Home Office Statistical Bulletin "Control of Immigration: Statistics, Third Quarter 1986" (Issue 38/86). Figures for the year 1986 will be given in the next Statistical Bulletin in this series due to be published in the first half of March.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many people applied for political asylum and refugee status in 1986; and from which countries they came;

(2) how many people are currently awaiting a decision on their application for political asylum and refugee status; and from which countries they came;

(3) how many people were *(a)* granted political asylum and refugee status in 1986 and *(b)* granted exceptional leave to remain in 1986; and from which countries they came.

Mr. Waddington: This information is not yet available for the year 1986. It is hoped to publish the figures by the end of April in a Home Office Statistical Bulletin.

AIDS

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women in prison on 31 January who were known to be suffering from AIDS.

Mr. Mellor: There was no reported case, male of female, of diagnosed AIDS in the prison population of England and Wales on the date mentioned.

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the prisons in the United Kingdom that are able to treat inmates who are suffering from AIDS.

Mr. Mellor: As regards England and Wales, I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to his question on 16 December 1986 at column 479. The position elsewhere

in the United Kingdom is a matter for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Northern Ireland.

Fresh Start Project

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the prison establishments that are being used as part of the prison department exercise as to the possible working of the fresh start project.

Mr. Mellor: Each establishment will be reviewed under the fresh start arrangements. In the first phase, there are to be development exercises, scheduled to start before 1 April 1987, in the following establishments:

Acklington, Albany, Aldington, Ashwell, Bedford, Blantyre House, Camp Hill, Canterbury, Cookham Wood, East Sutton Park, Eastwood Park, Gartree, Gringley, Hatfield, Haverigg, Leeds, Lewes, Leyhill, Manchester, Onley, Portland, Reading, Rochester, Stafford, Stocken, Styal and Wayland.

Neighbourhood Watch Schemes

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many neighbourhood watch schemes have been established in *(a)* Burnley, *(b)* Pendle, *(c)* Lancashire, *(d)* Greater Manchester, *(e)* Merseyside and *(f)* Cheshire.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are 18 neighbourhood watch schemes in Burnley, five in Pendle, 88 in Lancashire, 2,888 in greater Manchester, 2,585 in Merseyside and 3,505 in Cheshire.

Police Officers (Specialist Traffic Duties)

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, pursuant to the answer given by the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) on 10 February, regarding the deployment of police officers on specialist traffic duties, he will state the estimated cost of providing the information covering the period prior to 1986 sought by the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The estimate of the proportion of police resources devoted to road traffic duties which I gave in response to the hon. Member's previous questions on this subject (5 February 1987, c.*783* and 10 February 1987, c.*174*) was derived from returns held on a computer. Returns for earlier years are stored manually and the records are not in a form which necessarily enables the information required to be extracted. The initial cost of examining the manual returns and extracting the immediately available information is estimated to be of the order of £300. Further costs are likely through follow-up inquiries to try to fill gaps or explain discrepancies.

Wapping (Police Equipment)

Mr. Benn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, giving details of all surveillance equipment employed by the police at Wapping on 24 January.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner that three video cameras were used to assist the policing of the demonstration.

Mr. Benn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, listing the full dimensions and specifications, including weight, of all authorised weapons carried or used by officers, mounted or on foot, of the Metropolitan police on 24 January at Wapping.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner that the normal truncheons were carried by foot and mounted officers. Some foot officers drew and used their truncheons but no mounted officers did so. The truncheon carried by foot officers is 15½ ins. long and weighs about 10 oz. Mounted officers carry two truncheons. One is 3 ft. long and weighs 1 lb; the other is 12 ins. long and weighs 9 oz.

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy over the future use of British Airways to return people deported from the United Kingdom following the privatisation of British Airways.

Mr. Waddington: We have no plans to change the existing practice of using British airlines whenever possible, but will keep the matter under review.

Students (Postal Votes)

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will now issue a circular to electoral registration officers advising them that all bona fide students are entitled to a postal vote using form RPF7.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. We issued a circular letter to electoral registration officers on 6 February which advised them that students who cannot reasonably be expected to vote in person at a particular election because they will be away from their qualifying address will be able to apply for an absent vote at that election on the appropriate form, form RPF9. A copy of the circular (RPA 307) is in the Library.

Mr. Ramasamy Rajendrau

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department why, in the light of the letter of 9 December 1986 from the Home Department to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West, referring him to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office regarding the case of Mr. Ramasamy Rajendrau, the hon. Member subsequently received a letter from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office dated 26 January 1987, referring him back to the Home Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington; Mr. Ramasamy's application was apparently referred by the High Commission in Kuala Lumpur to the Home Office for a decision on 28 October, but the papers went astray in transit. When I wrote to the hon. Member on 9 December I was therefore unaware that the case had been so referred. Having contacted the British High Commission in Kuala Lumpur, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office was able to establish the true position, and this was explained in the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State's letter of 26 January. A further copy of the referral report has now been obtained. I regret the delays that have occurred and shall write to the hon. Member as soon as a decision on the application has been reached.

WALES

European Regional Development Fund

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will specify what grants have been allocated to Wals from the European regional development fund during each year since its inception; how many of these allocations have been de-committed each year; and for what reasons.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The information requested is shown in the table:

Year	*Gross commitment (£ million)*	*Number of projects committed (£ million)*	*Amount decommitted*[1]	*Number of projects decommitted*[2]
1975	6·2	122	—	—
1976	8·4	116	—	—
1977	7·1	119	0·6	—
1978	17·1	93	—	—
1979	25·6	85	3·9	—
1980	33·0	107	0·6	—
1981	25·5	92	0·7	5
1982	50·7	99	3·3	13
1983	47·3	136	2·2	16
1984	65·6	113	2·6	6
1985	56·9	100	1·9	8
1986	59·5	119	—	—

Figures have been rounded.

[1]Total grant de-commitment; includes projects which have been de-committed in whole or in part.

[2]Relates to entire schemes which have not proceeded as originally intended by the responsible organisation. In addition there are a number of schemes which have not reached the maximum eligible expenditure and a small, residual amount of grant has been de-committed in each case. No records are available of individual project de-commitments prior to 1981.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many people work on the Welsh Development Agency industrial estates; and what are the corresponding figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The information is as follows:

Number of persons working on Welsh Development Agency industrial estates

As at 31 March each year	*Number*
1978-79	58,575
1979-80	55,525
1980-81	47,698
1981-82	44,735
1982-83	42,791
1983-84	43,160
1984-85	43,187
1985-86	43,658

The figures do not include Welsh Development Agency staff located at the agency's offices at Treforest.

Migration Statistics

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what was the rate of inward migration and outward migration in each district authority area in Wales during the last decade for which figures are available.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Information on gross migration flows at a district level is available only from the 1981 census and this is given in the following table:

District	*Migrants*[1] *in the year preceding the 1981 census per 1,000 usual residents*	
	Inward	*Outward*[2]
Alyn and Deeside	39·3	37·7
Colwyn	48·2	36·7
Delyn	36·8	31·8
Glyndwr	40·5	29·8
Rhuddlan	43·7	31·0
Wrexham Maelor	23·5	18·8
Carmarthen	34·4	31·5
Ceredigion	46·0	32·6
Dinefwr	33·4	24·5
Llanelli	15·5	16·3
Preseli	39·3	30·4
South Pembrokeshire	39·9	26·7
Blaenau Gwent	12·7	16·4
Islwyn	18·2	20·9
Monmouth	44·0	34·3
Newport	23·7	21·3
Torfaen	21·6	19·6
Aberconwy	36·3	29·3
Arfon	28·7	29·6
Dwyfor	24·9	23·4
Meirionnydd	33·5	29·6
Ynys Mon	39·7	31·5
Cynon Valley	12·6	16·7
Merthyr Tydfil	13·3	14·6
Ogwr	20·0	18·3
Rhondda	11·0	12·5
Rhymney Valley	19·9	21·6
Taff-Ely	28·4	27·1
Brecknock	50·0	34·2
Montgomery	30·6	22·4
Radnor	43·5	30·2
Cardiff	26·5	28·5
Vale of Glamorgan	47·5	38·3
Port Talbot (Afan)	11·4	18·3
Lliw Valley	29·1	25·3
Neath	20·2	17·6
Swansea	20·8	21·8

[1] Excluding those under one year of age.
[2] Excluding those who moved outside Great Britain.
Source: 1981 census regional migration (part 1) and county reports for Wales.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many people from outside Wales came to live in Wales in each year since 1979; and how many people left Wales to live elsewhere in each of those years.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Estimates of migration into and out of Wales are given in the following table. These are estimated from changes notified within the United Kingdom to the National Health Service central register and from the international passenger survey. Migration between the United Kingdom and the Irish Republic is not included.

Year	*Migrants in thousands*	
	Into Wales	*Out of Wales*
1979[1,2]	55	51
1980[1,2]	51	54

Year	Migrants in thousands Into Wales	Out of Wales
1981[1]	48	53
1982[1]	52	53
1983[1]	49	52
1984[1]	52	50
1985	57	52

[1] Prior to April 1984 estimates of internal movement were based on a 10 per cent. sample of NHSCR data; since then a full count of transfers has been made.
[2] Estimates for 1979 and 1980 exclude Northern Ireland.
Source: OPCS

Local Government

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the future of local government development plans in Wales.

Mr. Mark Robinson: A paper, "The Future of Development Plans", was issued by the Welsh Office for consultation on September 15 1986. A copy of this paper is available in the House of Commons Library. The Department of the Environment is undertaking a parallel exercise in England. The closing date for comments is 14 March 1987.

Loft Insulation

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will indicate the total amounts made available in Wales for loft insulation grants in each of the years 1979 to 1987; and what he expects it to be in 1987-88.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Welsh local authorities' homes scheme allocations for the financial years 1979-80 to 1986-87 are as follows:

	£ million
1979-80	1·473
1980-81	1·136
1981-82	1·500
1982-83	2·196
1983-84	1·965
1984-85	3·772
1985-86	2·920
1986-87	2·680

The allocation for 1987-88 is £2·338 million and, as in the previous year, the bids made by local authorities have been met in full.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Beirut (Refugees)

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will send immediate medical and food aid to assist Palestinian refugees trapped in the Bourg el Barajneh camp in Beirut.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Government are deeply distressed at the situation in and around the refugee camps. We shall continue to call upon all parties to the fighting to observe humanitarian conventions and to allow relief workers to carry out their essential tasks. As soon as this is possible we shall be ready to respond urgently to requests for emergency aid.

TRANSPORT

Settle-Carlisle Railway Line

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the financial case submitted by British Rail regarding the proposed closure of the Settle-Carlisle railway line.

Mr. David Mitchell: I understand that copies of the full financial case are now available from British Rail.

British Rail (Finance)

Mr. Haynes asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy towards the extent to which the commercial operations of the British Railways Board should be profitable in every individual year, rather than over a period of years.

Mr. David Mitchell: The objectives set for the board last October do not specify a level of profitability for each individual year, but we have made it clear that we want the commercial businesses to improve their financial performance and to achieve a return of 2·7 per cent. on net assets by 1989-90.

Bus Services

Mr. Evans asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has about changes in bus mileage in the north-west region in the past 12 months.

Mr. David Mitchell: Some reductions in bus mileage have occurred in greater Manchester and Merseyside in the last 12 months. Otherwise I am not aware of any major changes in the north west.

Severn Bridge

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement regarding the progress of repair work on the Severn bridge.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Work for the strengthening of the Severn crossing is well under way. The first two contracts, for the provision of improved access and for strengthening the Aust viaduct at the eastern end of the crossing, are complete. A third contract for the supply of new hangers for the suspension bridge is in progress. Tenders for the fourth contract for the major strengthening works are due back on 23 February 1987; this is planned to be a two-year contract, to be completed in spring 1989. A fifth contract, for protection works to some of the river piers against possible shipping collision, is expected to be let later this year. Following the major strengthening work, the entire crossing will be completely resurfaced in 1989-90, for the first time since it was opened in 1966.

Tutbury Bypass

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has about the cause of the delay in the construction of the Tutbury bypass near Burton-upon-Trent.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Tutbury bypass is a Staffordshire county council scheme. The council's orders, published last September, attracted five objections. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will arrange a public inquiry if requested to do so by the county council.

A1 (Accidents)

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many accidents involving death or injury occurred on the A1 between Morpeth and the Scottish border in the most recent years for which figures are available; whether he will calculate these figures as a proportion of the traffic flow on that section of road; and what is the average for the A1 road system as a whole.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The numbers of accidents involving death or personal injury which have occurred on the A1 between Morpeth and the Scottish border were:

	Numbers
1984	59
1985	66
1986	56

Measured against the volume of traffic carried, this gives an accident rate of 0·35 accidents per million vehicle kilometres. The comparable rate for all A roads is 0·78.

Redundancy Payments (Compensation)

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for Transport when payments will be made to passenger transport executives and district councils in reimbursement for the liabilities for redundancy compensation which they incurred during 1986-87 in respect of their bus operations.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend announced on 4 June 1986 at column *598* that passenger transport executives and those shire districts with municipal bus companies would be reimbursed for additional costs resulting specifically from the effects which bringing forward the abolition of redundancy rebate would have on the special circumstances of their bus operations. Parliamentary approval for these payments will be sought in a Supplementary Supply Estimate for the local roads and transport vote (VIII, 5), and in respect of payments in Scotland for the roads, transport and environmental services Scotland vote (XVI, 6). Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £7·255 million will be met by repayable advances from the Contingencies Fund.

Channel Tunnel (Select Committee)

Mr. Rowe asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether the Government intend to issue a reply to the recommendations of the Select Committee on the Channel Tunnel Bill in its special report, Session 1986-87: HC34.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Government's reply to the recommendations in the Select Committee's special report has now been issued and a copy placed in the Library.

Railways (Electrification)

Sir Anthony Grant asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will receive a deputation from the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West, to discuss the proposal by British Rail for the electrification of the railway line between Cambridge and Royston; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I am studying a proposal from British Rail for electrification of the line between Royston and Cambridge. I shall be happy to listen to a deputation led by my hon. Friend.

Lighthouse Services

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the current system of financing lighthouse services in the United Kingdom; what plans there are to harmonise systems within the European Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My Department has received a wide range of representations about the financing of these services. We have no plans for harmonisation. The Government think that, if feasible, the costs should be met by those who use the services. We propose to extend light dues liability to the larger fishing vessels that are exempt at present. Nearly all pleasure craft are also exempt and many use the services. We think that the costs of recovering dues from them would be disproportionate to the likely revenue.

ENVIRONMENT

Home Insulation

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will indicate the total amounts available for loft insulation grants in England in each of the years 1979 to 1987; and what he expects it to be in 1987-88.

Mr. Tracey: There can never be a total amount available since local authorities can, with the approval of the Department, switch resources from their housing investment programme to the homes insulation scheme. However, the expenditure on loft insulation grants for the financial years from 1979 was as follows:

	£ million
1979-80	14·3
1980-81	14·6
1981-82	21·5
1982-83	26·5
1983-84	22·3
1984-85	22·4
1985-86	24·6
1986-87	[1]22·5

[1] Estimated

As my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction made clear in his announcement on 19 December at column *748*, £15 million is being made available for the homes insulation scheme in 1987-88.

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his policy on the homes insulation scheme, in the light of the proposals made to him by Neighbourhood Energy Action.

Mr. John Patten: I shall answer this question shortly.

London Local Authorities

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the total number of written communications between his Department and local authorities in the Greater London area in *(a)* 1979-80 and *(b)* 1986-87 to date.

Mr. Chope: No central record is kept of written communications between the Department and local authorities.

Departmental Services

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all functions and responsibilities currently undertaken by any central division or organisation within his Department which is concerned with local authority services solely within the Greater London area, stating the total estimated cost to public funds in 1986-87 and the total number of officials involved.

Mr. Chope: The divisions within my Department's central headquarters have no responsibilities or functions that relate solely to local authority services within the greater London area.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all regional or sub-regional outposts of his Department responsible for functions or services within the Greater London area, stating the functions and responsibilities of such outposts and giving the total cost of such offices to public funds in 1986-87 and the total number of officials involved.

Mr. Chope: The Department's greater London regional office's main functions lie in the fields of housing, planning, the urban programme, land registers and derelict land, together with liaison with the London Docklands Development Corporation and the London Residuary Body. Staff in post total 128. The estimated costs for 1986-87 are about £2,317,000.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the additional functions and responsibilities undertaken by his Department of a temporary or permanent kind as a result of the abolition of the Greater London council, stating the total estimated cost to public funds in 1986-87 and the total number of officials involved.

Mr. Chope: The Local Government Act 1985 conferred on my right hon. Friend a number of duties, controls and powers, including those in relation to the London Residuary Body and other successor authorities. However, the main specific responsibilities undertaken by my right hon. Friend as a direct result of the abolition of the Greater London council are:

- the laying before Parliament of a report in February 1986 on the transfer of functions related to the protection and enjoyment of the countryside, under Section 7 of the 1985 Act.
- the initial preparation of strategic guidance under Schedule 1 to the 1985 Act.

The estimated cost, including accommodation and overheads, during 1986-87 of the six staff that were engaged on the above functions at one time or another is about £55,000.

Staff time devoted to a number of abolition matters in London cannot readily be distinguished from that spent on abolition in all metropolitan counties, with which I am dealing in a separate answer.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what action he has taken since the abolition of the Greater London council to ensure that the functions and responsibilities of his Department and its related non-departmental public bodies dealing with the Greater London area are co-ordinated with each other;

(2) if he will make a statement on measures adopted by the Department of the Environment since the abolition of the Greater London council to ensure that the functions and responsibilities of that Department and its related non-departmental public bodies dealing with the Greater London area are co-ordinated with those of other departments and their related bodies in London matters.

Mr. Chope: The Department, other departments and quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations consult each other as appropriate on matters of mutual concern.

London Docklands

Mr. Mikardo asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the answer of 27 January, *Official Report*, column *169*, concerning the price of land to be sold to the Canary Wharf Consortium by the London Docklands Development Corporation, what factors, other than land price, will be taken into account in assessing the terms of the agreement overall; whether the consideration of other factors excludes acceptance of a price below the market value of land in the enterprise zone; if he will list all the previous occasions on which land for which he has any responsibility has been sold at a price below the market value as a result of priority being given to other factors involved in the transaction; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I shall answer this question shortly.

Rate Support Grant

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the rate support grant, in cash terms, for the borough of Slough for each year since 1979; and what is the percentage difference between the 1979 figure and the most recent figure available.

Mr. Chope: The figures requested are provided in the table.

The figures for 1979-80 and 1980-81 are not comparable with those for 1981-82 to 1986-87 because they comprise the needs, resources and domestic elements whereas from 1981-82 onwards the figures comprise block grant and domestic rate relief grant.

All figures are in cash terms. Those for 1979-80 to 1982-83 are final entitlements. Domestic rate relief grant figures for 1983-84 and 1984-85 are final entitlement; those for 1985-86, and 1986-87 are first estimates. Block grant figures for 1983-84 and 1984-85 are entitlements after holdback based upon provisional outturn; those for 1985-86 are entitlements after holdback based on budgets; those for 1986-87 are entitlements based on initial budget returns.

Borough of Slough rate support grant in cash terms

	£ million
1979-80	3·08
1980-81	3·37
1981-82	3·08
1982-83	2·89
1983-84	3·79
1984-85	3·13
1985-86	3·21
1986-87	5·24

The percentage difference between the 1979 figure and the most recent figure available for rate support grant is a 70·13 per cent. increase.

THE ARTS

British Library

Mr. Fisher asked the Minister for the Arts (1) what estimates he has for the construction costs of the new British Library on completion;

(2) what estimates he has for the construction costs of each phase of the building of the new British Library.

Mr. Luce: The latest estimated cost of stage 1A, the stage so far approved, including the cost of design and supervison of construction, is £218 million at 1986 prices. No decisions have been taken on subsequent stages.

Mr. Fisher asked the Minister for the Arts what schedules he has for the completion of each phase of the construction of the new British Library.

Mr. Luce: Stage 1A of the project, the stage so far approved, is due for completion in 1993. No decisions have been taken on subsequent stages.

Area Museum Councils

Mr. Terry Davis asked the Minister for the Arts when the Office of Arts and Libraries will pay the money which was due to area museum councils in March 1986.

Mr. Luce: I regret that the final instalment of grant payments due to the seven English area museum councils in 1985-86 was not paid because of an administrative oversight in the Office of Arts and Libraries. I have made arrangements to pay a proportion of these payments at once and the balance on 1 April this year. The payments due in 1986-87 have already been made in full.

Mr. Nellist asked the Minister for the Arts when the grant aid due to area museum councils in March 1986 will now be made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I refer the hon. Member to my reply given to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) today.

CIVIL SERVICE

Recruitment

Mr. Wareing asked the Minister for the Civil Service (1) what percentage of *(a)* external male appointees and *(b)* external female appointees to administration posts in the home Civil Service attended, as their last school attended (i) public schools, (ii) direct grant and other fee-paying schools and (iii) local education authority schools in each of the years 1979 to 1986;

(2) what percentage of *(a)* external male applicants and *(b)* external female applicants for administration posts in the home Civil Service attended, as their last school attended (i) public schools, (ii) direct grant and other fee-paying schools and (iii) local education authority schools in each of the years 1979 to 1986.

Mr. Luce: Recruitment to administration posts in the home Civil Service is mainly undertaken by individual departments and statistics on the schools background of appointees and applicants are not kept centrally.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Income Tax

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total amount paid in income tax for the tax year 1985-86 by persons who earned less than the national average wage showing the percentage of the total income tax revenue that this figure represents.

Mr. Norman Lamont: In 1985-86 average earnings were about £10,300 for male employees paid at adult rates with pay unaffected by absence. Taxpaying single people and married couples with gross incomes for income tax purposes below this level had income tax liabilities of about £12 billion in 1985-86, approximately 30 per cent. of total income tax liability.

Concessionary Fuel

Mr. Woodcock asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) whether he has any plans to review extra-statutory concessions in relation to concessionary fuel supplied to miners;

(2) if he will estimate the loss to the Treasury resulting from extra-statutory concessions allowed in relation to concessionary coal supplied to mine workers.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The concession relating to miners' concessionary coal is, like all extra-statutory concessions, reviewed from time to time. The cost of the concession is estimated to be about £15 million annually.

Milk Outgoers Scheme

Mr. Colvin asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how he intends to treat the new milk outgoers scheme for tax purposes.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I assume that my hon. Friend is referring to payments under the Milk (Community Outgoers) scheme or the Milk (Partial Cessation of Production) scheme. Under these, outgoers can opt for the payments to take one of two forms: compensation for the loss of their quota, which is liable to capital gains tax, or compensation for the loss of profit, which counts as income for tax purposes. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has taken steps to inform those applying for compensation of the tax position before they decide between the two options.

Share Dealings

Mr. Beith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the implications for the Government's policy on the spread of shareholdings of the incidence of dealings in shares of newly privatised companies on the stock exchange before letters of allotment have been sent out; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

SCOTLAND

Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will take steps to provide for the representation of the Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel on the Ambulancemen's Whitley council.

Mr. John MacKay: By long-standing convention, the composition of the staff sides of the NHS Whitley councils is a matter for determination by the staff sides themselves. I have no power to compel the staff side of the ambulance Whitley council to allow representation of the Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel on the staff side of that council. I can say, however, that the Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel has been granted full local recognition within the Scottish ambulance service.

Conifer Planting

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland on what grounds the Forestry Commission bases its advice that conifers should be planted at least 15 to 20 m back from main watercourses; what account is taken of local geography in reaching this assessment; and in what ways the Forestry Commission establishes whether this advice has been observed by planters.

Mr. John MacKay: The Forestry Commission's advice on this matter is published in its leaflet "The Management of Forest Streams", a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House. This leaflet recommends that, depending on the land form, the area to be kept free of conifers at each side of the watercourse should be about 10 times the width of the watercourse up to a maximum of 30 m. This is to avoid dense shading which would block out the sunlight that is essential if water plants and fish food organisms are to flourish. Such areas also provide ground through which water from drainage channels can be filtered to remove silt, space in which broadleaved trees can be planted for landscaping and to improve stream habitats, and easy access for anglers and walkers. The commission monitors whether such advice is being observed in the course of inspections of planting for which grants have been claimed.

Rape

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many men have been prosecuted for rape in each of the last five years in Scotland; how many have been convicted in each of these years; of these, how many have not been sent to prison; and how many have been sentenced to terms of imprisonment of not less than three years, between three and five years, between five and 10 years and over 10 years, respectively.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is set out in the table below:

Persons proceeded against for rape, Scotland

	1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Total	64	55	52	43	80
Charge proved	40	31	30	20	39
Sentenced to imprisonment[1]	38	30	22	18	36
Of which:					
Up to three years	13	6	4	6	11
Over three years and up to five years	12	9	8	3	9
Over five years and up to ten years	13	12	9	8	15
Over 10 years	—	2	1	1	1
Life	—	1	—	—	—
Sentences other than imprisonment	2	1	8	2	3
Of which:					
Fine	1	1	1	1	—
Detention of child	1	—	3	—	3
Hospital order	—	—	1	1	—
Probation	—	—	2	—	—
Detention centre	—	—	1	—	—

[1] including detention in a young offenders institution

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people in Scotland have been prosecuted during the last five years for committing the offence of rape having already served a sentence of imprisonment for that offence; and what were the sentences administered.

Mr. Lang: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Health Service (Consultants)

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the total cost of management consultants engaged by the Scottish Home and Health Department to advise on management arrangements in the Health Service in Scotland; and what savings have been achieved as a result of this work.

Mr. John MacKay: The Scottish Home and Health Department commissioned Coopers and Lybrand Associates to review unit management arrangements in the Scottish Health Service and to make recommendations about the introduction of general management at unit level. The total cost of this research, the production of detailed working papers, some additional work commissioned in connection with the research and the printing of the final report was £118,126, including expenses and value-added tax.

The introduction of general management is intended to ensure the efficient, effective and economic use of the substantial resources allocated to health boards. It is not possible to quantify specific savings arising out of the work undertaken by Coopers and Lybrand Associates.

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the cost, broken down by individual health board, of management consultants engaged by the various health boards during the financial years 1984-85 and 1985-86, giving details of the payments made to each firm; and what financial savings have resulted.

Mr. John MacKay: This information is not held centrally.

Population Statistics

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his most recent estimate of the population of *(a)* Dundee, *(b)* Tayside and *(c)* Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: The most recent estimates of population published by the registrar general relate to 30 June 1985. They are:

	Population
Dundee	177,674
Tayside	394,322
Scotland	5,136,509

Radiation

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will now publish in full the assessment of dose effect relationships referred to on page 118 of the National Radiological Protection Board publication M139.

Mr. Ancram: The Scottish Development Department will publish shortly the Scottish monitoring data relating to the Chernobyl accident for the period up to December 1986. The publication will contain dose assessments.

EC (Food Stores)

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if those on *(a)* supplementary benefit, *(b)* housing benefit and *(c)* family income supplement in Scotland will qualify for free food from European Economic Community intervention food stores in the eight-week European Economic Community campaign; and what monitoring procedures are being undertaken to ensure those eligible receive such food.

Mr. John MacKay: Assessment of eligibility is for the charities themselves, but the Government regard the most needy as including those on supplementary benefit and family income supplement, and other groups of people who are either homeless, living in hostels, attending feeding centres, receiving meals on wheels or very disadvantaged in other ways.

Loft Insulation Grants

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will indicate the total amounts made available in Scotland for loft insulation grants in each of the years 1979 to 1987; and what he expects it to be in 1987-88.

Mr. Ancram: The amounts made available to local authorities in Scotland for loft insulation grants in each of the years 1978-79 to 1986-87 were as follows:

	£ million
1978-79	1·64
1979-80	2·30
1980-81	2·67
1981-82	2·44
1982-83	2·33
1983-84	2·33
1984-85	2·88
1985-86	2·35
1986-87	2·19

The amount available for allocation in 1987-88 has still to be determined.

Agricultural Land

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his policy for planning guidance on development involving agricultural land.

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. and learned Friend will shortly consult interested parties with a view to producing revised guidance on development involving agricultural land.

Community Charge

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the percentage of the charges due which he expects to be actually collected by local authorities under the proposed community charge system.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. and learned Friend expects that local authorities will make every effort to collect all the community charges due under the new arrangements.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Police (Searches)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland what criteria procurators fiscal use, when suggesting lines of inquiry to the police, to determine the desirability of searches of particular premises belonging to individuals or organisations; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The procurator fiscal in Scotland is entitled to direct the police regarding the investigation of criminal offences. In cases where he gives such directions the lines of inquiry which are considered appropriate in individual cases will depend upon the facts and circumstances of those particular cases.

In general terms, the procurator fiscal will require to be satisfied, having regard to the nature and seriousness of the suspected offence and the necessity to secure evidence, that he is legally justified in applying to the sheriff for a search warrant. Among the factors to be considered will be whether the holder of evidence is prepared to hand it over without recourse to formal legal process.

Domestic Violence

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he is satisfied with the adequacy of current safeguards for both the victims and the accused in cases of domestic assault in the light of experience with the operation of the Lord Advocate's guidelines on the subject with particular reference to the extent to which the interpretation of the guidelines is a matter for individual police officers in specific cases; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The guidelines issued by my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate provide a source of general advice to police officers and cannot remove the need for the exercise of discretion in individual cases.

I am aware of the widespread concern in respect of domestic violence and share that concern. The matter is under constant review and every effort is made to ensure that such incidents are dealt with promptly and in an even-handed manner.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if, in the light of the proposals in the report by Scottish Women's Aid, a copy of which has been sent to him, he has any plans to issue guidelines to procurators fiscal on the police response to domestic assault; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Procurators fiscal are aware of the revised guidelines issued to chief constables. There are no plans at present to issue further advice or directions to procurators fiscal.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if the Lord Advocate intends to issue guidelines on the police response to domestic violence in the light of the recent incident in which a man died after he was left by the police outside in the snow following an intervention by them in a domestic quarrel; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: There are no plans to issue guidelines on this matter at present.

EMPLOYMENT

Skillcentres

Mr. Thurnham asked the Paymaster General what is the number of skillcentres located in each of the Manpower Services Commission's education and training group's areas in the north-west region.

Mr. Trippier: There are nine skillcentres in the Manpower Services Commission's vocational education and training group's north west region, as follows:

MSC VETG Area Office	*Number of skillcentres*
Greater Manchester North Area Office	2
Lancashire Area Office	2
Cumbria Area Office	1
Cheshire Area Office	1
Greater Manchester Central Area Office	1
Merseyside Inner Area Office	1
Merseyside Outer Area Office	1
Total	9

Youth Opportunities Programme

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General how many people were engaged in the youth opportunities programme for each month of June to August 1983, inclusive; and what was the estimated effect on the number of people registered as unemployed for each of the relevant months.

Mr. Trippier: The numbers of young people engaged in the youth opportunities programme in the months of June, July and August 1983 were as follows:

	Numbers
June 1983	154,409
July 1983	127,800
August 1983	100,040

It is difficult to estimate the effects on the unemployment count as this varies with the different types of scheme offered under the youth opportunities programme and depends on a number of uncertain assumptions. However, on average around 85 per cent. might have been otherwise unemployed during that period.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Madden asked the Paymaster General (1) how many women in Bradford are employed in firms with fewer than 10 employees;

(2) how many women in Bradford are employed for less than 20 hours a week;

(3) how many women in Bradford are in employment; and how many began new jobs on or after 1 June 1985.

Mr. Lee: The precise information requested is not available.

Employment statistics for local areas are obtained from censuses of employment and the most recent are for September 1981. The September 1984 census estimates for local areas are not yet available. Analyses by size of firm or actual numbers of hours worked are not available but, at September 1981, there were 78,000 women employed in the Bradford travel-to-work area (1984 definition) of which 33,500 were working not more than 30 hours a week. My Department has no information about the numbers taking up new jobs.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Paymaster General how many people are unemployed in Slough, by sex, who have been unemployed for *(a)* less than six months, *(b)* six months to one year, *(c)* one year to two years, and *(d)* over two years, respectively.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. The table shows the numbers of unemployed male and female claimants who had been unemployed for the durations requested at 9 October 1986, the latest date for which such an analysis is available, in the Slough local authority district.

Unemployed claimants in the Slough local authority district at 9 October 1986

	Male	*Female*
Under six months	1,307	775
Six months to one year	606	305
One to two years	435	168
Over two years	679	249
Total unemployed	3,027	1,497

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Paymaster General how many people are unemployed in Slough, by sex, who are *(a)* under 25 years, *(b)* 25 years to 35 years, *(c)* 35 years to 50 years and *(d)* over 50 years of age, respectively.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. The table shows the numbers of unemployed male and female claimants in the age groups requested at 9 October 1986, the latest date for which such an analysis is available, in the Slough local authority district.

Unemployed claimants in the Slough local authority district at 9 October 1986

	Male	*Female*
Under 25 years	741	552
25-34 years	732	414
35-49 years	726	286
Over 50 years	828	245
Total unemployed	3,027	1,497

Information Technology

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General how many information technology centres there are in Lancashire; and if he will indicate the number of places at each centre.

Mr. Trippier: There are six information technology centres (ITeCs) in the county of Lancashire.

The number of YTS places at each centre is:

	Number
Blackburn ITeC	61
Burnley ITeC	46
Fylde Coast (Blackpool) ITeC	46
Lancaster ITeC	37
Preston ITeC	62
West Lancashire (Skelmersdale) ITeC	52

ITeCs are, however, independent training providers and are therefore free to determine the numbers and type of other training places that they offer.

Community Programme

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Paymaster General (1) if participants in the community programme are eligible for unemployment benefit on the days when they are not working on the programme;

(2) if he has any plans to alter the full extent normal rule to make community programme participants ineligible for unemployment benefits.

Mr. Lee: Social security legislation precludes the payment of unemployment benefit to anyone who establishes a pattern of regular working the same number of days each week. Decisions on individual claims are made by independent adjudicating authorities taking into account the particular circumstances of each case.

The amendment of social security legislation is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services.

European Social Fund

Mr. Wainwright asked the Paymaster General if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the nature and amount of aid currently received from the European social fund in each of the Huddersfield, Castleford, Pontefract, Normanton, Barnsley, Dewsbury, Oakefield and Hemsworth areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: No comprehensive figures are available for the amount of European social fund support allocated to the industrial areas cited. However, the European Commission allocated the following amounts from the European social fund for employment and training measures taking place in 1986 to local authorities, private companies, industrial training boards and voluntary bodies in west and south Yorkshire:

	£ million
West Yorkshire	5·45
South Yorkshire	1·63

The above figures do not include social fund support for national programmes of employment and training which operate in the areas cited. The United Kingdom Government will continue to support applications to the European social fund from the areas cited as it does applications from all areas of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Simon Montgomery

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Paymaster General if he will provide details of the time, date and place of the appeal board hearing concerning disciplinary proceedings against Mr. Simon Montgomery, a clerical officer in his Department; and if he will give the reasons for the five-month delay in the board's hearing.

Mr. Lee: The appeal board hearing concerning dismissal proceedings against Mr. Simon Montgomery, a former clerical officer in this Department, commenced at 10.30 am on 12 February 1987 at 11 Belgrave road, London.

Mr. Montgomery was given notice of his dismissal on 3 September 1986 to take effect on 17 October 1986. It is understood that his initial appeal to the Civil Service Appeal Board was reviewed by the board on 29 September followed by his main statement on 14 October 1986. The departmental response was received on 5 November 1986. The Civil Service Appeal Board then scheduled the earliest convenient date to all parties, as is its usual procedure.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Paymaster General on what basis Mr. Simon Montgomery, a clerical officer in the Hove unemployment benefit office, was dismissed from duty on 18 December 1986; and if he will detail specifically the disciplinary charges levelled against him.

Mr. Lee: Mr. Simon Montgomery was dismissed from duty in my Department from 17 October 1986 after four separate incidents relating to his work over a period of some two years, each of which led either to a warning about his future conduct or to a disciplinary penalty. More detailed information of the kind sought is properly a confidential matter between employer and employee, as laid down in the Civil Service pay and conditions code agreed with the Civil Service unions. A copy of the latter is available in the House of Commons Library.

Birmingham Adjudication Office

Mr. Terry Davis asked the Paymaster General how many claims were under consideration at the adjudication office in Birmingham *(a)* on 31 December 1986 and *(b)* on 31 January 1987; and how many claims had been held there for more than a month on both dates.

Mr. Lee: The number of cases under consideration at the Birmingham adjudication office on 31 December 1986 was 6,170, of which 2,596 cases were held there for one month or more.

The number of cases under consideration at the adjudication office in Birmingham on 31 January 1987 was 5,049, of which 1,730 cases were held there for one month or more.

YTS

Mr. Favell asked the Paymaster General how many people are currently working in *(a)* the coal industry and *(b)* the electrical supply industry under the YTS programme.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 February 1987, c. *604*]: I regret that, in my earlier reply, the number of young people in training on YTS in the electrical supply industry in England and Wales was wrongly attributed to the Central Electricity Generating Board. I apologise for any inconvenience caused by this error.

Professional and Executive Recruitment

Mr. Wigley asked the Paymaster General how many people have been placed in jobs in Wales by Professional and Executive Recruitment in each year since its establishment and during each of those years *(a)* how many people from outside Wales were placed in jobs inside Wales *(b)* how many people from Wales were placed in jobs in Wales and *(c)* how many people from Wales were placed in jobs outside Wales.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 February 1987]: The number of people placed in jobs in Wales by Professional and Executive Recruitment in each year since April 1977 is shown in the table. Figures are no longer available for the three previous years.

The information sought in the remainder of the question is not recorded.

	Number
April 1986—January 1987	773
April 1985—March 1986	771
April 1984—March 1985	684
April 1983—March 1984	1,072
April 1982—March 1983	591
April 1981—March 1982	278
April 1980—March 1981	267
April 1979—March 1980	370
April 1978—March 1979	439
April 1977—March 1978	277

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Pike asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the latest estimate of spending by all European Economic Community countries on the common agricultural policy; and what is the estimate for 1987-88.

Mr. Jopling: The provisional estimate for total Community expenditure on the CAP in 1986 is about 23,000 mecus (£14,900 million). For 1987 the Community's draft budget includes 24,152 mecus (£15,500 million) for CAP measures. Figures for 1988 are not yet available.

Fish Stocks

Mr. John Townend asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if the Government have any plans to co-operate with the Norwegian Government to reduce the growing damage done to the fish stocks in the North sea by seals.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Whisky Industry

Mr. Canavan asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what subjects he discussed at his last meeting with representatives of the Scotch whisky industry.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have nothing to add to the reply given to the hon. Member on 20 January at column 494.

Sicily (Fruit Juice)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will raise at the next meeting of the Agriculture Council the substantial payments allegedly made from European Economic Community funds for the bogus export of non-existent fruit juice from Sicily as a means of financing the Mafia organisation; if he will take immediate steps to ascertain the precise amount of public funds involved; and if he will further seek to ensure that further such frauds are prevented;

(2) if he will take steps to deduct from the United Kingdom's European Economic Community contribution that part of common agricultural policy expenditure which relates to the provision of common agricultural policy funds to the Mafia organisation in Sicily for the claimed delivery of non-existent fruit juice to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation headquarters in Naples and other alleged customers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling [*pursuant to the reply*, 12 February 1987]: Community law requires that member states must satisfy themselves that transactions financed by the CAP are actually carried out and executed correctly, and must recover sums lost as a result of fraud or negligence.

The European Commission carries out a full audit before clearing the accounts of member states. If it discovers that Community funds have been used improperly due to negligent administration it has power to reclaim them in full from the state concerned.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Maternity Payments

Mr. James Lamond asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Oldham, Central and Royton claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Oldham, Central and Royton are expected to qualify each year for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Oldham, Central and Royton constituency is covered by the Department's office at Oldham although its boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The number of claims received for maternity grant in the Oldham local office during the calendar year 1986 was 1,021.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Oldham, Central and Royton will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Clelland asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in *(a)* Tyne Bridge and *(b)* Newcastle, Central constituencies claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in each of the said constituencies are expected to qualify for maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The *(a)* Tyne Bridge and *(b)* Newcastle, Central constituencies are covered by the Department's offices at

(a) Gateshead, and Newcastle St. James, and *(b)* Newcastle West, Newcastle East and Newcastle St. James although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituencies. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the four local offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Gateshead	2,308
Newcastle St. James	691
Newcastle West	955
Newcastle East	1,459

It is not possible to predict how many women in *(a)* Tyne Bridge and *(b)* Newcastle Central will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Denton and Reddish and Stockport constituencies claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Denton and Reddish and Stockport constituencies are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Denton and Reddish and Stockport constituencies are covered by the Department's offices at Hyde, Stockport South, Stockport North and Ashton-under-Lyne although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituencies. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the four local offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Hyde	1,584
Stockport South	2,028
Stockport North	1,848
Ashton-under-Lyne	443

It is not possible to predict how many women in Denton and Reddish and Stockport constituencies will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Great Grimsby received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Great Grimsby are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 2,077 claims to maternity allowance were made at Grimsby, the Department's office which covers the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Great Grimsby will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Great Grimsby claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Great Grimsby are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Great Grimsby constituency is covered by the Department's office at Grimsby although their boundaries are not conterminous. The number of claims for maternity grant received at Grimsby local office during the calendar year 1986 was 3,096.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Great Grimsby will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Terry Fields asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Liverpool, Broadgreen, claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Liverpool, Broadgreen, are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Liverpool, Broadgreen constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Liverpool City, West Derby, Breckfield, Belle Vale, Toxteth and Edge Hill, although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the six local offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
City	388
West Derby	1,356
Breckfield	1,103
Belle Vale	1,021
Toxteth	854
Edge Hill	747

It is not possible to predict how many women in Liverpool, Broadgreen will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Terry Fields asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Liverpool, Broadgreen, received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Liverpool, Broadgreen, are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, the following numbers of claims to maternity allowance were made at the Department's offices which cover the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous:

	Number
Liverpool City	217
Breckfield	769
Toxteth	551
West Derby	868
Belle Vale	565
Edge Hill	726

It is not possible to predict how many women in Liverpool, Broadgreen, will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987.

However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Diabetics

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether disposable syringes and needles supplied through the hospital service for diabetic treatment are intended for single use only;

(2) what guidance is given to the hospital service with regard to the proportion of disposable syringes to be supplied for diabetic treatment to the number of injections each requires.

Mr. Newton: It is for consultants to advise their patients on the use best suited to their own condition. Departmental guidance on clinical matters would be inappropriate.

AIDS

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to ensure that the information contained in the AIDS leaflet, recently distributed to all households, is communicated to the functionally illiterate in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Newton: We are at the start of a long campaign to educate the public about AIDS, the first stage of which has been whole population coverage by advertising in the media and by the AIDS leaflet. We are considering how best to build on this in order to reach specific groups within the community, including those with reading difficulties.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether his plans to ensure that the AIDS leaflet reaches students in universities and colleges will include arrangements to ensure that YTS trainees training on employers' premises and with private training agencies are similarly informed.

Mr. Newton: The special arrangements made for supplies of the AIDS leaflet to be available in colleges and universities were to enable students living away from home to have their own copies.

I understand that the majority of trainees under the YTS scheme and at private training agencies live at home. They should therefore have had the opportunity of reading the leaflet when it was distributed to each household.

Posters are currently being displayed in main post offices where copies of the leaflet are available.

Benefits

Mr. Terry Lewis asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the total number of supplementary benefit claimants awarded an additional requirement for domestic assistance; and what were the average amounts paid in each of the years 1980 to 1986 inclusive, for *(a)* residential assistance and *(b)* other cases.

Mr. Major: The available information, which does not differentiate between residential assistance and other cases, is as follows:

	Total number of domestic assistance additions (thousands)	*Average weekly amount* (1) £
1980	4	1·37
1981	5	2·51
1982	4	3·83
1983	2	3·59
(2) 1984	3	3·92

Notes

(1) These amounts do not take account of the effect of the available scale margin in relevant cases so that the average amount of benefit actually received could be somewhat lower than shown.

(2) Latest available date.

Source: Annual statistical inquiries.

Mr. Terry Lewis asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the total number of supplementary benefit claimants awarded an additional requirement for attendance needs; and what was the average amount paid in each of the years 1980 to 1986, inclusive.

Mr. Major: The number of cases in the statistical sample is too small to provide a reliable estimate of the number of claimants with additional requirements for attendance needs or average amounts. Indications are, however, that for each year 1980 to 1984, the latest year for which information is available, there were fewer than 1,500 claimants. Payments cannot exceed the lower rate of attendance allowance.

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he will be in a position to reply to the letters from the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby of 9 December 1986 and 15 January in respect of recent changes in supplementary benefit single payments.

Mr. Lyell: I wrote to the hon. Member on 11 February.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people in Slough are currently in receipt of *(a)* supplementary benefit, *(b)* sickness benefit, *(c)* housing benefit and *(d)* maternity benefit, respectively.

Mr. Lyell: The table gives the latest available figures of the number of people receiving *(a)* supplementary benefit, *(b)* sickness benefit and *(c)* maternity allowance from the Department's local office at Slough:

	Number
(a) Supplementary benefit	12,900
(b) Sickness/invalidity benefit	2,374
(c) Maternity allowance	690

Source:

(a) 100 per cent. count of cases in action on 10 December 1986.

(b) and *(c)* 100 per cent. count of cases in action on 13 January 1987.

The estimated number of people who were in receipt of housing benefit in the Slough borough council area at April 1986—the latest available information—was 9,469.

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many pensioners in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Strathclyde region, *(c)* Glasgow district and *(d)* Shettleston constituency applied for severe weather payments in the current year; and how many applications were (i) accepted and (ii) refused.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claims by pensioners for exceptionally cold weather payments is not available.

Statistics are being maintained on the total number of exceptionally cold weather payments made, the amount of those payments and the number refused, and these will be published in due course.

Cervical Cancer

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received in respect of a new, semi-automated test, known as the HDA test, for screening for cervical cancer; what his response has been; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: We have had numerous representations from and on behalf of the charity "Quest for a Test for Cancer", which is developing this test. We have made it clear that the charity must obtain an independent evaluation of its research before we could consider the test's potential for mass screening in the National Health Service. We have advised the charity on ways in which it might secure such an evaluation.

Ambulance Personnel

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received from the Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel regarding its non-representation on the Whitley Council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: We have received a number of representations from the association and from right hon. and hon. Members. I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, my hon. Friend the Member for Argyll and Bute (Mr. MacKay) to the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) today.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Afghanistan

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from Amnesty International on torture in Afghanistan; what representations he has made about it; what action he proposes to take; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The Amnesty International report on torture in Afghanistan has been brought to our attention on several occasions. As I said on 16 December, it confirms a horrifying picture of denial of human rights in Afghanistan. We have raised the matter with the Soviet embassy in London and the Soviet Government can be in no doubt of our concern at the incidents of torture which have been reported and of the alleged complicity of Soviet personnel.

Egypt

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current state of the United Kingdom's relationship with Egypt; what attitude Her Majesty's Government take to the Egyptian middle eastern peace initiative; and if he will make a statement on these matters.

Mr. Renton: Our relations with Egypt are excellent. Egypt has a major role to play in the search for peace in the middle east. We maintain a regular and friendly dialogue on ways of making progress and our views are close.

Diplomats

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* the letter dated 5 December 1986 from the Minister of State the hon. Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker) to the hon. Member for Leicester, East regarding waivers of diplomatic immunity.

Mr. Eggar: I assume that my hon. Friend is referring to the letter of 5 February, the text of which is as follows:

"In Tim Eggar's Answer to your Parliamentary Question of 22 January he undertook to let you have further information about occasions when a foreign Government has refused to waive the immunity of diplomats alleged to have committed serious offences. I am writing in Tim's absence overseas.

Your question was confined to alleged serious offences carrying a minimum prison sentence of 3 years. In fact I understand that the various Acts covering criminal offences provide only for maximum sentences, not minimum ones. Over the past five years, therefore, taking your Question to refer to waivers requested and refused for offences which *could* attract a penalty of at least three years, there have been eleven such cases since the beginning of 1982. We have requested waivers in connection with alleged offences of shoplifting and theft (7 cases), indecent assault (1), grievous bodily harm (1), assault occasioning actual bodily harm (1) and criminal damage (1). Each of these carries a *maximum* penalty of more than three years, though of course many sentences would be for shorter periods than this. Gross indecency towards a child under 14 of either sex carries a maximum penalty of only two years; the American case which has recently received so much publicity does not therefore fall into the category covered by your Question. Nor do drunken driving offences, which carry a maximum sentence of six months (plus a fine and mandatory disqualification).

I hope this provides you with sufficient information. As you know, Tim would be happy to chat with you about our policy in this area if this would be of assistance."

Namibia

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contacts have been established by members of his Department with Christian Organisations for Social, Political and Economic Change, in particular the organisation called Church Action on Namibia; and if he will list all meetings that have taken place with members of Christian Organisations for Social, Political and Economic Change and Church Action on Namibia in relation to the Nambian independence issue.

Mrs. Chalker: We have had contacts on Namibia with various Christian organisations. A comprehensive list of meetings with such organisations is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he or officers of his Department last met members of a Namibian political party.

Mrs. Chalker: The last such meeting was when a senior official in my Department met members of a Namibian political party on 10 February in Luanda.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement concerning Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the future of Namibia.

Mrs. Chalker: We remain committed to the independence of Namibia on the basis of the peaceful implementation of UNSCR 435, which is the only internationally agreed basis for a settlement. We have consistently supported the path of negotiation towards its implementation.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he intends next to meet the Government of the United States of America to discuss the failure of the contact group to bring about Namibian independence; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We maintain regular contact with the Government of the United States of America on Southern African questions, including Namibia.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he plans any changes in Her Majesty's Government's policy towards Namibia in the light of the report, entitled "Human Rights and Namibia", published by the International Society for Human Rights last year, a copy of which has been sent to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Our policy on Namibia is well known and unchanged. We remain fully committed to the independence of the territory on the basis of the peaceful implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 435.

South West Africa People's Organisation

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contacts have been established by British diplomatic staff with the South West Africa People's Organisation.

Mrs. Chalker: British diplomatic staff have contacts from time to time and at various levels with the South West Africa People's Organisation, which is a negotiating party to the United Nations Plan for Namibia endorsed by United Nations Security Council resolution 435.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contact British diplomatic staff resident in Angola, Zambia and South Africa have had with the South West Africa People's Organisation in the last two years; and if he will give the place and time of all such contacts.

Mrs. Chalker: British officials resident in Angola, Zambia and South Africa have had various contacts with representatives of the South West Africa People's Organisation in the last two years. A comprehensive list is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations his Department has made to the United Nations concerning the use of United Nations funds in South West Africa People's Organisation camps in Angola and Zambia.

Mrs. Chalker: In the course of discussions on the United Nations programme and budget, we regularly urge the economical and efficient deployment of resources throughout the organisation. This includes funds administered through the United Nations Council for Namibia and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to be informed of the results of the European Commission's investigation into conditions in South West Africa People's Organisation camps.

Mrs. Chalker: Our European partners share our concern over allegations of human rights abuses in Namibian refugee camps. Together with our partners in the Twelve we are continuing to pay close attention to these allegations, as we do to all questions of human rights abuses wherever they may occur, but so far as we know there has been no investigation by the European Commission.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations his Department has made to the Governments of Angola and Zambia concerning the detention of the SWAPO One Hundred in SWAPO controlled camps in Angola and Zambia.

Mrs. Chalker: The office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is the administering authority for refugee camps in Angola and Zambia. We have not, therefore, made representations on this subject to the Governments of Angola and Zambia.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has concerning the detention without trial of 600 to 700 persons by the South West Africa People's Organisation.

Mrs. Chalker: We have no independent source of information on allegations of detentions without trial by the South West Africa People's Organisation.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he or any of his staff have received concerning the detention by the South West Africa People's Organisation of 100 Namibian refugees; and what information he has concerning the conditions under which they are detained.

Mrs. Chalker: We have received representations about the detention of Namibian refugees by the South West Africa People's Organisation from the International Society for Human Rights, the Namibian Parents' Committee and from right hon. and hon. Members. We have no independent source of information on the conditions under which they are detained.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about conditions in those South West Africa People's Organisation camps for which British funds have been indirectly made available.

Mrs. Chalker: We have no independent information on conditions in camps for refugees from Namibia. We have expressed our concern at alleged human rights abuses in the camps to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, who is responsible for the administration of the camps.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he or a Foreign Office Minister last met a vice-president of the South West Africa People's Organisation.

Mrs. Chalker: The then Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind) met Mr. Hendrik Witbooi, Vice-President of the South West Africa People's Organisation, on 16 February 1984.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) whether he or any officer of his Department has raised in discussions with the South West Africa People's Organisation allegations that the South West Africa People's Organisation employs torture in camps it controls in Angola and Zambia; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he or any officer of his Department has raised in discussions with the South West Africa People's Organisation, allegations that the South West Africa People's Organisation is detaining between 600 and 700 Namibians in inhuman conditions in camps in Angola and Zambia; and if he will make a statement;

(3) whether he or any officer of his Department has raised with representatives of the South West Africa People's Organisation the case of Ben Boois, a Namibian refugee, reported by the International Society for Human Rights in its analysis of "Human Rights and Namibia" published in the United Kingdom (ISBN 3-89248-006-0) and also by the Namibian Parents Committee as having been murdered by SWAPO;

(4) whether he or any officer of his Department has raised with representatives of the South West Africa People's Organisation the case of Nadapdula Mpupa, a Namibian refugee, reported by the International Society for Human Rights in its analysis of "Human Rights and Namibia" published in the United Kingdom (ISBN 3-89248-006-0) as having disappeared from a SWAPO controlled camp;

(5) whether he or any officer of his Department has raised with representatives of the South West Africa People's Organisation the case of Elia Shikwambi, a Namibian refugee, reported by the International Society for Human Rights in its analysis of "Human Rights of Namibia" published in the United Kingdom (ISBN 3-89248-006-0) to be held in detention by SWAPO, without trial, in contravention of the United Nations universal declaration on human rights and the United Nations standard minimum rules for the treatment of prisoners;

(6) whether he or any officer of his Department has raised with representatives of the South West Africa People's Organisation the case of Tauno Hatuikulipi, a Namibian refugee, reported by the International Society for Human Rights in its analysis of "Human Rights and Namibia" published in the United Kingdom (ISBN 3-89248-006-0) as having been tortured and then executed by the South West Africa People's Organisation.

Mrs. Chalker: We are concerned at all violations of human rights and have expressed our concern to representatives of the South West Africa People's Organisation about the various allegations of human rights abuses in Namibian refugee camps.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 16 February 1987

PRIME MINISTER

EXPO 88 (Brisbane)

Mr. Sayeed asked the Prime Minister which Government Departments will be providing a financial contribution to the British pavilion at EXPO 88 in Brisbane.

The Prime Minister: The British pavilion at EXPO 88 is at present financed solely by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Privatisation

Mr. Hickmet asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the progress of the privatisation programme pursued since 1979, the effects on British industry and the British economy, and the effects thereon of wider share ownership and of employee share ownership.

The Prime Minister: The programme of privatisation continues to be highly successful. Fourteen major companies and around 600,000 employees have been transferred to the private sector since 1979. The privatisation of British Gas was the largest flotation ever in Europe or America and survey evidence suggests that this sale alone may have created 2 million first-time shareholders. The privatisation programme is a key element in our strategy for widening share ownership, as a result of which we have succeeded in roughly trebling the number of people holding shares since 1979. The Government have encouraged employee ownership in companies being privatised; nearly 90 per cent. of employees in companies sold by flotation have become shareholders and therefore have a stake in the future of their companies. By transferring these companies to the private sector we have increased their incentives to greater efficiency and competitiveness, thus benefitting their employees, their shareholders and the economy as a whole.

Cabinet Office

Mr. Adley asked the Prime Minister if there are any proposals to change the 1986-87 cash limit for the Cabinet Office.

The Prime Minister: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the cash limit for the Cabinet Office (class XX, vote 2) will be increased by £260,000 from £14,767,000 to £15,027,000 for essential new works concerned with security.

House Building Fraud (Northern Ireland)

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Prime Minister if she will set up a commission of inquiry into the house-building fraud involving exemption certificates and public sector housing estates from which terrorists have benefited, as exposed by Mr. Justice Nicholson in a recent case heard in Belfast, and in particular into the workings of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in relation to those estates and into the scope of the fraud; what information she has as to whether there have been any similar cases in other parts of the United Kingdom and as to what sums of public money are involved.

The Prime Minister: The recent case to which my hon. Friend refers was the latest in a long line of successful prosecutions for tax exemption fraud in Northern Ireland. In the past two years, 87 persons have been convicted in respect of frauds totalling in excess of £13,250,000; other cases are pending or remain under investigation. There is no evidence of any similar cases in the rest of the United Kingdom.

I am satisfied that the Royal Ulster Constabulary, with the full support of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and other relevant agencies, has made commendable progress in combating this potential source of finance for terrorist organisations. I therefore, see no need for a commission in enquiry on the lines proposed by my hon. Friend.

The Government will maintain their determined efforts to cut off all the sources of finance for such organisations.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Bail

Mr. McNamara asked the Attorney-General what proportion of persons awaiting trial solely or partially on the evidence of alleged accomplice witnesses have been refused bail; and what is the average period of remand for which persons detained without bail have been held to date after being charged on such evidence.

The Solicitor-General: There are no persons currently awaiting trial on charges directed by the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland where the Crown case includes the evidence of an alleged accomplice witness.

Mr. McNamara asked the Attorney-General how many applications for bail, by those held on remand for scheduled, non-scheduled offences, and both together, were refused in 1986.

The Solicitor-General: In 1986, 825 applications for bail by those held on remand for scheduled offences were refused by the High Court and magistrates courts in Northern Ireland. The High Court also refused 284 applications in respect of persons on remand for non-scheduled offences. Information is not available in relation to unsuccessful applications in this category in the magistrates courts.

Plastic Bullets

Mr. McNamara asked the Attorney-General how many cases in 1986 involving persons injured by plastic bullets in Northern Ireland have been considered by the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland; and what action was taken in each case.

The Solicitor-General: Figures for cases received during 1986 by the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland involving persons injured by the alleged use of baton rounds are as follows:

	Number
Cases	14
Persons injured (including one fatal injury)	15
Prosecutions directed	1
No prosecutions directed	12

In one case a final direction pends the submission to the director of additional evidence.

Crown Prosecution Service

Dame Jill Knight asked the Attorney-General if he will take steps to improve the speed and efficiency of the Crown Prosecution Service in dealing with reimbursement of moneys paid over in cases where a prosecution is brought but when all charges have subsequently been dropped and the prosecution has been ordered to discharge the defendant's costs; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General: Efforts are continually made by the Crown Prosecution Service to speed up the carrying out of all its functions, including the payments of costs.

Mrs. Cynthia Payne

Mr. David Young asked the Attorney-General if he will give the total cost to public funds of the recently ended trial of Mrs. Cynthia Payne.

The Solicitor-General: These cannot be ascertained with any degree of accuracy. The total cost of an individual trial comprises numerous elements, some of which may be part of the general running costs of the several Government Departments concerned and therefore cannot be ascertained as separate components except as an arbitrary estimate. So far as regards individual fees to the legal profession (prosecuting or defending) it is not the practice to publish these, and in any event they could not be ascertained until after taxation of bills of costs, which has not yet taken place. Allowance must also be made for proportion of judicial salaries.

State Security

Mr. Dalyell asked the Attorney-General if he will list all the occasions since 1979 on which he has sought advice from outside Her Majesty's Government in cases involving alleged breaches of the Official Secrets Acts in relation to *(a)* his assessment of the extent of any damage to national security for the purposes of determining the need for and scope of police inquiries and *(b)* his subsequent decision as to whether to bring a prosecution; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General: Any request for advice from outside Her Majesty's Government would be confidential, but it is not the Attorney-General's practice to seek such advice, other than on questions of law or evidence, in which event he may consult counsel or the police.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Attorney-General to what extent *(a)* he and *(b)* the Director of Public Prosecutions are being kept informed about progress with the police inquiries initiated by him into alleged breaches of the Official Secrets Acts in relation to project Zircon; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General: The Director of Public Prosecutions is being kept informed about the progress of the police inquiries and is himself keeping me generally informed. The Director has not yet received any papers from the police.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Attorney-General what is his practice with regard to keeping other Ministers informed about the progress of police inquiries initiated by him into alleged breaches of the Official Secrets Acts; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General: Whether and to what extent the Attorney-General would keep other Ministers informed about the progress of police inquiries into such alleged offences would depend on the circumstances of the particular case.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Attorney-General if he sought any advice from outside Her Majesty's Government prior to initiating police inquiries into alleged breaches of the Official Secrets Acts in relation to project Zircon; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General: No.

Industrial Tribunals (Birmingham)

Mr. Terry Davis asked the Attorney-General if he will list the legal qualifications of the part-time chairmen of industrial tribunals in Birmingham.

The Solicitor-General: All part-time chairmen of industrial tribunals in the Birmingham region are barristers or solicitors of not less than seven years' standing.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Africa (Food Production)

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will direct Her Majesty's Government's African aid programme more towards increasing domestic food production in recipient countries.

Mr. Chris Patten: Yes. We aim to increase our assistance to food production and agriculture in Africa wherever we can do so effectively.

Aid Agencies (Co-ordination)

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he is satisfied with the existing co-ordination between the various British aid agencies that serve the development programme.

Mr. Chris Patten: Yes. I am satisfied with the present degree of co-ordination between the Government and such other bodies as the British Council, the Crown Agents, the Commonwealth Development Corporation, the voluntary agencies, universities and specialist institutions, but I recognise that all concerned have to work hard to achieve our common objective of promoting development.

EEC (Food Aid)

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reforms have been proposed for the European Economic Community food aid system to increase its effectiveness in the Third world.

Mr. Chris Patten: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) on 26 January at column 18.

Bourj el Barajneh

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will urgently dispatch aid and supplies to the Palestinian refugee camp at Bourj el Barajneh in the Lebanon; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) on 13 February. Regrettably little has changed, although a small amount of food has been allowed into the camp. We remain ready to provide help through the international agencies involved immediately it becomes possible to take more substantial supplies into the camp.

Third World

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any plans to increase public awareness of overseas development and Third world issues by means of a public education campaign, including material to be understood by children of school age.

Mr. Chris Patten: Following a detailed review, we have decided to concentrate our activities in this field in the main through the official information programme. At the same time, I have agreed to provide a further grant of £100,000 to the Centre for World Development Education.

TRANSPORT

Road Safety

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of his budget for research into ways of reducing road accidents and casualties for 1985-86 and 1986-87 and the amount proposed for 1987-88.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Details of the annual budget expenditure allocated for road safety research are as follows:

	1985-86 £	*1986-87* £	*1987-88* £
Road user safety	2,379,000	2,416,000	2,344,000
Vehicle design, construction and safety	1,635,000	1,804,000	1,887,000
Highway engineering improvements	965,000	1,074,000	1,034,000
Research on general highway engineering of which road safety is a factor	(1,625,000)	(1,583,000)	(1,372,000)
Estimate 30 per cent. and 45 per cent. for road safety	650,000	679,000	549,000
TOTAL	5,629,000	5,973,000	5,814,000

Funding for road safety research in future years is under review.

Humber Bridge

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport what recent discussions he has had with the relevant local authority and other interested bodies concerning the finances of the Humber bridge; what conclusions have been reached; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Officials of the Department and the Humber bridge board have been jointly evaluating ways of putting the finances of the bridge on a sound footing. The board is due to meet shortly to consider these assessments. It will then be for the board to put proposals to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

M25

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any plans for improving the safety of the Chertsey turn-off on the eastbound carriageway of the M25; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Consultants are currently preparing a scheme for additional fourth lanes on the M25 between junctions 11 (Chertsey) and 13 (Staines). This will include the improvement of the Chertsey junction.

Lorry Parks

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many designated lorry parks there are in England and Wales; if he is considering proposals to add to this number; and what range of charges are made for vehicles using lorry parks.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We do not keep records of lorry parks. Their provision is essentially a matter for local authorities and the private sector. Provision for parking heavy goods vehicles is a standard feature required at motorway service areas.

Heavy Goods Vehicles

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with those who franchise motorway service facilities with a view to improving facilities for those driving heavy goods vehicles.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In August last year, we wrote to operators asking for certain improvements in standards when new motorway service areas (MSAs) were being developed and existing ones improved. In the case of new MSAs, we now require provision of showers and shaver points, and ask tenderers to consider provision of separate eating facilities for drivers of heavy goods vehicles. Operators have scope within the terms of their leases for improving existing facilities for drivers. We have agreed that overnight accommodation can be built on sites where there is sufficient room for expansion to cope with the increased traffic.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what consultation he has had with interested parties about the provision of trunk road facilities for those driving heavy goods vehicles; if he is satisfied with present provisions for re-fuelling, parking, rest and refreshment; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what representations he has received about trunk road facilities for those driving heavy goods vehicles; and what suggestions have been made for the improvement of such facilities.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Representations have been received in a report by the Association of County Councils published in December last year ("The Travel Needs of Road Users: The way to get things going"). This suggests, amongst other things, that there should be transit stopping facilities for heavy goods vehicles at intervals of roughly 30 minutes driving time.

The provision of services for trunk road users is primarily a matter for private initiative within the framework of planning policies. We will consider in the light of the report whether there is a need for further action by the Department or local authorities to secure provision of facilities.

There have been no recent formal consultations. I have discussed the issues with Jack Ashwell of the Transport and General Workers Union.

A34 (Newbury)

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to have 1987 cost estimates for improving the A34 at Newbury as an alternative to a Weston by-pass; and if he will give the most recent cost estimate for underpassing the Robin Hood roundabout where the A4 meets the A34 in such a way as to separate north-south traffic from east-west traffic.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Estimates of the cost of a number of objectors' alternative proposals for improving the A34 at Newbury are being prepared for the likely public inquiry. They will be ready in the next few months.

No estimate for an underpass at the Robin Hood roundabout only is available. Such a proposal would involve substantial property demolition and provide only a partial solution to the problem.

Greater London

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all regional and sub-regional outposts of his Department responsible for functions or services within the Greater London area, stating functions and responsibilities of such outposts and giving the total cost of such offices to public funds in 1986-87 and the total number of officials involved.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This answer can only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all functions and responsibilities currently undertaken by any division and organisation within his Department which is concerned with local authority services solely within the Greater London area, stating the total estimated cost to public funds in 1986-87 and the total number of officials involved.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This answer can only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport if will list the total number of written communications between his Department and local authorities in the Greater London area in *(a)* 1979-80 and *(b)* 1986-87, to date.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No such record is kept.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport if will list the additional functions and responsibilities undertaken by his Department of a temporary or permanent kind as a result of the abolition of the Greater London council, stating the total estimated cost to public funds in 1986-87 and the total number of officials involved.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: These are set out in the Local Government Act 1985 and the associated statutory instruments. They were extensively discussed during the passage of the legislation. The total estimated cost to public funds and the total number of officials involved are not separately identifiable.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the action he has taken since the abolition of the Greater London council to ensure that the functions and responsibilities of his Department and its related non-departmental public bodies dealing with the Greater London area are co-ordinated with each other.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Appropriate arrangements for co-ordination between this Department, the British Railways Board, London Regional Transport and the London Regional Passengers Committee existed before abolition of the GLC.

ENVIRONMENT

Nuclear Waste

Sir Trevor Skeet asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has complied with the recommendation of Sir Frank Layfield in his summary of conclusions chapter 2, paragraph 3, that at least two members of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee should be advisors specifically to provide an independent expert environmental contribution to the handling of radioactive waste management.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy is currently considering Sir Frank Layfield's report on the CEGB application to build Sizewell B. The Secretary of State has a quasi-judicial role in the planning process and it would therefore be improper of me to comment on any part of the report. However, the House of Commons will have the opportunity to express its views before a decision is taken and a debate is being arranged in the week beginning 23 February.

Sir Trevor Skeet asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the dumping of nuclear waste at sea to be resumed by the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer my hon. Friend to the Government's response to the Environment Committee's

report on Radioactive Waste (Cmnd. 9852) in which it is stated that the Government, in common with many other countries, consider that the disposal of radioactive waste at sea is a safe disposal option, which should remain available. They will, however, continue to decide on any application for the disposal of such waste in the light of all the relevant factors.

Sir Trevor Skeet asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what form of licence has been granted by his Department to Pharmacia Ltd. of Milton Keynes to deposit low level waste in a land fill site near Stewartby, Bedfordshire; and if he will publish the source of the materials involved and the identification of the isotopes.

Mr. Waldegrave: Pharmacia (GB) Ltd. was issued on 11 April 1983 with a certificate of authorisation to dispose of low level radioactive waste by removal as refuse by a waste collection authority or by depositing it at a dump used for the deposit of substantial quantities of waste that are not readioactive waste. The terms of the authorisation do not specify a particualr location. The company is registered as a user of iodine-125 and cobalt-57 for sale and research.

Urban Trees

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to survey the state of health of urban trees in Britain.

Mr. Waldegrave: Research is sponsored by the Department into the many factors which give rise to damage for single trees in a range of adverse evironmental conditions. No specific survey of urban trees is currently planned.

Litter

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what achievements he can list from the UK 2000 initiative; how many litter wardens have been appointed; if he is considering introducing on the spot fines for litter offenders; and if he has any proposals for encouraging people to return empty bottles to suppliers.

Mr. Waldegrave: A report on the achievements of UK 2000 is given in my answer to the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mr. Clwyd) on Wednesday 4 February at column *721*.

Information on the number of litter wardens is not held centrally. The Government see considerable difficulty in the content of on-the-spot fines for litter offenders.

The Government support the recommendation of the Waste Management Advisory Council that the industry take steps to encourage recycling of bottles. Such steps include the introduction of readily identifiable return-ability symbols and a clearer indication of deposit rates.

Houses (Radon Levels)

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his statement on 27 January, *Official Report*, column 189, concerning radon levels in houses, for what period he expects the two stated recommended action levels to remain in force before review; whether he expects a review of these action levels to be initiated on publication of reviews during 1987 by *(a)* the International Commission on Radiological Protection, *(b)* the Committee on the Biological Effects of Ionising Radiation and *(c)* any other body; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: As I indicated on 27 January, the Government have followed the formal advice of the National Radiological Protection Board and the Committee on the Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment in setting the levels of radon in dwellings above which precautionary action is advisable. These levels will be kept under review in the light of any further evidence that emerges about the effects of radon on health.

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his statement on 27 January, *Official Report*, column 189, concerning radon levels in houses, what discussions have taken place on the feasibility of a study of the health effects of such exposure to radon; how soon he expects a decision to be reached on whether to undertake such a study and about its duration.

Mr. Waldegrave: The recommendations for action on radon in dwellings are based in part on epidemiological studies of the health effects of exposure on uranium miners. Both the National Radiological Protection Board and the Committee on the Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment consider that there is a need for a further study of the health effects on persons exposed to radon gas in the home. The feasibility of such a study and the way in which it might be set up are currently being investigated.

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to arrange for further sampling of radon levels in dwellings other than in Devon and Cornwall, and other than at the request of members of the public; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: As I indicated on 27 January, it is intended that the systematic survey of radon levels in houses should be restricted to Devon and Cornwall for the time being as most of the houses with the highest levels are likely to be located there. However, the need for systematic surveys in other parts of the country will be kept under review in the light of the results obtained from the free measurement service to be provided by the NRPB.

Mr. Warren asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what measure the Government will take to ascertain whether existing homes are experiencing radon gas concentrations greater than the action level of 400 becquerels per cubic metre; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer my hon. Friend to my statement of 27 January.

Mr. Warren asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements he will introduce to enable the financing and inspection of home improvements needed to protect people whose homes are experiencing Radon gas levels greater than 400 becquerels per cubic metre.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer my hon. Friend to my statement of 27 January. No decisions can be made about the implementation of remedial measures until the work in hand on establishing the extent of the problem and the most effective ways of dealing with it has been completed.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment pursuant to his statement on 27 January,

Official Report, columns 189-90, concerning radon levels in houses, what number of houses in Somerset is to be included in the further survey announced; whether any parts of Somerset are areas where a measurement service will be provided at no cost to those concerned; what arrangements have been made for distribution in Somerset of his Department's leaflet; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 February 1987, c. 115]: As I indicated on 27 January, it is intended that the systematic survey of radon levels in houses should be restricted to Devon and Cornwall for the time being. However, free measurements will be provided on request, through the National Radiological Protection Board, to people who live in areas of Somerset and other parts of the country where radon concentrations might be at or above the action level; and supplies of the Department's leaflet have been sent to Somerset County Council for distribution to the public.

Water Pollution

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the total number of water pollution incidents in respect of each of the 10 water authority regions in England and Wales for each of the last five years; and for each of the respective totals what is the number of incidents within the following categories according to the cause of the pollution incident *(a)* agriculture, *(b)* industry, *(c)* fish farms, *(d)* sewage and *(e)* other.

Mr. Waldegrave: The total number of reported water pollution incidents in each of the 10 water authority areas in England and Wales since 1981-82 are as follows:

	1981-82	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*
Thames	1,810	2,120	2,345	2,486	2,695
Southern	1,300	1,327	1,400	1,574	1,668
North West	1,350	1,288	1,385	2,241	2,202
Severn Trent	2,401	2,681	3,354	4,372	4,500
Wessex	844	790	966	1,125	993
South West	1,055	1,140	1,600	1,685	1,718
Anglian	1,095	1,077	1,288	1,557	1,707
Northumbrian	509	544	613	654	722
Yorkshire	1,136	1,020	1,165	1,536	2,006
Welsh	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,418	1,681

n/a = not available.

No breakdown of these figures is held centrally but details are available from the water authorities and, in some cases, are contained in the authorities' annual reports.

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment at what levels it is possible to detect the toxicity of Decapol in *(a)* drinking water and *(b)* untreated water.

Mr. Waldegrave: The toxic constituents in the Decapol range of products are acrylamides. The most toxic of these can be detected at 0·2 mg per litre in both drinking water and untreated water.

Radiation

Mr. Knowles asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to receive the report of research commissioned by his Department on radioactive waste management and radioactivity in the environment.

Mr. Waldegrave: I received the 1984-86 report today. Copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment; further to his reply to the hon. Member for South Shields on 2 February, *Official Report*, column *494*, concerning Her Majesty's radiochemical inspectorate, if he will estimate *(a)* the number of man-years' effort required to undertake the three-year programme of reviewing authorisations of radioactive discharges and *(b)* the number of man-years' effort required to complete such a review for a typical nuclear site; whether the staffing compliment of the inspectorate was increased by reason of that review programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: There is no typical nuclear site. The time required at each site will vary but will probably be no more than 150 and no less than 30 man days per review. Preliminary estimates suggest that provision for about 12 man years effort should be provided over the three-year period. The staffing complement of the inspectorate is kept under regular review and the effort required to review the authorisations has been taken into account. The last staffing review was held in October 1986 and authority to recruit additional inspectors has been given.

Smallholdings

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will carry out a review of the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1977 class VI—Agriculture, with a view to limiting its scope for the development of smallholdings of industrial, commercial and residential use.

Mr. Waldegrave: Class VI of the General Development Order applies only to development for agricultural purposes. Change from agricultural use to industrial, commercial or residential use requires specific planning permission.

Heveningham Hall

Mr. Faulds asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is now in a position to state whether he will intervene in the neglect of the commitments undertaken by the owner of Heveningham hall, Mr. A. Al-Ghazzi.

Mr. Waldegrave: Not yet. It will depend on the advice I receive from the chairman of the Historic Building and Monuments Commission for England, who I know is looking into the matter very carefully.

Radiochemical Inspectorate

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to his reply to the hon. Member for South Shields on 2 February, *Official Report*, column *494*, concerning Her Majesty's radiochemical inspectorate, what is the total number of such inspectors presently in post; what is the authorised complement; when was the staffing level of the inspectorate last reviewed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The total number of Her Majesty's radiochemical inspectors in post is 22. The authorised complement is 32 but this complement is currently under review and an additional five inspectors have been approved for 1987-88.

AIDS

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the 10 local authorities whose social services departments have experienced most demand from AIDS victims; and if he will state which of them were rate-capped in each year since rate capping began; and if he will give the total rate support grant to each of the local authorities in each year since 1982.

Mr. Chope: The collection of data on the incidence of AIDS is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services. I understand, however, that the relevant information is compiled by regional health authority, rather than local authority, areas.

Rates

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report (a)* the rate support grant spending assumption per head of population for 1987-88 for Adur, Hove and Worthing district councils and *(b)* the proposed grant to be received in 1987-88 per head of population in Adur, Hove and Worthing district councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I shall answer this question shortly.

Local Authority Flats

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the number of flats currently owned by local authorities; how many are currently unoccupied; how many such flats he expects to be sold to tenants as a result of his Department's current campaign; what percentage take-up this represents and over what time scale; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: Local authorities in England are estimated to own 1·7 million flats. 113,000 local authority dwellings were unoccupied in April 1986; separate figures are not available for flats.

Thirty five thousand local authority flats were sold in England between April 1979 and September 1986, representing 2 per cent. of the stock of flats. It is difficult to predict the rate of sale in future, but it is hoped that it will increase to over 10,000 a year.

Agricultural Land

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what planning restrictions on the use or development of agricultural dwelling houses would be removed by the policy contained in his draft circular "Development Involving Agricultural Land"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: Policy on the development and use of agricultural dwelling houses in England and Wales is set out in the annex to DOE circular 24/73 (Welsh Office 49/73). Paragraph 4 states that, unless the applicant shows that there are valid reasons why a dwelling house should be erected on the farm rather than in a nearby village, the normal planning considerations will apply and the need for agricultural dwellings should be met as far as possible by building in an accessible village, hamlet or existing group of dwellings. It may sometimes be appropriate to impose conditions when planning permission is granted for such dwellings restricting occupancy to persons employed in agriculture in the locality. Such conditions, as in the case of all planning conditions, should only be imposed where they are necessary, relevant to planning and to the development to be permitted, enforceable, precise and reasonable in all other respects.

The draft circular on development involving agricultural land does not propose any change in this policy although it urges that applications for removal of such agricultural conditions should be considered on the bases of realistic assessments of the continuing need for them.

Homesteading

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to encourage the continuing role of homesteading as one of the ways to bring back into use local authority properties in disrepair.

Mr. John Patten: I am continuing to encourage local authorities to look at a wide range of options for meeting people's housing needs and wishes, and I shall be reminding them of the value of homesteading in this context at the next suitable opportunity.

Homesteading is a very useful way of bringing empty council flats and houses back into use. It also gives people a chance to become home owners at a relatively low cost. It does not suit all properties, and not all first-time buyers are willing and able to take on the often considerable work needed, but it can be very helpful indeed in areas where first-time buyers have the necessary skills to undertake renovation work but find it very difficult to afford the prices of houses on the ordinary market. In such cases, some local authorities will use homesteading, using their powers to offer mortgages and home imporvement grants where necessary. They can also, with the Secretary of State's consent, waive mortgage interest payments for up to five years.

GLC Heritage Collection

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will issue a direction to the London residuary body to prevent the disposal at public auction of the catalogued items in the Greater London Council's heritage collection; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: No. I understand that the LRB does not intend to auction those items that have historical and traditional association.

County Hall, London

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will direct the London residuary body not to accept any proposal for the use of county hall which involves demolition of the building; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: No. Any proposals for the demolition of county hall would require listed building consent and the ususal procedures for obtaining that consent would apply.

Insulation

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now introduce a home insulation scheme to allow claimants on supplementary benefit and housing benefit 90 per cent. grants to cover costs of draught proofing as well as loft insulation.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) on Wednesday 28 January at col. *244*.

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his policy on the homes insulation scheme, in the light of the proposals made to him by Neighbourhood Energy Action.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 13 February 1987]: Neighbourhood Energy Action (NEA) have proposed that the changes to the homes insulation scheme should be extended to cover draught-proofing payments currently made by the DHSS. The future arrangements for help with the cost of materials for draught-proofing are under consideration between the relevant Government Departments concerned and the proposals made by NEA will be taken into account.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give a breakdown of the other public bodies to which staff from the Greater London council and metropolitan city councils transferred following abolition.

Mr. Chope: Staff were transferred statutorily at abolition from the Greater London council and metropolitan county councils to the bodies specified in the following orders made under the Local Government Act 1985:

(i) The Local Government Reorganisation (Designation of Staff) Order 1986—1986/192
(ii) The Mersey Tunnels Order 1986—1986/297
(iii) The Tyne Tunnel Order 1986—1986/298
(iv) The Local Government Reorganisation (Airports) Order 1986—1986/425
(v) The London Government Reorganisation (Designation of Staff) Order 1986—1986/426
(vi) The Local Government Reorganisation (Designation of Metropolitan County Council Staff) Order 1986—1986/523
(vii) The Local Government Reorganisation (Designation of Staff) (No. 2) Order 1986—1986/582

No record is kept centrally of the recruitment by successor or other public bodies of former GLC or metropolitan county councils' employees.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give a breakdown by residuary body of the total paid to date in detriment to staff transferred from the seven abolished authorities to successor bodies.

Mr. Chope: The information is as follows:

Residuary Body	*Compensation for Detriment paid up to 31 December 1986* £
London	695,000
Greater Manchester	5,631
Merseyside	96,400
South Yorkshire	645,389
Tyne and Wear	204,000
West Midlands	572,618
West Yorkshire	161,866
Total	2,380,904

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many additional staff were employed by central Government Departments following abolition of the Greater London council and the metropolitan county councils.

Mr. Chope: Much of the Department's work on matters arising from the abolition of the Greater London council and the metropolitan county councils is handled by staff within the appropriate policy areas or regional offices, and is not separately identifiable except at disproportionate cost. The number of staff currently employed centrally in the Department entirely on such matters is 17. The number of staff so employed in other Government Departments is a matter for the respective Secretaries of State.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, if he will provide details of *(a)* the total number of staff declared redundant and *(b)* the total cost of redundancy pay for each of the authorities abolished by the Local Government Act 1985.

Mr. Chope: No record is held centrally of any staff having been declared redundant by the Greater London council or the metropolitan county councils in connection with the Local Government Act 1985. However, under that Act, all employees of those authorities who were in post on 31 March 1986 and who were not designated for transfer by order were treated as if they had been declared redundant by their employer immediately before the abolition date. Of those, 6,284 were entitled to redundancy payments or compensation. The details are as follows:

Abolition Council	*Number of former employees entitled to redundancy payments or compensation*	[1]*Total costs to December 1986* £
Greater London	3,188	21,851,333
Greater Manchester	637	6,739,798
Merseyside	370	3,520,174
South Yorkshire	480	3,421,137
Tyne and Wear	149	989,700
West Midlands	524	3,598,535
West Yorkshire	936	7,440,774

[1] These figures include the costs of any redundancies among residuary bodies' employees since 1 April 1986.

Dog Licences

Mrs. Shields asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list the revenue collected from issuing dog licences, and the total cost of collection and administration, for each year since 1978; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what steps his Department is taking to ensure that post offices acting as agents for local authorities issue dog licences when requested to by the general public; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will list in tabular form *(a)* the number of dog licences issued, *(b)* the estimated number of dogs in Britain and *(c)* the number of prosecutions for non-possession of a dog licence for each year since 1978; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what procedures his Department adopts in order to ensure efficient administration and issuing of dog licences by local authorities and post offices acting as their agents.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall write to the hon. Lady.

Capacitors (Health Hazards)

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to advise users of capacitors containing polychlorinated biphenol to replace them in view of their toxicity and non-biodegradability.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 February 1987, c. *314*]: The Control of Pollution Act (Supply and Use of Injurious Substances) Regulations 1986, Statutory Instrument 1986 No. 902, banned the sale and new use of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) throughout the United Kingdom.

It is not planned to advise existing users of capacitors containing PCBs to replace them before the end of the service life of such equipment since PCBs pose no threat to human health or the environment whilst in use in secure equipment.

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice he gives on the safe disposal of capacitors containing polychlorinated biphenol.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 February 1987, c. *314*]: The main source of advice the Department gives on the disposal of wastes containing polychlorinated biphenyls is waste management paper No. 6 which includes advice on the safe disposal of capacitors.

Conservation Areas

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a map of England identifying Country Heritage sites and areas of special importance for nature conservation which will be protected from industrial development and road planning.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his answer*, 10 February 1987, c. *157*]: The production of such a map is impracticable. However, details of all formally designated sites are notified to planning authorities so that their status can be properly considered when planning applications are made.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Surplus Food (Disposal)

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest annual cost to the United Kingdom of the recent European Economic Community Agriculture Council decision that the financing of disposal of certain surplus Common Agricultural Policy stocks should be borne by national budgets for a period until repayments can be made from the European Economic Community budget; when this procedure was approved by European Economic Community finance ministers; what provision exists in the Public Expenditure White Paper for these costs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: In the context of the package of economy measures agreed by the Agriculture Council in December, the Commission indicated that it would subsequently bring forward a proposal to defer reimbursement to member states in respect of losses on the disposal of 1 million tonnes of butter from intervention stocks in 1987 and 1988. Reimbursements are to be made in four equal instalments starting in 1989, by which time the Commission expect that their cost will be more than offset by savings to the Community budget from the reductions in milk production agreed in December. In the meantime, the member states' financing costs will be reimbursed.

The Commission estimates that deferring reimbursement in this way will reduce EC budget expenditure in 1987 and 1988 by about 2,185 million ecu. The cost to the United Kingdom in postponed receipts from the Community budget is estimated to be broadly neutral, the delay in reimbursement being balanced by a saving in our contributions to the Community budget.

The Council of Agricultural Ministers on 9-10 February approved the necessary regulation, subject to the views of the European Parliament. The subject was also discussed at the Council of Economic and Finance Ministers on 9 February.

Tobacco Duty

Mr. McCartney asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of their income the richest 10 per cent. of households pay on tobacco duty; and what percentage of the income of the lowest 10 per cent. income group is expended on tobacco duty.

Mr. Brooke: The information can be obtained from the tables on pages 107 and 108 of "Economic Trends", No. 397, November 1986, published by the Central Statistical Office, a copy of which is in the Library.

Payroll Giving

Mr. Yeo asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps have been taken to enable civil service employees to donate money to charity under the payroll giving scheme when the scheme comes into effect on 1 April.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Balance of Payments

Mr. Douglas asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give details for the year ended December 1986 of

the United Kingdom balance of payments position *(a)* overall and *(b)* with the European Economic Community, and the balance of trade in manufactured goods for the same period (i) overall and (ii) with the European Economic Community.

Mr. MacGregor: The preliminary estimates for the United Kingdom balance of payments in the fourth quarter and year 1986 will be published on 5 March. The first available estimate for the current account in 1986, which included a projected figure for the balance of invisible transactions in the fourth quarter, showed a deficit on £187 million. Estimates of the 1986 United Kingdom balance of payments with the European Community will not be available until this summer.

On trade in manufactured goods, the United Kingdom recorded a deficit of £5,852 million with the rest of the world in 1986 and a deficit of £10,072 million with countries in the European Community.

VAT

Sir Fergus Montgomery asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consultations took place with the mail order industry before the consultation paper, "VAT: Small Business Review" was published.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 February 1987; c. *37*]: None, but officials of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise have met representatives of the industry to discuss their response to the consultation paper.

Sir Fergus Montgomery asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what compliance cost assessment of the costs and benefits to the mail order industry of the changes proposed in the consultation paper, "VAT: Small Business Review" was carried out by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise in accordance with the provision of paragraph 3.12 of "Building Businesses . . . Not Barriers" (Cmnd. 9794) and if he will publish the findings.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 February 1987, c. *37*]: The compliance costs of those few proposals which may result in additional costs for certain classes of businesses are being taken into account together with the revenue and other possible benefits, in the consideration which the Government is giving to the responses to the consultation document proposals. No formal assessment will be completed until the Government have announced their decisions.

Sir Fergus Montgomery asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the benefits to the United Kingdom economy as a whole of implementing the changes outlined in the consultation paper, "VAT: Small Business Review" in respect of the mail order industry.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 February 1987, c. *37*]: This is receiving further examination in the light of the responses to the consultation paper proposals.

Sir Fergus Montgomery asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment has been made by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise of the cost to retail traders providing self-financed credit facilities of compliance with the proposed new requirements in the consultation paper, "VAT: Small Business Review".

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 February 1987, c. *37*]: Representations received from retail traders providing self-financed credit facilities suggest that, if the proposal to abolish the standard method of reckoning gross takings for users of the VAT special retail schemes were to be implemented, revenue could be in excess of £25 million a year.

Sir Fergus Montgomery asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment has been made by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise of the cost to retail business of compliance with the proposed new requirements in the consultation paper, "VAT: Small Business Review".

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 February 1987, c. *37*]: The consultation paper proposals are mostly beneficial to small retail businesses. I regret that there is no reliable basis for forecasting accurately the value of these benefits.

Sir Fergus Montgomery asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many representations were received from *(a)* business organisations and *(b)* individuals, regarding the present value added tax regulations for mail order firms in each of the years 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985 and 1986.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 February 1987, c. *37*]: There are no VAT regulations relating specifically to mail order firms. The only recent representations have been those at the end of 1986 in the contest of the consultation document "VAT: Small Business Review" and special schemes for retailers.

Premium Bonds

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his reply of 6 February, if he will give sub-totals for the unclaimed prize money from premium bond draws by year; and what is his policy in respect of unclaimed prize money.

Mr. Ian Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 February 1987, c. *235*]: The unclaimed prize money from premium bond prize draws is as follows:

	Value £
1957	—
1958	50
1959	100
1960	325
1961	425
1962	875
1963	1,775
1964	2,250
1965	2,700
1966	3,325
1967	5,020
1968	7,200
1969	10,425
1970	14,625
1971	21,700
1972	28,500
1973	36,200
1974	43,700
1975	68,375
1976	87,425
1977	116,125
1978	143,475
1979	174,600
1980	291,400
1981	380,400
1982	489,900
1983	628,850
1984	773,450
'1985	640,180

‘ Up to and including July draw.

Unclaimed prizes remain available to winners without time limit.

Share Dealings

Mr. Beith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the implications for the Government's policy on the spread of shareholdings of the incidence of dealings in shares of newly privatised companies on the Stock Exchange before letters of allotment have been sent out; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to the reply*, 13 February 1987]: Arrangements for initial dealings in the shares of newly privatised companies are looked at in the circumstances of each case. The practical issues which need to be taken into account include the time needed to process large numbers of applications and the importance of allowing dealings on the stock exchange to begin as soon as possible.

EMPLOYMENT

European Social Fund

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General how much has been allocated since 1981 by the European social fund to each of the Manpower Services Commission's special training measures; and what sums have been applied for in 1987, for each individual programme.

Mr. Lee: The following table shows the amounts allocated from the European social fund to the main groups of Manpower Services Commission training programmes since 1981.

European Social Fund Allocation

	£
1981	
Youth Opportunities Programme	59,408,000
Unified Vocational Preparation	430,000
Training for Skills Programme	4,281,000
Threshold Computer Scheme	818,000
	64,937,000
1982	
Youth Programmes	113,289,000
Training for Skills Programme	4,348,000
Threshold Computer Scheme	887,000
	118,534,000
1983	
Youth Programmes	197,401,000
Threshold Computer Scheme	1,147,000
Training for Skills Programme	1,424,000
	199,972,000
1984	
Youth Training Scheme	137,950,000
Training Opportunities Programme	31,040,000
Open Tech Programme	1,694,000
Training for Skills Programme	1,662,000
Threshold Computer Scheme	1,232,000
	173,578,000
1985	
Youth Training Scheme	93,779,000
Job Training Programme	8,224,000
Wider Opportunities Training Programme	1,810,000
Open Tech Programme	1,629,000
National Priority Skills Scheme	1,349,000
Threshold Computer Scheme	1,233,000
	108,424,000
1986	
Youth Training Scheme	107,861,000
Job Training Programme	9,224,000
Wider Opportunities Training Programme	273,000
National Priority Skills Scheme	371,000
Non-Advanced Further Education	11,833,000
Threshold Computer Scheme	1,473,000
	131,035,000

The amounts applied for in 1987 for each MSC programme are as follows:

	£
Youth Training Scheme	425,639,000
Job Training Programme	111,912,000
Wider Opportunities Training Programme	4,645,000
Non-Advanced Further Education	19,881,000
National Priority Skills Scheme	5,183,000
Threshold Computer Scheme	1,207,000
	568,467,000

Radiation

Dr. David Clark asked the Paymaster General, further to his reply to the hon. Member for South Shields on 3 February, *Official Report*, column *616*, concerning the Health and Safety Executive assessment level of 0·17mSv radiation exposure in a year; when this assessment was introduced; what assessment level is recommended by the International Commission on Radiological Protection; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The assessment level of the dose for any person outside the site boundary was first published by the Health and Safety Executive in April 1979 in "Safety Assessment Principles for Nuclear Power Reactors". The International Commission on Radiological Protection does not make recommendations on assessment levels; it recommends dose limits which are then used by Her Majesty's nuclear installations inspectorate of the HSE in devising the assessment level.

YTS Students

Mr. Lawrence asked the Paymaster General what proportion of YTS students obtain permanent jobs within three months of completing their course in each region of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Trippier: The Manpower Services Commission conducts regular surveys of young people leaving YTS. Results from these surveys (including data for regions) are placed in the Library of the House each month. I refer the hon. Member to these documents.

Community Programme

Mr. Fatchett asked the Paymaster General what has been the impact on targeted community programme schemes in the eight task force areas of the embargo on recruitment of under-25-year-olds to community programme places in connection with the job training scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I will reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Dr. Godman asked the Paymaster General if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of *(a)* prosecutions and *(b)* convictions in England and Wales since 1981 for offences relating to the fraudulent misuse or misappropriation of moneys advanced by the Manpower Services Commission in connection with the community programme.

Mr. Lee: Central records are only held for cases dating back to 1984. Since then there have been 13 prosecutions, resulting in nine convictions; the other four have still to be determined. The Manpower Services Commission vigorously investigate any allegations of misuse of public funds on the community programme, referring serious cases to the police and seeking recovery of the moneys involved.

YTS

Mr. McCrindle asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the contribution by the financial services industries to the YTS; if he will state the numbers joining the scheme from banks, building societies, insurance companies, insurance brokers, accountants and estate agents, respectively; and how many such young people have subsequently found employment.

Mr. Trippier: *(a) Contribution by the financial services industries to YTS.*

The financial services industry are making an important contribution to the YTS.

The major banks, building societies and insurance industry run substantial YTS clerical training schemes, designed to deliver transferable office skills. Additionally many insurance brokers, insurance offices and estate agents act as work placement providers for local managing agents.

(b) Entrants to the YTS.

Statistics are not kept nationally by standard industrial classification on two year YTS. However, the latest figures for one-year YTS starters by SIC show the following numbers of entrants at March 1986.

	Number
Banking and finance	3,089
Insurance companies	920
Insurance brokers Accounts Estate agents Business services	27,167

(c) YTS trainees subsequently finding employment

Information on the proportion of ex-trainees who have obtained employment is not available in the form requested. However the Manpower Services Commission's regular follow-up survey provides the following results about those young people who left schemes in the financial service sector between April 1985 and March 1986.

Percentage in work (including part-time) 3 months after leaving

Sector	*Per cent.*
Banking and finance	84
Insurance	79
Business services	61
Owning and dealing with real estate	63

Earnings

Mr. Robert C. Brown asked the Paymaster General whether any statistics in the 1986 new earnings survey have not been published.

Mr. Lee: The published tables in the 1986 new earnings survey are the same as in previous years apart from results relating to the special questions on size of organisation. However, within the tables there may be small variations in the categories for which information is published which will depend on the reliability of the results including simple size and standard error of the estimate.

Mr. Robert C. Brown asked the Paymaster General what objections have been received from companies or employers' organisations to publication of figures in the new earnings survey.

Mr. Lee: No objections have been received from companies or employers' organisations to publication of figures in the new earnings survey other than on grounds of reliability of the data.

Mr. Robert C. Brown asked the Paymaster General what steps he is taking to ensure that the 1987 new earnings survey discloses figures for all industries including gas supply.

Mr. Lee: Consultations are taking place between employers and my officials where necessary to ensure that the 1987 new earnings survey returns provide reliable results.

Gas Workers

Mr. Robert C. Brown asked the Paymaster General why the new earnings survey does not include any figures relating to manual workers in the gas industry, SIC 1620 public gas supply, gas workers NJIC agreement and gas fitters occupation.

Mr. Lee: Results for the following groups—manual workers in the gas industry SIC 1620 public gas supply, Gas Workers NJIC agreement and gas fitters occupation—are normally included in the new earnings survey published report. My Department took the decision to exclude figures from the 1986 report following advice from British Gas that the survey data were unreliable.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Marshall asked the Paymaster General how many data processing staff are in post within his Department; and how many of them are trainees.

Mr. Lee: At 12 February 1987, the Department of Employment group employed total of 406 professional data processing staff at the levels executive officer to grade 5. Eighteen were trainees.

These figures exclude all staff at levels from clerical assistant to grade 7 employed on non DP work as well as staff at data processor and senior data processor levels.

Mr. Michael Marshall asked the Paymaster General what was the average number of days training per year given to professional information technology staff within his Department who are no longer trainees in the most recent years for which figures are available.

Mr. Lee: The average figure for 1985 was nine days and for 1986 was 10 days for those parts of the Department for which figures are readily available.

Job Training Scheme

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Paymaster General what are the implications for equal opportunities of the eligibility rules for the new job training scheme.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I will reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Paymaster General, pursuant to his reply of 10 February, if unemployed women who have been signing on as unemployed at an unemployment benefit office for six months or more, but who are ineligible for benefit, or who are only in indirect receipt of benefit via an unemployed spouse, will be eligible for a training allowance under the job training scheme.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The allowances paid to participants in the new job training scheme are at a rate equivalent to the amount of benefit in payment immediately before joining the scheme. Men and women not receiving benefit immediately before training will not, therefore, be eligible for a training allowance. They will become entitled to an allowance if a later change of circumstances would have entitled them to benefit had they remained unemployed. Benefits received by the spouse of a trainee who is not getting an allowance will not be affected.

Liverpool Heritage Developments Ltd.

Mr. Fields asked the Paymaster General what is the value of past and current contracts between *(a)* the Manpower Services Commission and *(b)* the Merseyside Task Force and Liverpool Heritage Developments Limited formerly Dunebourne Limited.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 February 1987, c. *53-54*]: I understand that there are no current contracts between the Manpower Services Commission and Liverpool Heritage Developments Limited, formerly Dunebourne Limited, and nor have there been any in the past.

I believe the hon. Member may be referring to the Manpower Services Commission's community programme contract with Merseyside Improvements Agency. I understand that the agency has arrangements with a number of sponsors, one of which involves restoration work on the Liverpool Royal Institute by Liverpool Heritage Developments Limited. The cost of the project is about £335,500.

I also understand that there are no current contracts between Merseyside Task Force and Liverpool Heritage Developments Limited.

In February 1986, Merseyside Task Force provided £200 to Liverpool Heritage Developments Limited for work involved in a presentation on the enterprise allowance scheme, in association with other local bodies.

Nuclear Installations Inspectorate

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Paymaster General if he will publish a list showing the number of any notifiable incidents reported to Her Majesty's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate in each year since 1970 where such incidents involved a flask designed to transport nuclear fuel; whether reporting criteria for such incidents have been changed in the period; whether reporting criteria differ between incidents occurring inside and outside nuclear sites; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: I have been asked to reply.

Since 1970 the number of notifiable incidents relating to fuel flasks on nuclear sites has been:

	Number
1970 to 1973	none
1974	none
1975	none
1976	2
1977	5
1978	2
1979	4
1980	6
1981 to 1983	none
1984	1
1985 to 1986	none

Up to 1976, incidents were reported to comply with site licence conditions and the Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1963. In 1976, under arrangements announced by the Secretary of State for energy on 2 February at column 210, the reporting criteria were extended to include incidents of lesser significance. Modifications to those criteria were announced by the Under-Secretary of State for Energy on 26 July 1982 at column 374.

Those arrangements relate to incidents on nuclear sites. Transport-related incidents off site are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Deportation

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were deported in each of the last three years; to which countries they went; and how many went to countries other than those from which they originally came.

Mr. Waddington: The only information available relates to the nationality of the person deported which will usually be the country of both origin and destination. Figures for 1984 and 1985 are given in the table; corresponding information for 1986 will be available in March.

Deportation Orders enforced, by nationality

Nationality[1]	*Number* 1984	1985
Commonwealth		
Australia	6	4
Cyprus	39	25
Ghana	140	137
Hong Kong BDTC	16	23
India	44	51
Jamaica	7	8
Malaysia	10	6

Nationality[1]	Number 1984	1985
Mauritius	12	8
Nigeria	214	216
Sierra Leone	4	6
Sri Lanka	6	5
Zimbabwe	12	2
Other Commonwealth	43	31
Total Commonwealth	553	522
European Community (EC)		
France	6	4
Ireland	23	20
Italy	23	23
Netherlands	17	10
Other EC	15	11
Total EC	84	68
Non-EC Foreign		
Algeria	13	11
Chile	6	11
Colombia	18	14
Egypt	13	11
Germany (Dem. Rep.)	17	16
Iran	11	10
Israel	7	3
Libya	19	8
Morocco	10	18
Pakistan	42	49
South Africa	6	5
Turkey	56	28
USA	22	17
Other foreign	41	51
Total non-EC foreign	281	252
All countries	918	842

[1] Only those with 10 or more cases in total during 1984-5 are shown separately; other nationalities are represented under "Other Commonwealth", "Other European Community" and "Other non-EC foreign".

Shops Act 1950

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many local authorities have made section 51 orders under the Shops Act 1950.

Mr. Waddington: This information is not held centrally.

High Street, Kensington (Bomb Explosion)

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what evidence he has received as to any connections between Iranian diplomats in London and the bomb explosion in High street, Kensington, in August 1986;

(2) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the Metropolis with regard to the police investigations into the bomb explosion in High street, Kensington, which killed Bijan Fazeli in August 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: Police investigations into this incident are continuing. No one has claimed responsibility and I cannot speculate as to who may have caused the explosion.

Terrorism

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons detained under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Acts in each of the police areas of Metropolitan London, Dumfries and Galloway and Merseyside were charged with offences under the Acts or under other Acts, separately, in 1986.

Mr. Hurd: The available information is shown in the table. Information on detentions in the three police force areas specified is published quarterly in Home Office statistical bulletins, copies of which are in the Library (table 3 of issue 2/87 gives figures up to the end of 1986).

Persons detained in 1986 under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 and subsequent charges

Police force area	Detained	Charged under Prevention of Terrorism Acts	Charged under other legislation[1]
Metropolitan police district	84	[redacted]	9
Merseyside	11	2	—
Dumfries and Galloway	50	8	—
Other areas	57	3	14
Total	202	13	23

[1] Persons also charged with offences under the Prevention of Terrorism Acts are included in the previous column.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was the average number of days spent on remand by those remanded in custody for terrorist-type offences in 1986 with regard to cases now completed in England and Wales and the number of bail applications refused, respectively;

(2) how many persons were remanded in custody before trial for offences connected with terrorism in 1986.

Mr. Mellor: The only information which is readily available relates to prisoners who are now in prison custody in category A and does not cover prisoners who have been released or downgraded.

Five such prisoners were first received in custody in 1986. The case of one of them has now been completed. He spent a total of 186 days on remand; our records show that he did not make any applications for bail.

Northern Ireland

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the number of deaths which have occurred in Great Britain in 1986 connected with the present civil unrest in Northern Ireland; and what information he has as to how many of those deaths were caused by action taken by the police, and each of the known paramilitary groups.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In 1986 no homicides were recorded as attributed to acts of terrorism connected with Northern Ireland.

Prisoners (Transfer)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners were transferred from *(a)* England and Wales to Northern Ireland and *(b)* Northern Ireland to England and Wales in 1986; and under which section of the Criminal Justice Act 1961 such transfer was carried out.

Mr. Mellor: Three prisoners were transferred from England and Wales to Nothern Ireland in 1986; two of these transfers were made under section 26 of the Criminal Justice Act 1961 (permanent transfer) and one under section 27 (temporary transfer). Two prisoners were transferred under section 27 from Northern Ireland to England and Wales.

Fire and Civil Defence Authorities

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to limit the number of committees and sub-committees of the fire and civil defence authorities serving the former metropolitan counties and the amount expended on servicing such committees and sub-committees.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Such legislative controls have existed since 1 April 1986, and will continue to operate until 31 March 1989, by virtue of the Fire and Civil Defence Authorities (Establishment, Support Services and Management Schemes) Regulations 1985, made under section 85 of the Local Government Act 1985. These regulations require the fire and civil defence authorities for the first three years of their existence to submit for the Secretary of State's approval, inter alia, a management scheme including details of the authority's organisation. The Secretary of State may approve a scheme either as submitted or, after consultation with the authority in question, subject to such modifications or alterations as he may require. The exercise by the Secretary of State of the precept limitation controls, to which the fire and civil defence authorities are automatically subject in their first three years by virtue of section 68 of the Local Government Act 1985, reflects an assessment, taking into account the advice of Her Majesty's inspectorate of fire services, of what constitutes effective, efficient and economic practice over the whole of fire and civil defence authorities' expenditure.

Special Hospitals

Mr. Cunliffe asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to take powers to prevent the release from special hospitals of persons with previous convictions for violence.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Under the Mental Health Act 1983, persons who are the subject of special restrictions can be discharged from special or other hospitals only with the consent of my right hon. Friend or on the direction of a mental health review tribunal.

Mr. Cunliffe asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people, subject to a hospital order as a result of violent offences, have been released on licence from a special hospital and subsequently have been convicted of similar offences in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The only readily available information relates to all persons detained in special hospitals in England and Wales under part V of the Mental Health Act 1959 and Criminal Procedure (Insanity) Act 1964 subject to special restrictions on discharge, who were conditionally discharged in the years 1974-79. Of the 157 such persons (not including those who died or were repatriated) 17 were convicted of a 'grave' offence within five years of discharge ('grave' offences cover mainly homicide, serious wounding, rape, buggery, robbery, aggravated burglary and arson).

Burglary (Greater London)

Mr. David Young asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the latest figures for the number of unsolved burglaries in the latest year for which figures are available in the Metropolitan area of Greater London.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The estimated number of offences of burglary recorded by the Metropolitan police in 1985 but not cleared up was 139,000. Since an offence may be recorded and cleared up in different years, it is not possible to give an exact figure. Numbers of notifiable offences recorded and cleared up in each offence category are published annually in the report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis (appendix 4ii of the issue for 1985, Cmnd. 9790).

Departmental Staff

Mr. Michael Marshall asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average number of days training per year given to professional information technology staff within his Department who are no longer trainees in the most recent years for which figures are available.

Mr. Hurd: In 1985 and 1986 staff in the Home Office in the automatic data processing functional specialism received an average of about six days formal training per year. This excludes initial training.

Mr. Michael Marshall asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many data processing staff are in post within his Department; and how many of them are trainees.

Mr. Hurd: At 12 February 1987, there were 380 Home Office staff in post in the automatic data processing functional specialism at executive officer level and above; four were trainees undergoing initial training. These figures exclude staff in the former grades of data processor and senior data processor.

Greater London

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list the total number of written communications between his Department and local authorities in the Greater London area in *(a)* 1979-80 and *(b)* 1986-87, to date;

(2) if he will list the additional functions and responsibilities undertaken by his Department of a temporary or permanent kind as a result of the abolition of the Greater London council, stating the total estimated cost to public funds in 1986-87 and the total number of officials involved;

(3) if he will list all regional and sub-regional outposts of his Department responsible for functions or services within the Greater London area, stating function and responsibilities of such outposts and giving the total cost of such offices to public funds in 1986-87 and the total number of officials involved;

(4) if he will list all functions and responsibilities currently undertaken by any division and organisation within his Department which is concerned with local authority services solely within the Greater London area, stating the total estimated cost to public funds in 1986-87 and the total number of officials involved;

(5) if he will list the action he has taken since the abolition of the Greater London council to ensure that the functions and responsibilities of his Department and its related non-departmental public bodies dealing with the Greater London area are co-ordinated with each other.

Mr. Hurd: I will reply as soon as possible.

Television and Radio Broadcasting

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are his responsibilities with regard to television and radio broadcasting.

Mr. Hurd: I am responsible for the Government's policies on the provision of broadcasting and cable television services within the United Kingdom. I have responsibilities for appointments to the broadcasting and cable authorities; for licensing the broadcasting authorities under the terms of the Wireless Telegraphy Act 1949; and for setting the level of the independent television levy and the broadcast receiving licence fee. I have certain reserve powers concerning programmes and advertisements carried on radio or television.

BBC Scotland (Police Raid)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Metropolitan Police Commissioner about the date on which the Metropolitan police first contacted Strathclyde police about the proposed search of BBC premises in Glasgow.

Mr. Hurd: I understand that the Metropolitan police first contacted Strathclyde police on this matter on 29 January.

Road Traffic Offences

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether there have been any prosecutions of persons for acting in contravention of, or failing to comply with, section 6 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.

Mr. Hurd: Such prosecutions are not recorded separately in the information available to me.

Prisoners (Mental Illness)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to institute research into the incidence of mental illness amongst the prison population of England and Wales.

Mr. Mellor: Yes. The Department is in discussion with the institute of psychiatry, university of London, about a study into the incidence of mental disorder amongst the sentenced prison population and the services required.

Prisoners (Psychiatric Treatment)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners who are currently serving a sentence in a jail in England and Wales have previously been an in-patient at a psychiatric establishment.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is not available centrally.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners currently serving a prison sentence are receiving psychiatric treatment.

Mr. Mellor: Information in the form requested is not collected centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Regina v. Allen

Mr. Gregory asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress he has made in considering legislation to reverse the House of Lords judgment in Regina v. Allen in relation to the non-payment of bills for accommodation and catering services.

Mr. Mellor: We are not at present persuaded that there is a need for legislation.

News International, Wapping

Mr. Dennis Canavan asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the total cost to date of giving police protection to the News International plant at Wapping; and if he will give separate figures for the cost of the operation on the night of 24 January.

Mr. Douglas Hogg [*pursuant to his reply*, 2 February 1987, c. *476*]: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the additional cost to the Metropolitan police of policing the News International dispute at Wapping, up to and including 31 January 1987, is estimated at £5·7 million. The estimate of the additional cost of the operation on 24 January 1987 is £56,000.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Financial Products (Salesmen)

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if it remains his policy that the self-regulatory organisations created under the Financial Services Act are the most appropriate agencies for the purpose of licensing of salesmen of financial products; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Recognised self-regulating organisations are an important part of the regulatory framework which is being set up by the Financial Services Act. It is in the first instance for applicants for recognition to decide whether to include in their rules a system of licensing of salesmen employed by their members. It will then be for the Secretary of State or designated agency to decide whether the rules as a whole provide an adequate level of investor protection.

Banks and Building Societies (Polarisation)

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received from banks and building societies about their inclusion in the concept of polarisation as defined in the Financial Services Act in relation to the sale of insurance and related products; and what discussions he has had with the Securities and Investment Board on this matter.

Mr. Howard: I have received a copy of the paper the British Bankers Association has sent the Director General of Fair Trading expressing the banks' concerns on this subject. I have also received representations from others supporting polarisation and am considering the matter. I have had no discussions with the Securities and Investments Board on this subject since the Financial Services Act was passed.

Heavy Vehicles

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing, for each category of heavy vehicles imported from Germany, its average landed value in each year since 1983 and in the latest month for which figures are available together with the corresponding rates of exchange between sterling and the German mark.

Mr. Alan Clark: I will reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Rolls-Royce plc

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will state the amount of any loans still to be repaid by Rolls-Royce plc to Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Pattie: There are no amounts owing by Rolls-Royce plc on loans advanced to it by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will state the amounts of equity capital invested by Her Majesty's Government in Rolls-Royce plc in each year since 1971; and if he will convert each of the figures into current value equivalents at today's prices.

Mr. Pattie: Following is the information:

	1986[1] Prices £ million	*Actual £ million*
1971	145	30
1973	124	[2]30
1975	220	77
1976	93	38
1977	45	21
1978	14	7
1979	54	31
1980	138	94
1981	170	130
1982	60	50

[1] Converted into 1986 prices using the Retail Price Index.
[2] Includes £10 million originally paid by Her Majesty's Government as part of a loan but later coverted to equity.

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will state the dividends received by Her Majesty's Government from Rolls-Royce plc in each year since 1971 in respect of the equity capital invested by Her Majesty's Government in the company.

Mr. Pattie: No dividends have been received by Her Majesty's Government in respect of equity invested in Rolls-Royce plc.

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will state the amount of public money provided by Her Majesty's Government to Rolls-Royce plc in each year since 1971 in respect of contributions towards aero-engine programmes, and the receipts by Her Majesty's Government in each of those years in respect of such programmes.

Mr. Pattie: Following is the information on launch-aided aero-engine programmes.

	£ million
1971-72	—
1972-73	4·20
1973-74	6·90
1974-75	9·90
1975-76	10·10
1976-77	13·00
1977-78	6·00
1978-79	34·10
1979-80	77·90
1980-81	67·10
1981-82	92·90
1982-83	53·50
1983-84	74·60
1984-85	20·00
1985-86	22·68
1986-87	27·32

In addition, £143·4 million was provided for the fully funded RB211-22B programme in which the Government took all receipts for the first 555 engines, totalling £330 million.

Six of the aero-engine programmes for which launch aid has been provided are either still in production or under development and are therefore expected to yield a levy on sales for a number of years to come.

Excluding the 22B programme, the total levies on sales received by Her Majesty's Government for all launch-aided engine programmes up to 31 December 1986 was £120·6 million. An annual breakdown is not readily available.

Helicopter Industry

Dr. Hampson asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the future of the United Kingdom helicopter industry; and what measures he is considering to strengthen its technological and strategic position.

Mr. Pattie: Westland plc is the United Kingdom's only helicopter manufacturer. The company recently announced pre-tax profits of £26·4 million for the year ended 30 September 1986, of which £8·9 million was attributable to its helicopter business. My Department is providing launch aid to Westland for the development of the

commercial versions of the EH101 helicopter. The company also receives funding from the Department for a number of technological research projects.

Multi-fibre Arrangement

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make use of article 24 of the new multi-fibre arrangement protocol to bring under quota restraint garments made predominantly from ramie.

Mr. Alan Clark: The European Commission has been informed of my concern at the high level of imports this year from certain third countries of garments made predominantly of ramie. We have provided the Commission and other member states with the provisional import figures obtained for the first 20 days of the year. Other member states have been invited urgently to provide similar details of ramie imports so that the Community can decide what action, including the possibility of consultations under article 24 of the protocol, to take. The United Kingdom has emphasised the need for the Community to act quickly if this is justified.

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the number of garments made from more than 50 per cent. by weight of ramie fibre, contained within Category 5 (jumpers, pullovers and cardigans) of the multi-fibre arrangement, for which import licences have been received since 31 December 1986.

Mr. Alan Clark: There is no import licensing requirement for pullovers made predominantly from ramie, but special surveillance measures have been in force since 1 January 1987. Provisional import figures reveal that in the first 20 days of January, 240,000 of these pullovers originating in China, Hong Kong, South Korea and Taiwan (the only countries for which figures are at present available) were imported into the United Kingdom.

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish in the *Official Report* details of the special import surveillance arrangements he has made in relation to certain garments made predominantly from ramie.

Mr. Alan Clark: In order to monitor effectively imports of certain garments made predominantly from ramie, five new Nimexe headings were created on 1 January this year for pullovers, shirts and blouses. With the co-operation of Her Majesty's Customs, my Department has been monitoring the levels of the most sensitive of these imports from Hong Kong, South Korea, Taiwan and China under an import surveillance arrangement which provides provisional import figures at 10-day intervals. In view of the significant quantity identified, arrangements are now being made for imports under the remaining Nimexe headings to be similarly closely monitored and for Macao to be added to the list of originating countries.

British National Space Centre

Mr. Michael Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received regarding the provisions submitted to him by the British national space centre; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: There have been several expressions of interest from industry and others, including my hon. Friend, in the proposals I have received from the British National Space Centre. These proposals represent a major long-term commitment and they are being carefully considered. I hope to be able to make a statement on them in the near future.

Consumer Credit Act

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he intends to exempt loans of less than £15,000 for housing purposes from building societies from the restrictions of the Consumer Credit Act.

Mr. Howard: All building society loans secured on first mortgage for house purchase, repair and improvement are already exempt from the requirements of the Consumer Credit Act. Other secured loans by building societies and other lenders will come within the scope of the Act. I consider it right in principle that the protection of the Act should be available to consumers who pledge their home as security in credit agreements.

I am aware of the view of some building societies that the need to comply with the Consumer Credit Act, to which other commercial lenders have been subject since May 1985, in respect of repair loans to owner-occupiers will make it difficult for them to participate in certain local schemes for property renovation. I am considering whether any further limited exemption from the requirements of the Act may be appropriate, but I would not be prepared to make any changes that would significantly weaken the protection available to borrowers or distort competition between the main commercial lenders.

Exports

Mr. Watts asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a further statement about the recent trend of export trade.

Mr. Alan Clark: Non-oil exports were at record levels in both value and volume last year. By the end of 1986 the volume of non-oil exports was over 10 per cent. higher than a year earlier and is forecast to rise further this year.

Manchester Ship Canal Company

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will set up an immediate departmental inquiry into the procedures and commercial practices involved in the takeover bid for the Manchester Ship Canal Company; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The practices in question do not appear to be within the scope of any of my right hon Friend's investigatory powers under the Companies Act, but they can certainly be considered within the framework of the review of various aspects of takeover regulation which he announced on 28 January.

Soya

Mr. Loyden asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the figures for the import into the United Kingdom of *(a)* soya beans and *(b)* soya meal for the months of December 1986 and January 1987.

Mr. Alan Clark: In December 1986, 63,656 metric tonnes of soya beans (value £9 million) and 106,670 metric tonnes of soya meal (value £36,000) were imported into the United Kingdom.

Figures for January 1987 are not yet available.

British Shipbuilders and British Steel

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will estimate how many persons were employed in each region and in Scotland and Wales by *(a)* British Shipbuilders and *(b)* British Steel in June 1979; and how many are now employed.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 February 1987]: A direct comparison is not possible between 1979 and 1986, because of the privatisation programme of both corporations. The information contained in the table therefore also refers to those companies privatised since 1979.

Region	*British Shipbuilders*			*British Steel Corporation*	
	June 1979	*December 1986*		*September 1979*	*September 1986*
		Current BS Yards	*Ex BS Yards*[1]		
South West	1,288	579	430	60	—
South East	8,893	—	1,220	3,590	560
Northern	43,105	4,174	17,320	35,800	9,530
North West	4,409	—	1,350	2,610	370
Yorkshire and Humberside	671	—	—	45,480	12,880
West Midlands	—	—	—	7,860	1,980
East Midlands	—	—	—	18,640	2,550
Scotland	22,004	3,298	6,370	18,970	6,050
Wales	—	—	—	50,630	18,820
TOTAL	80,370	8,051	26,690	183,640	52,740

[1] Where current employment not known, composite figures include employment within the yard at the time of sale by British Shipbuilders. A similar breakdown is not available for the British Steel Corporation but it is estimated that about 20,000 employees have been transferred, primarily on the formation of joint venture companies between BSC and the private sector.

Science and Technology Grants

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will specify the number of claims made for various science and technology grants to his Department during each year since 1979; and which of these claims were received from small companies.

Mr. Pattie [*pursuant to his reply*, 13 February 1987]: The number of applications under the principal schemes for project support under the Science and Technology Act 1965 are as follows. Statistics relating to size of firms are not readily available, but also shown are applications with eligible project costs below £100,000. These are generally accepted only from small firms.

Number of Applications

	Total	*Number*[1]
1979-80	823	436
1980-81	889	430
1981-82	1,489	637
1982-83	2,382	998
1983-84	3,338	1,448
1984-85	1,810	788
1985-86	1,561	797
	12,292	5,534

[1] With project costs below £100,000

Orbital Slots

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when Her Majesty's Government last filed an orbital slot with the International Telecommunications Union.

Mr. Butcher [*pursuant to his reply*, 13 February 1987]: On 21 January 1987.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will place in the Library examples of data filed with the International Telecommunications Union in connection with orbital slots.

Mr. Butcher [*pursuant to his reply*, 13 February 1987]: I have placed in the Library copies of the information sent on 21 January 1987 in respect of the Inmarsat AOR Central IA and IIA satellites.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Museum Charges

89. **Mr. Cohen** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the proposed implementation of entrance charges to the natural history museum, the geological museum and the zoological museum at Tring.

90. **Mr. Eric Deakins** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the proposed implementation of entrance charges to the natural history museum, the geological museum and the zoological museum at Tring.

91. **Mr. Bidwell** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the proposed implementation of entrance charges to the natural history museum, the geological museum and the zoological museum at Tring.

Mr. Walden: I refer the hon. Members to my reply to the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Raynsford) on 6 February at column 846.

GCSE (Staffordshire)

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what allocation has been made to Staffordshire county council for the implementation of the general certificate of secondary education.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government have directly provided for the following expenditure in Staffordshire towards the introduction of GCSE:

	1986-87 £	*1987-88* £
On books and equipment	438,900	234,700
On in-service training	159,490	332,000

Youth Service

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether there is any intention to develop a specific category within his Department's education support current programme to cover the needs of the Youth Service.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend's reply of 20 January to my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) at column 513-14 referred to the new activities to be supported in the 1987-88 programme. The allocations for one of these, the promotion of social responsibility in young people, include several projects which are to be run by, or in conjunction with the youth service. In addition, the youth service is included within the area of responsibility of the co-ordinators employed by local education authorities to stimulate action aimed at the prevention of drug misuse, which was first supported in the 1986-87 ESG programme.

Capital Allocations

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what reports and information were available to his Department in considering the 1987-88 capital allocations for local education authorities; what information was available on *(a)* the age, suitability and condition of each authority's school accommodation, *(b)* the age, suitability and condition of each authority's other educational accommodation, *(c)* the extent to which each authority had removed surplus places, *(d)* the capital receipts likely to be available to each authority and *(e)* the extent to which each authority had made provision to implement the Education Act 1981 concerning children with special needs, and the further requirement for such provision; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what criteria were used in determining the 1987-88 capital allocations for local education authorities; to what extent consideration was given to *(a)* the age, suitability and condition of each authority's school accommodation, *(b)* the age, suitability and condition of each authority's other educational accommodation, *(c)* the extent to which each authority had removed surplus places, *(d)* the capital receipts likely to be available to each authority and *(e)* the extent to which each authority had made provision to implement the Education Act 1981 concerning children with special needs, and the further requirement for such provision; and if he will make a statement;

Mr. Dunn: The Department does not collect comprehensive information in categories *(a)* to *(e)*. Every year, all local education authorities send to the Department details of their capital expenditure plans for the following financial year. Individual local education authorities' allocations of prescribed capital expenditure on schools for 1987-88 were calculated, on the basis of the information thus supplied, by giving priority to committed expenditure (up to a level previously notified to the authority), expenditure on projects required to meet basic need, and expenditure required in connection with the removal of surplus school places. What remained was allocated by means of a formula based on information supplied by LEAs about the incidence of substandard school accommodation and on each authority's planned expenditure in other categories relating to schools. For further and higher education, priority was given to committed expenditure (on the same basis as for schools), tertiary projects arising from statutory proposals to remove surplus places, and the provision of computers and technical equipment. This general approach, which has been in use for a number of years, was devised after discussions with the local authority associations.

Saltby Church of England School

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what allocation he has granted to Leicestershire county council for 1987-88 for minor works for aided schools; and whether this is intended to cover necessary works at Saltby Church of England primary school.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend approved for minor works at voluntary aided and special agreement schools an allocation of £88,000 for 1987-88 and a provisional indication of £22,000 for 1988-89. It is for the local education authority, in consultation with the voluntary bodies in its area, to determine how the allocation should be spent.

Schools

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information is available to his Department on whether capital expenditure for improvements has been either planned or undertaken at those schools inspected by Her Majesty's inspectors since 1979, where the report of inspection judged the quality of lessons to be restricted by poor accommodation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: Individual authorities provide information of this type from time to time in correspondence with the Department; but no central record is kept of such data.

School Closures

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what action he is taking to support parental preferences for small rural schools to remain open; and if he will make a statement on his policy in this regard.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has a statutory duty to consider proposals for the closure of small rural schools on their merits. In doing so he takes account inter alia of expressed parental preference for schools of this kind. Small isolated schools may have difficulty in sustaining a broad and balanced curriculum: my right hon. Friend is currently supporting pilot projects in 14 LEAs under the

rural schools educational support grants programme, aimed at identifying ways of widening and enriching the curriculum.

Sex Education

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he is satisfied that local education authorities are taking all such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that sex education in schools is given with proper regard to moral considerations; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend expects all parties to fulfil their new responsibilities and duties under the Education (No. 2) Act 1986, including the requirement for any sex education offered by schools to encourage pupils "to have due regard to moral considerations and the value of family life".
He intends to issue shortly a circular on sex education at school which will include guidance on the implementation of the new legislative provisions.

Overseas Development

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will now seek to include courses in awareness on overseas development in modern studies courses in secondary schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government believe that there should be room in the secondary curriculum for elements which need not or should not be taught as separate subjects. Some awareness of economic matters and of overseas development, for example, which many secondary schools already include in the curriculum, can arise naturally in the course of studying subjects such as geography and economics.

UGC Review

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he expects to publish a response to the review of the University Grants Committee, Cmnd. 81; what consultations or discussions he expects to hold on this report; when he expects to complete his consideration of this report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Knowles) on 10 February 1987 at column *172*.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

BBC Scotland (Police Raid)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if the Lord Advocate will call for a report from the office of the procurator fiscal in Glasgow about the progress of inquiries in connection with the police search of BBC premises in Glasgow on 31 January and 1 February; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The Crown Office is being advised of the progress of the procurator fiscal's inquiries. Once the procurator fiscal is in a position to submit a formal report to the Lord Advocate, he will do so.

To date, 211 articles have been examined and returned to the BBC.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he will list all the occasions since 1979 on which the Lord Advocate, the Crown Office or procurators fiscal have sought advice from outside Her Majesty's Government in cases involving alleged breaches of the Official Secrets Acts in relation to *(a)* their assessment of the extent of any damage to national security for the purposes of determining the need for and scope of police inquiries and possible search warrants and *(b)* their subsequent decision as to whether to bring a prosecution; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Any request for advice from outside Her Majesty's Government would be confidential; but it is not the Lord Advocate's practice to seek such advice.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland to what extent *(a)* the Lord Advocate and *(b)* the local procurator fiscal are being kept informed about progress with the police inquiries in Scotland into alleged breaches of the Official Secrets Acts in relation to project Zircon; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The procurator fiscal is being kept informed from time to time about progress with the police inquiries in Scotland into alleged breaches of the Official Secrets Acts in relation to project Zircon and the Lord Advocate is being kept informed by the procurator fiscal of these matters. A full report will be prepared and submitted by the police to the procurator fiscal in due course.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland, pursuant to the answer of 11 February, what is the Lord Advocate's practice with regard to *(a)* informing as opposed to consulting other Ministers about applications for search warrants in relation to alleged offences under the Official Secrets Acts and *(b)* keeping other Ministers informed about the progress of police inquiries into such alleged offences; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Whether and to what extent the Lord Advocate would *(a)* inform as opposed to consulting other Ministers about applications for search warrants in relation to alleged offences under the Official Secrets Acts and *(b)* keep other Ministers informed about the progress of police inquiries into such alleged offences would depend on the circumstances of the particular case.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland why the Lord Advocate did not seek to obtain an interim interdict or an interdict in perpetuity in relation to the publication of material in Scotland concerning the proposed BBC programme about Project Zircon, as soon as he became aware of the likelihood that an article on the subject by Mr. Duncan Campbell was to be published in the *New Statesman* of 23 January; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: My noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate was not aware and had no grounds for believing that there was a threat or likelihood of publication of this material by the *New Statesman*.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 11 February, *Official Report*, column 308, by what means the procurator fiscal knew the attitude of the BBC to the requirement of due legal process in relation to requests by the police to search the corporation's Glasgow premises; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I refer the hon. Member to the statement by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, which is reported in the *Official Report* for 3 February 1987 at column 825, and to my answer to the hon. Member's written question on 9 February 1987, at column 9.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland to what extent his consideration of the public interest in assessing the need for, and scope of, a search warrant requested by the police differs from that which he applied in deciding whether to bring prosecutions in cases involving breaches of the Official Secrets Act; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: In cases of alleged breaches of the Official Secrets Acts, as in many other types of case, consideration requires to be given to the public interest by the Lord Advocate in deciding whether to direct the carrying out of a criminal investigation and thereafter, where that investigation has produced a legal sufficiency of evidence, whether there should be a prosecution. An application for a search warrant by a procurator fiscal at the request of the police in the course of a criminal investigation is part of the evidence-gathering process in such an investigation.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 11 February, *Official Report*, column 308, what precise steps the Lord Advocate took to satisfy himself of the adequacy and scope of search warrants in the course of criminal investigations by the police into alleged breaches of the Official Secrets Act in relation to Project Zircon; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I refer the hon. Member to my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate's answers in another place on 4 February 1987 *Official Report*, columns 199-205 to which I have nothing to add.

WALES

Planning Appeals

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* for each year since 1979 *(a)* the total number of planning appeals made to his Department, *(b)* the number of appeals withdrawn, *(c)* the number of appeals upheld and *(d)* the number of appeals rejected.

Mr. Mark Robinson: For each year since 1979 the total numbers of planning appeals made to the Department, withdrawn, upheld and rejected are as follows:

Year	*Received*	*Withdrawn*	*Upheld*	*Rejected*
1979	844	181	164	363
1980	875	225	230	204
1981	1,028	214	237	492
1982	773	198	217	545
1983	744	167	241	431
1984	806	161	229	402
1985	912	172	261	353
1986	1,048	195	342	495

Mental Hospitals

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give details of long-stay mental hospitals currently approved for closure, or listed in strategic plans as proposed for closure before 1995, or indicated by health authorities as possibilities for closure outside the strategic planning period, listing the present number of in-patients in each case.

Mr. Mark Robinson: There is no regional strategic plan for Wales. The information by district is as follows. Although the strategic plans for Clwyd and Gwent have been approved, the separate consultation procedures linked to the closure of hospitals have not yet been carried out.

District Health Authority	*Mental illness or handicap hospitals proposed for closure in strategic plan (before 1995)*	*Status of strategic plan*	*Mental illness or handicap hospitals where District Health Authority has indicated a possibility of closure (after 1995)*	*Number of in-patients at December 1986*
Clwyd	Pool Park	Approved by Secretary of State	—	56
Gwent	Pen-y-fal	Approved by Secretary of State	—	445
	—	—	Llanfrechfa Grange	330
Mid Glamorgan	Parc	Approval under consideration	—	536
	—	—	Hensol	402
Powys	—	—	Llys Maldwen	56
			or	
			Bryn Hyfryd	59
South Glamorgan	—	—	Ely	410

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the number of long-stay patients discharged from each mental hospital since 1981.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The latest information is as follows:

Mental Illness Hospital/Unit	Number of long-stay patients discharged[1]				
	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
North Wales, Denbigh	36	39	40	50	65
Gwynfa Residential Clinic	1	3	—	—	—
Maelor General	—	—	1	—	—
Bronglais	—	—	—	—	—
West Wales General	—	2	1	1	6
St. David's, Carmarthen	20	53	34	53	24
Bryntirion	—	—	—	—	2
Pen-y-Fal	33	29	24	37	26
St. Woolo's	—	—	—	1	7
St. Cadoc's	10	11	22	12	13
Ysbyty Gwynedd	—	—	—	—	—
Morganwg-Glanrhyd/Penyfai	30	38	24	27	15
Morganwg-Parc	45	22	33	21	14
East Glamorgan General	—	1	4	3	3
Tyntyla	2	1	4	2	1
Mid Wales, Talgarth	14	12	20	19	6
University Hospital	1	—	—	2	2
Royal Hamadryad	3	7	7	2	10
Whitchurch	22	16	19	14	16
Sully	17	8	9	4	4
Lansdowne	1	—	1	1	7
Cefn Coed	19	16	21	39	31
Garngoch	—	—	—	—	—
Tonna	—	—	1	3	—

[1] Patients who have been resident for 12 months or more.

Mental Handicap Hospital/Unit	Number of long-stay patients discharged[1]				
	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Broughton	3	—	4	—	1
Coed Du Hall	—	1	2	—	—
West Wales General	—	—	—	—	—
Allt-y-Mynydd	—	6	3	2	1
County, Griffithstown	—	2	—	2	—
Llanfrechfa Grange	7	8	3	10	7
Bryn-y-Neuadd	10	19	10	12	4
Llwyn View	1	2	—	1	—
Garth Angharad	8	5	1	5	6
Cefn Hirgoed	14	7	3	5	10
Hensol	12	17	19	11	9
Ystrad Mynach	1	5	1	2	3
South Pembrokeshire	—	6	6	3	4
Bronllys	7	6	9	4	4
Brynhyfryd	—	—	—	2	—
Llys Maldwyn	1	2	—	—	1
Ely	6	17	8	9	5
Llwyneryr	7	6	9	7	11
Gorseinon	3	4	3	5	4
Drymma Hall	4	—	—	24	16

[1] Patients who have been resident for 12 months or more.

Hospital and Health Services

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the capital spent on hospital and community health services for each year since 1974-75 to the latest available date giving in each case the amount *(a)* in cash terms and *(b)* deflated by the gross domestic product deflator and (i) in gross terms and (ii) in net terms after deducting proceeds from land sales.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information requested is set out in the following table:

Gross Capital Expenditure on Hospital and Community Health Services

£ million

	Cash	Adjusted to 1985-86 prices by GDP deflator
1974-75	15·3	51·9
1975-76	23·1	62·3
1976-77	18·0	42·9
1977-78	21·1	44·1
1978-79	23·7	44·8
1979-80	24·3	39·3
1980-81	31·6	43·1
1981-82	41·4	51·4
1982-83	47·1	54·5
1983-84	49·8	55·2
1984-85	52·5	55·8
1985-86	54·7	54·7

Net Capital Expenditure on Hospital and Community Health Services

£ million

	Cash	Adjusted to 1985-86 prices by GDP deflator
1974-75	15·3	51·9
1975-76	23·1	62·3
1976-77	17·7	42·2
1977-78	20·8	43·5
1978-79	23·2	43·9
1979-80	24·2	39·1
1980-81	30·8	42·0
1981-82	40·7	50·5
1982-83	45·6	52·8
1983-84	49·0	54·3
1984-85	51·1	54·3
1985-86	53·0	53·0

NHS (Staff)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to receive the report of the review of grading structure of secretarial staff and clerical workers in the National Health Service which is being carried out by the administrative and clerical Whitley council.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Negotiations on a revised grading structure for administrative and clerical staff are taking place within the Whitley council. It is too early to say when an outcome might be expected.

Darren Colliery

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to announce his decision on the planning appeal relating to the tip removal on the former Darren colliery site at Trebanos.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Certain matters arising on this case have been referred back to the parties for further consideration. Until these matters have been resolved it will not be possible for the inspector to issue his decision.

Garngoch Colliery

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to announce his decision following a public inquiry at the Lliw Valley borough council offices on 7 October 1986 regarding planning matters relating to the site at Garngoch colliery.

Mr. Mark Robinson: My right hon. Friend will issue his decision on this appeal as soon as possible. It is taking longer than usual because of the need to consider complex legal issues raised at the inquiry.

Rights of Way

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of outstanding cases that await his decision in relation to the implementation of the review of public rights of way under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 in West Glamorgan.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: There are no outstanding cases.

Hazard Signals (M4)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* (i) the nature of the hazard necessitating the switching on of the advisory 50 miles per hour speed limit signals on the evening of 5 February between junctions 36 and 37 on the westbound carriageway of the M4 motorway, (ii) the time that the signals were activated, (iii) the time that the hazard was removed and (iv) the time that the signals were switched off.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Operation of these signs is a matter for the appropriate police force, in this case the South Wales police. I am informed that an advisory 50 mph speed limit was displayed between junctions 36 and 37 of the M4 at 15.30 on 5 February because of restricted visibility due to poor weather conditions. An accident involving several vehicles occurred in the westbound carriageway at 17.48 and this was not cleared until 21.44. Weather conditions improved sufficiently by 22.39 to allow the advisory speed limit to be lifted.

Photographic Museum

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if the working party examining the establishment of a Welsh national photographic museum is considering in its deliberations the site at the Lliw Valley borough council offices at Penllergaer.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Yes.

River Dee Crossing

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will estimate the additional capacity of traffic there would be by widening the A494(T) where it crosses the River Dee at Queensferry; and what is the additional capacity that would be made available by the construction of the local or outer link as defined in the report on the north-east Clwyd traffic study.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Adding a third lane to the existing road at Queensferry would increase the capacity from 45,000 vehicles per day to around 65,000. Provision of a local link would create additional capacity of around 18,000 vehicles per day; and of an outer link additional capacity of around 45,000.

School Books

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the level of expenditure on school books in Wales for each of the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Local authorities recorded expenditure on text books, library books, educational equipment, stationery and materials in nursery, primary, secondary and special education over the last 10 years is shown in the following table. Reliable information on text books and library books is not separately available.

Year	*£'000*
1976-77	7,139
1977-78	7,649
1978-79	8,849
1979-80	9,455
1980-81	10,352
1981-82	11,436
1982-83	12,975
1983-84	14,000
1984-85	13,882
[1]1985-86	14,498

[1] Provisional.

Milk Quota

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of the milk quota which has changed hands in South Wales has changed hands through grass letting.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: This information is not available.

Derelict Land

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all the projects funded by derelict land grants in *(a)* Wales and *(b)* Mid Glamorgan in the last three years.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information is as follows:

Land reclamation projects approved 1984-85

	£'000
Gwent	
Tredegar patches shallow workings	39
No. 9 Pit	18
Gantre Mineshafts	122
Pant-y-fforest Mineshaft	104
The "45" Yard	18
Beaufort Brickworks	17
Pontygof School	12
Nantyglo Junior Comprehensive School	21
Biozyme Site	42
Railway land, Abergavenny	281
Railway land, Snatchwood	9
Hafodyrynys	206
Orb Works	136
Cashmores	84
South Glamorgan	
Penarth Dock II	419
Mid Glamorgan	
Gelliwion II	1,352
Graig-y-Duffryn	1,273
Cambrian Colliery	2,301
West Glamorgan	
White Rock Works	107

	£'000
Cwmfelin Works	159
Dyfed	
Pentip School	11
Castle Pond	66
Bryn Tip	39
Salters Works	200
Glanmorfa Foundry	105
Graig Tip, Burryport	141
ROF Pembrey IV	8
Bonvilles Court	26
Bierspool	650
Llanreath	84
Kete Airfield	27
The Hydro, St. Davids	1
BR Goods Yard, Blaenau Ffestiniog	141
Parc Quarry	50
Clwyd	
Sealand Avenue	84
Bodelwyddan Castle	110
Ryeland Street	43
Shotton Steelworks	1,827
Castle Works	946

Land reclamation projects approved 1985-86

	£'000
Clwyd	
Rhyl Brickworks	80
Warwick Chemicals	19
Courtaulds Greenfield Works	143
Princes Clay Pit	140
Maelor Creamery	32
Powys	
Diamond Tip	84
Gwent	
No. 21 Pit	34
Park View Chapel	5
Britannia (Cottage Stores)	36
Tirpentwys IV	95
New Inn Gas Works	103
Comptons Site, Newport	96
South Glamorgan	
Colchester Estate	34
Castle Works	10
Dow Corning	29
Mid Glamorgan	
Cwmcynon/Deep Duffryn	1,124
Harkins Depot	17
West Glamorgan	
Khartoun Terrace	317
Briton Ferry 3/5 Ph 2	133
Clydach Sewage Works	12
Birds site, Swansea	156
Dyfed	
Cold Stores, Llanelli	10
BSC Machynys	46
Waddles Foundry	28
Erw Road	18
Pothouse Wharf	24
Pembroke Dockyard	90
Barnlake, Neyland	217
Cabin Club	10
FL Steelcraft	67
Gwynedd	
Mine Entrance, Aberdovey	19
Llanrwst Mine	76
Port Dinorwic	72
Quarry Hoppers	59

Land reclamation projects approved 1986-87

	£'000
Clwyd	
Grosvenor Chater	23
Wrexham to Abenbury	158
Wynnstay Shalebanks	131
Dyfed	
Llangennech Quarry	31
Duport Steelworks	1,337
The Churnworks, Haverfordwest	50
Gwent	
Central Depot, Nantyglo	87
Trosnant, Pontypool	45
Cwmcelyn Pond	82
ASL Airflow, Pontllanfraith	214
GKN Canal Culvert	79
Gwynedd	
Gas Works, Blaenau Ffestiniog	48
Trefor Harbour	283
Dolwyddelan/Chwarel Ddu	162
Mid Glamorgan	
Broadway, Pontypridd	70
Penrhiwfer (Dinas Isaf)	391
Cwmblacs III	226
Bryn Oer North Drainage	44
Wyndham/Western	233
Penyrenglyn	267
Cwmaman-Fforchwen	71
South Glamorgan	
Heath Park Offices	33
Radyr Branch Line	51
Cardiff Wartime Dereliction	27
West Glamorgan	
Viscose Tip	155
Glanrhyd and Tarreni	1,915
Duffryn Works	262
Garngoch 3-Phase 3	84
Aberdulais Water Works	17
Cymmer/Glyncymmer 3	25
Broadoak	310
Birds Site-Phase 2	190

Note: Schemes shown are approved up to 31 January 1987.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many derelict land grants have been paid in respect of schemes in *(a)* Wales and *(b)* Mid Glamorgan in each of the past three years; how much grant was paid; and what was the value of the schemes.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information is given in the following table:

	Number of schemes for which contract payments commenced	*Value of schemes* (£'000)	[1]*Grant paid on land reclamation projects* (£'000)
Mid Glamorgan			
1984-85	3	4,926	1,661
1985-86	2	1,141	3,421
1986-87	7	1,302	1,583
Wales			
1984-85	39	11,279	8,572
1985-86	34	3,435	10,396
1986-87	32	6,746	4,677

Note: All figures for 1986-87 are to the end of January 1987.
[1]Includes second and subsequent tranches of payment.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list current applications for derelict land grants in *(a)* Wales, *(b)* Mid Glamorgan, *(c)* West Glamorgan, *(d)* Gwent and *(e)* Clwyd.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I will write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

Doctors' Surgeries

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if doctors' surgeries improvement grants are available in Wales to carry out improvements to the accessibility of surgeries for disabled people; and what guidance has been issued to the family practitioner committees on the subject.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Yes; guidance is contained in the statement of fees and allowances payable under the NHS general medical services issued to all family practitioner committees and family doctors in Wales.

Disabled People

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many physically disabled people under 35 years of age currently attend local authority day centres in Wales.

Mr. Mark Robinson: At the 31 March 1986, the number of physically disabled people under 65 years of age attending local authority day centres in Wales was 685. Information on the number of under 35-year-olds is not available centrally.

Doctors' Lists

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has on the size of general practitioners' patients lists in *(a)* Clwyd and *(b)* Rhyl; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The average size of general practitioners' patients' lists is 1,892 in Clwyd and 2,559 in Rhyl.

Legislation

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many separate items of subordinate legislation affecting Wales were created in each parliamentary session since 1979; of these, how many were made by his Department, and how many were made jointly with other departments; and if he will list the items, indicating those which were debated on the Floor of the House or in Committee.

Mr. Wyn Roberts [*pursuant to the reply*, 9 February 1987, c. *91*.]: The annual HMSO publication "Lists of Statutory Instruments" contains a list of the general and local statutory instruments (both printed and unprinted) registered in that year arranged under subject headings. Copies are available in the Library of the House. To provide information in the form and detail requested by the hon. Gentleman could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

SCOTLAND

Torness

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if, pursuant to his replies to the hon. Member for East Lothian on 10 December 1986, *Official Report*, columns 173-4, he will now place a full copy of the "Interim Emergency Manual" for Torness nuclear power station in the Library.

Mr. Lang: I refer the hon. Member to my replies of 9 December, *Official Report* column 136. The interim emergency manual by its nature is subject to revision as commissioning proceeds. Its contents will in due course be incorporated in the emergency plan for Torness nuclear power station. The South of Scotland electricity board has already undertaken to place a copy of the completed emergency Plan in the Library, and also give it wider circulation, when it has been approved by Her Majesty's nuclear installations inspectorate.

Paramilitaries

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many persons have been *(a)* killed and *(b)* injured in Scotland in 1986 as a result of paramilitary activity; and if he will break down the figures specifying whether the paramilitaries were (i) from Western Europe, (ii) from Northern Ireland, (iii) from the Republic of Ireland, (iv) from other parts of the world and (v) of unknown origin.

Mr. Lang: From available information, there were no such deaths or injuries in Scotland during 1986.

Prisoners (Northern Ireland)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many prisoners were transferred from *(a)* Scotland to Northern Ireland and *(b)* Northern Ireland to Scotland in 1986; and under which section of the Criminal Justice Act 1961 such transfers were carried out.

Mr. Lang: In 1986 three prisoners were transferred permanently from Scotland to Northern Ireland under section 26(1) of the Criminal Justice Act 1961, and one prisoner was transferred temporarily, for a period of 15 days, from Northern Ireland to Scotland under section 27(1) of the Criminal Justice Act 1961.

Hospital and Community Health Services

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the capital spend on hospital and community health services for each year since 1974-75 to the latest available date, giving in each case the amount *(a)* in cash terms and *(b)* deflated by the gross domestic product deflator and (i) in gross terms and (ii) in net terms after deducting proceeds from land sales.

Mr. John MacKay: The information requested is as follows:

£ million

	Capital Expenditure (Gross)		*Capital Expenditure (Net)*	
	Cash	*Adjusted by the GDP Deflator*	*Cash*	*Adjusted by the GDP Deflator*
1974-75	30·2	102·1	30·0	101·5
1975-76	39·1	105·2	38·9	104·7
1976-77	37·3	88·7	36·6	87·0
1977-78	37·8	79·0	37·1	77·5
1978-79	48·1	90·7	47·3	89·2

	Capital Expenditure (Gross)		Capital Expenditure (Net)	
	Cash	Adjusted by the GDP Deflator	Cash	Adjusted by the GDP Deflator
1979-80	57·2	92·3	56·8	91·7
1980-81	62·4	84·9	61·9	84·2
1981-82	80·9	100·2	80·5	99·7
1982-83	93·7	108·2	92·0	106·3
1983-84	98·4	108·7	96·7	106·9
1984-85	106·0	112·4	104·1	110·3
1985-86	119·5	119·5	117·1	117·1

Community Programme (Fraud)

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* prosecutions and *(b)* convictions there have been in Scotland since 1981 for offences relating to the fraudulent misuse or misappropriation of moneys advanced by the Manpower Services Commission in connection with the community programme.

Mr. Lang: I understand from the Manpower Services Commission that according to their central records which date back only to 1984, there is no record of a case in Scotland resulting in prosecution or conviction.

BBC Scotland (Police Raid)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 11 February, if the Strathclyde police officers who accompanied him to the premises of BBC Scotland on 30 January told him that the police operation to be held there the following day was connected to the disclosure of information about the Zircon satellite.

Mr. Rifkind: No. The police officers were solely concerned to make me aware that the police operation, of which my Department had been informed earlier in the day, would not take place until the Saturday. At this time I was not aware of the communication from the police to my Department.

Northern College Board of Governors

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the composition of the new Northern college board of governors, showing the proportion of members who will sit in a specifically representative capacity of staff or students; if he will provide comparable figures for the previous boards at *(a)* Aberdeen and *(b)* Dundee colleges; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: Following a consultation exercise last year, it is intended to alter the composition of the governing bodies of all the colleges of education from 1 April. The tables provide the detailed information requested.

Future composition of Northern College of Education Governing Body

Category of interest	Number of representatives
Local authorities	3
Directors of education	1
Higher education	2
Academic staff	6
Non-academic staff	1
Teachers	3
Students	1
The Churches	1
Other interests	2
Secretary of State's appointees	4
Co-opted members	up to 3

Present composition of Governing Bodies

Category of interest	Number of representatives Aberdeen	Dundee
Local authorities	6	4
Directors of education	1	1
Higher education	3	3
Academic staff	7	7
Teachers	7	7
Students	2	2
The Churches	2	2
Other interests	—	2
Secretary of State's appointees	4	4

Scottish Development Agency

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many new projects applied for Scottish Development Agency funding in each year since 1979; and how many were successful.

Mr. Rifkind: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the level of funding of the Scottish Development Agency by his Department in each year since 1979-80 expressed in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* real terms based on constant 1980-81 prices and *(c)* real terms based on constant 1986-87 prices.

Mr. Rifkind: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Cash Limits

Mr. Corrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether it is proposed to change the cash limit on any departmental vote for which he is responsible.

Mr. Rifkind: Yes. Following expected savings on a number of services the cash limit for class XVI, 2 (agricultural services and fisheries, Scotland) is being reduced by £1,000,000 from £77,843,000 to £76,843,000. This reduction will partly offset increased expenditure of £4,158,000 on class XVI, 1 (agricultural support, Scotland) which is not subject to a cash limit and for which a Supplementary Estimate will be presented to Parliament very shortly.

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps are being taken to ensure that all claims made for severe weather payments will be processed in such a way as to ensure that all those eligible for benefit receive it.

Mr. Major: I have been asked to reply.

The exceptionally cold weather claim forms have been designed to allow ease of completion whilst at the same time providing the information needed to decide

entitlement and make payments quickly. Cases of doubt are referred back to the claimant for additional information before a decision is made.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Lebanon

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many British subjects are currently known to be in Lebanon; and what advice he is giving to them about staying there.

Mr. Eggar: There are about 1,700 British nationals currently in Lebanon, of whom the vast majority are dual nationals. Consular advice to British nationals resident in all areas of Lebanon is kept constantly under review. At present, our advice is that they should observe a high level of caution and consider whether they have compelling reasons to remain in the country. Those in west Beirut have been repeatedly urged to leave.

Miss Yasmin Chothia

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to be in a position to reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East concerning Miss Yasmin Chothia.

Mr. Eggar: A reply was sent to the hon. Member on 12 February.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library a copy of the recent letter sent by the Chairman of the Falkland Islands Council to his Department, acquiescing in Her Majesty's Government's discussions with Argentina over Falkland Islands' sovereignty.

Mr. Eggar: No such letter has been received.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish the contents of each letter he has received since 1 January 1987 from the Falkland Islands Legislative Council or any of its members; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: No such letters have been received.

Namibia

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will suspend all contact with the South-West Africa People's Organisation until such time as it has provided full information in respect of the persons executed by the People's Liberation Army of Namibia in 1985-86.

Mrs. Chalker: All reports of alleged human rights abuses relating to Namibia, whether by the South-West Africa People's Organisation or by South African forces, are causes of concern to us. We shall nevertheless continue to talk to all parties to the UN plan, including the South-West Africa People's Organisation and the South African Government, with the aim of promoting internationally accepted independence for Namibia.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he or any official of his Department has received any representations or has made representations concerning Vilho Komomeya, Iipumbu Shongolo, Aaron Seibeb, Bennie Pwetrus, Theresia Basson, Ben Motinga, Hans Claasen, Joel Toromba, Uunona Kamarona, Jackson Hamupembe, Shilongo Iilya Shilongo, Theophillus Shoopala, all Namibian refugees held in detention by the South-West Africa People's Organisation.

Mrs. Chalker: We have received representations about some of the Namibians in question from the Namibian Parents Committee and the International Society for Human Rights. We have expressed our concern to the South West Africa People's Organisation about allegations of human rights abuses in Namibian refugee camps.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make representations to the South-West Africa People's Organisation about its use of torture and other forms of inhuman conduct against young children abducted from Namibia.

Mrs. Chalker: We are concerned at all violations of human rights, and have expressed to representatives of the South-West Africa People's Organisation our concern at the various allegations of human rights abuses in Namibia refugee camps.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment his Department has made of the current level of opposition within Namibia to the transitional Government of national unity; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We believe that the level of opposition to, or support for, any political organisation in Namibia can be established accurately only through the free and fair elections provided for under the United Nations plan for Namibian independence.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will continue to fund indirectly the weekly *Namibian* newspaper.

Mrs. Chalker: We do not give funds to the *Namibian*, and we are not aware of any indirect funding of the newspaper from official sources.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) whether he plans any changes in Her Majesty's Government's policy towards Namibia in the light of the torture and execution of Lukas Stefanus, Victor Nkandi, Eric Biwa, Henry John Bonzaanier, Tauno Hatuikulipi, Latatutu Hatuikulipi, Peter Nanyemba, Ben Boois and Beny Petrus by the South-West Africa People's Organisation;

(2) whether he plans any changes in Her Majesty's Government's policy towards Namibia in the light of the illegal detention, without trial, of four leading members of the central committee of the South-West Africa People's Organisation, SWAPO of South-West Africa/Namibia.

Mrs. Chalker: Our policy on Namibia is well known and unchanged. We remain fully committed to the independence of the territory on the basis of the peaceful implementation of UN Security Council resolution 435.

Angola

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make

representations to the Government of Angola about the conditions of detention and the death of Ceila Mbunambana in Angola.

Mrs. Chalker: We are concerned about allegations of possible human rights abuses wherever they occur. We have as yet no knowledge of this particular case. If my hon. Friend can provide further information we will be in a better position to comment.

Mr. J. Rajiah

Mr. Hunter asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) further to his answer of 21 November, *Official Report*, column 381-2, what subsequent representation he has made to, or what dealings he has had with, Spanish authorities concerning the shooting by the Spanish police of Mr. J. Rajiah, the late constituent of the hon. Member for Basingstoke;

(2) what information has been received by the British embassy in Madrid about the availability and willingness of Spanish witnesses to the shooting of Mr. J. Rajiah, the late constituent of the hon. Member for Basingstoke, to attend the inquest in the United Kingdom;

(3) if he will make immediate representations to Spanish authorities requesting that Spanish witnesses to the shooting of Mr. J. Rajiah, the late constituent of the hon. Member for Basingstoke, and other Spanish people whose testimony may be relevant, be encouraged to attend the inquest due to be held in the United Kingdom towards the end of February.

Mr. Eggar: Mr. Rajiah was a Sri Lankan citizen. Our initial action in expressing concern to the Spanish authorities was taken in the interests of speed (as Sri Lanka is not represented in Madrid).

The matter is before the High Court in Seville; and Her Majesty's Consul in Seville will be seeing its president next week to ask whether he can agree to our request for a copy of the police report, and other documents. Any further approaches to the Spanish authorities should be taken by the Sri Lankans.

The attendance at an inquest in this country is entirely a matter for the coroner. Even if Mr. Rajiah had been a British national, it would not be appropriate to make representations to the Spanish authorities about the attendance of witnesses. This would be a matter for the Spanish legal representative appointed to represent the interests of the Rajiah family.

No information has been received about the attendance of witnesses.

Zircon Project

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether officials from his Department have held discussions with officials from *(a)* the Federal Republic of Germany and *(b)* the United States regarding collaboration on the Zircon project.

Mr. Renton: We do not intend to depart from the practice of successive Governments, which has been not to comment on matters of intelligence and security.

Turks and Caicos Islands

Mr. Haynes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to make an announcement on the restoration of democracy in the Turks and Caicos Islands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We are currently studying the report of the Turks and Caicos Islands constitutional commission and its recommendations for the island's future.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Remands

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the average period between remand and trial for prisoners refused bail and charged with scheduled offences in Northern Ireland in 1986.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many prisoners charged with scheduled offences in the latest calendar year for which figures are available were remanded in custody prior to trial for periods between *(a)* zero to three months, *(b)* three to six months, *(c)* six to nine months, *(d)* nine to 12 months, *(e)* 12 to 18 months and *(f)* over 18 months for scheduled and non-scheduled offences, respectively.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many prisoners were remanded in custody prior to trial for scheduled and non-scheduled offences, respectively, in 1986.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what percentage of prisoners on custodial remand for scheduled and non-scheduled offences, respectively, were *(a)* given a non-custodial sentence, *(b)* given a custodial sentence, and *(c)* found not guilty or not proceeded against in 1986.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the average number of days that prisoners spent on custodial remand for scheduled, non-scheduled offences and both together, in 1986.

Mr. Scott: For persons who were tried in 1986 and who were in custody at the time of their trial, the average time spent on custodial remand was 216 days for persons charged with scheduled offences and 45 days for persons charged with non-scheduled offences.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons were remanded in custody before trial for scheduled, non-scheduled offences and both together in 1986.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Evidence (Accomplices)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people have been convicted in the current year either on their own admission of guilt or following a plea of not guilty on the basis of evidence on behalf of the Crown given by alleged accomplices in cases concerning scheduled offences in Northern Ireland; how many suspects arrested on the basis of such evidence have been released as a result of the retraction of evidence given by accomplices; how many people are presently awaiting trial as a result of evidence obtained from alleged accomplices; and how many people have been found not guilty, or not guilty on appeal, on the basis of such evidence.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Emergency Provisions

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many persons were detained under the Emergency Provisions (Northern Ireland) Act 1978; and, of those persons, how many were charged with scheduled offences and how many were charged with non-scheduled offences in 1986;

(2) how many persons were detained under Emergency Provisions (Northern Ireland) Acts 1973 and 1978 in the second half of 1986.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Terrorism

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of persons who were initially detained under other acts and were subsequently charged under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Acts in 1986;

(2) how many persons detained under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Acts were charged with *(a)* offences under the Acts and *(b)* offences under other Acts (excluding common law offences) in 1986.

Mr. Scott: In 1986, five people detained in Northern Ireland under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 were charged with offences under that Act; 330 were charged with offences under other Acts. Three people were charged with an offence under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 having first been detained in Northern Ireland under another Act.

Security

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the security statistics for the second half of 1986 are now available, together with details of persons charged with terrorist-type activities and convictions for scheduled offences for the year.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Prisons

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the number of prisoners in Northern Ireland's gaols as at 31 December 1986, detailing the numbers by sex, in prison and in young offenders centres separately.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Firearms

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* to show how many firearms, by type, namely, handguns, rifles, shotguns or fully automatic weapons, were seized by the security forces in Northern Ireland in 1986; and for each type, how many were legally held weapons stolen by terrorist organisations from (i) civilians, (ii) the Royal Ulster Constabulary, (iii) the Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve, (iv) the Ulster Special Constabulary, (v) the Ulster Defence Regiment and (vi) the regular Army;

(2) if he will detail the number of arms found in 1986 under the headings of *(a)* machine guns, *(b)* rifles, *(c)* shotguns, *(d)* pistols/revolvers and *(e)* others.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Plastic Bullets

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many formal complaints have been made about incidents of police use of plastic baton rounds in 1986; in how many cases the complaint has been upheld; and in how many cases disciplinary action has been taken against the officers involved;

(2) how many plastic bullets were fired in Northern Ireland in the second half of 1986; in what circumstances and in what location the bullets were fired; and how many persons were injured as a result.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many attacks on Royal Ulster Constabulary personnel took place in each month of 1986, showing whether the attack was on *(a)* a foot patrol or *(b)* a mobile patrol and *(c)* the total attacked while on duty each month together with details of the type of attack namely: (i) physical assault, (ii) stone throwing, (iii) petrol bomb, (iv) explosion, (v) shooting and the number of persons made amenable.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Prison Population

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the size of the present prison population in Northern Ireland divided into terrorist offenders and other offenders categorised by age and by sex in the following groups: under 18 years old, 18 to 25 years, 25 to 30 years, 40 to 50 years, 50 to 60 years and over 60 years, giving a breakdown of the length of sentence being served by each age group under the following headings: (i) up to three months, (ii) over three months

and up to six months, (iii) over six months and under 12 months, (iv) over 12 months and under 18 months, (v) over 18 months and up to four years, (vi) over four years and up to eight years, (vii) over eight years and (viii) life, together with a breakdown, divided into terrorist offenders and other offenders under the same sentence headings of the numbers as a percentage of the total prison population.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Strip Searches

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many strip searches were made of female prisoners in Her Majesty's prison, Maghabary, in January 1987; if he will give the number of persons involved and the number of times each person was searched; whether any prison contraband, smuggled item or illegal correspondence was discovered in any search, indicating which items; in how many cases prisoners refused to be searched and had to be restrained while the search was being concluded; and if he will indicate the reasons for the search, namely making an appearance in court, and in which court, on remand, attending trial, inter-prison visit or other reasons.

Mr. Scott: During January 1987, 47 searches were carried out on 27 prisoners; nine prisoners were searched once, 16 were searched twice and two prisoners were searched on three occasions. No prohibited article was found during these searches and no prisoner refused to be searched. The searches were carried out in the following circumstances:

	Number
First admission on remand/awaiting trial	5
First admission on sentence/final discharge	22
Attending Lisburn Remand Court	1
Attending Belfast Remand Court	4
Attending Antrim Remand Court	1
Bail Court appearances	5
Going on or returning from home leave	6
Inter prison visits	2
Visits to outside hospital	1

Teachers (Recognition)

Mr. Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many teachers convicted of offences, but not sentenced to prison as a result, have had their recognition withdrawn by his Department over the past three years.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

Security Forces (Offences)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give details for 1986 of the number of members of the Ulster Defence Regiment, the Royal Ulster Constabulary, their respective reserves, and the British Army, who have been charged with offences and who have been convicted of offences, giving details of custodial sentences imposed, and separately for charges and convictions concerning murder, attempted murder, membership of illegal organisations, conspiracy to cause explosions, withholding information concerning terrorist activities, possession of explosives, possession of explosives with intent to cause bodily harm, possession of firearms, possession of firearms with intent to cause bodily harm and other offences classified as scheduled offences.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

ENERGY

North-West Leicestershire Coalfield

6. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what discussions he has held with the chairman of the Coal Board concerning the development of new pits in the north-west Leicestershire coalfield.

Mr. David Hunt: My right hon. Friend and I have regular meetings with the chairman of British Coal to discuss all aspects of the coal industry.

Energy Efficiency

13. **Mr. Evans** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received from local authorities concerning his plans for spending on energy efficiency in 1987-88.

Mr. David Hunt: The Energy Efficiency Office has undertaken a programme of initiatives to help local authorities take cost-effective action on energy efficiency, and continues to offer a range of support and advice. I have received no specific representations from local authorities on my spending plans, though the energy efficiency office has regular discussions with local authorities and their representative groups.

Nuclear Power (North-West)

16. **Mr. Favell** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the importance of nuclear power for employment in the north-west.

Mr. Goodlad: The nuclear industry is one of the region's biggest industrial employers. It is also amongst the region's biggest industrial investors and trainers. It makes a major contribution to the local economy.

Helium Gas-Cooled Reactor

18. **Mr. Geraint Howells** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what research has been carried out by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority into the helium gas-cooled reactor; and at what cost in public expenditure.

Mr. Goodlad: The United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority carried out Research and Development in support of helium gas-cooled reactors, including their hosting of the multi-lateral DRAGON project, from 1954 until 1974 when it was decided not to build a commercial reactor of this design. The total cost of the AEA's work is estimated at £43 million. The AEA has continued to maintain a technical understanding of developments conducted in other countries.

Neighbourhood Energy Action Groups (Essex)

20. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the neighbourhood energy action groups operating in Essex.

Mr. David Hunt: The following 10 community insulation projects are operating in Essex:

Braintree Neighbourhood Energy Project
Brentwood DC Community Programme
Chelmsford Neighbourhood Energy Project
Epping Forest Neighbourhood Energy Project
Harlow Energy Action
NACRO Grays Energy Conservation Team
NACRO (Southend) Community Programme
Tendring Neighbourhood Energy Project
Tower Radio Homes Insulation Project
Uttlesford Neighbourhood Energy Project

Pit Visits

21. **Dr. Michael Clark** asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many pit visits have been made by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Wirral, West (Mr. Hunt) since September 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Since September 1984 I have made 30 visits to British Coal pits and other operations. I have also visited five pits and two opencast sites overseas.

CBI (Energy Committee)

23. **Mr. Hannam** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what discussions he has had recently with representatives of the Confederation of British Industries energy committee.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Energy met the energy policy committee of the Confederation of British Industries last December.

Home Insulation

24. **Mr. Raynsford** asked the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to the answer of 1 December, *Official Report*, columns *455-6*, what is his estimate of the proportion of the 12·5 million homes inadequately insulated against draughts which are occupied by householders in receipt of state benefits; and what assessment he has made of the numbers of those who are unlikely to be able to meet the cost of draught-proofing without financial assistance.

Mr. David Hunt: About a third of the homes that are inadequately insulated against draughts are likely to be occupied by households in receipt of state benefits. It is not possible to estimate how many such households would be unable to meet the cost of draughtproofing without financial assistance.

Mr. Lord asked the Secretary of State for Energy what new measures he plans to take to increase the number of houses which are properly insulated.

Mr. David Hunt: As well as supporting the continuing expansion of the community insulation projects, which have already insulated over 300,000 homes, my Department continues actively to promote the cost-effective energy efficiency measures which all householders should take to benefit from reduced fuel bills.

British Coal Enterprise Ltd

25. **Mr. Patchett** asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many jobs have been created in the Barnsley, East constituency by British Coal Enterprise Ltd.

Mr. David Hunt: I regret that information is not available in the form requested. Total job opportunities created in Yorkshire by end-January 1987 were 2,375.

34. **Mr. Ashby** asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many jobs have been created by British Coal Enterprise Ltd. at the latest available date.

Mr. David Hunt: British Coal enterprise continues to make good progress. The £22·1 million committed by the company is now supporting 1,000 individual projects with a combined capital investment of £145 million, it has helped create nearly 14,000 new job opportunities.

Tidal Power

26. **Mr. Stevens** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what support his Department is giving to research and development of tidal power *(a)* this financial year and *(b)* in 1987-88.

Mr. David Hunt: In July last year my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced the launch of a major new phase in the United Kingdom's tidal programme, costing £5½ million. This includes advanced investigation into a Severn barrage on a line near to Cardiff and Weston costing £4·2 million, shared equally between the Department, CEGB and the Severn Tidal Power Group: studies into a Mersey Barrage proposed by the Mersey Barrage Company towards which the Department is contributing up to £400,000; and generic studies funded by the Department, including environmental issues, construction techniques and the potential of smaller sites around the United Kingdom. Work on the programme is spread over a number of years; budget provision this year is £0·3 million.

Power Generation

27. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will publish his Department's most recent assessments of the cost of generating power by *(a)* nuclear, *(b)* coal, *(c)* wind, *(d)* tidal barrage and *(e)* wave means.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: My right hon. Friend is considering the assessments made by Sir Frank Layfield in his report on Sizewell B. It would be inappropriate for me to comment further at this stage.

Budget Payment Schemes

28. **Mr. Watts** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has had as to what proportion of gas and electricity consumers make use of budget payments schemes.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The electricity and gas industries each promote a range of budget schemes designed to even out bills and thus to help consumers plan payments and to avoid building up debts. I am advised that about 14 per cent. of domestic electricity consumers and about 22 per cent. of domestic gas consumers take advantage of such schemes.

Disconnections

29. **Mr. Freud** asked the Secretary of State for Energy, if he will review the criteria whereby customers are disconnected for inability to pay their fuel bills.

Mr. Goodlad: No. The code of practice on disconnection is being operated satisfactorily by the electricity and gas industries.

Electricity Demand

30. **Mr. Wrigglesworth** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board; and if he discussed with him projections of energy demand into the 1990s.

Mr. Goodlad: I meet the chairman regularly and we discuss a wide range of issues. Information on demand forecasts by the Electricity Council was provided in my answer to the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) on 12 December 1986 at column *242*.

Sizewell B

31. **Mr. Barron** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if the design of the proposed Sizewell pressurised water reactor is now complete; and if his Department has made a final assessment of its safety.

Mr. Goodlad: In addition to the consent of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State the Central Electricity Generating Board requires a licence from the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate before it can begin to build the station. The inspectorate will satisfy itself about the safety of the design before it issues any licence. My right hon. Friend is considering Sir Frank Layfield's report and it would be inappropriate for me to comment on any of the matters covered by the report before he takes his decision on the CEGB's application to construct Sizewell B.

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether the computer programmes to control the Sizewell B reactor during an emergency shutdown were submitted to Sir Frank Layfield.

Mr. Goodlad: Evidence was taken at the inquiry on the systems which would control the reactor following a fault. Detailed computer programmes were not submitted.

Layfield Report

32. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the supplementary note accompanying the Layfield report, which included comments on the accident at Chernobyl.

Mr. Goodlad: There is no such note.

British Coal (Productivity)

33. **Mr. Michael Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is the most recent figure for productivity in British Coal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: For the week ending 31 January, average deep mined revenue output per manshift was 3·54 tonnes. Productivity is now recovering after a seasonal dip associated with the Christmas and new year holiday period and the subsequent severe weather.

Coal Sales

35. **Mr. Haynes** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he last discussed coal sales to the Central Electricity Generating Board with the chairman of British Coal.

Mr. David Hunt: My right hon. Friend and I have regular meetings with the chairman of British Coal to discuss all aspects of the coal industry.

Electricity Supplies (France)

36. **Mr. Madel** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what contribution was made, during the period of severe weather in January, to the maintenance of electricity power supply in the United Kingdom by the supply of electricity from France.

Mr. Goodlad: Imports through the electricity link with France during the period of severe weather made a useful contribution to secure and economic supplies of electricity in the United Kingdom. On 12 January, the day of peak demand, electricity was exported to France which was experiencing difficulties with its own supply system because of the weather.

Central Electricity Generating Board

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Energy when his Department last had discussions with the Central Electricity Generating Board on the subject of local liaison committees in relation to his policy of commitment to openness; what are the present terms of reference for such committees; what information is available to his Department on whether these committees are open to the public; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The terms of reference and membership of the committees are described in the booklet "The CEGB and nuclear power: Questions and Answers"; a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House. I understand that the CEGB is developing further organisational proposals to put to the committees.

Plutonium

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Energy how much plutonium has been produced in Central Electricity Generating Board reactors in each year since 1979.

Mr. Goodlad: Information on the allocation or use of plutonium produced in the Magnox reactors of the United Kingdom generating boards was given in lines *(a)* and *(b)* of the table provided in the replies to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Sir A. Fletcher) on 1 April 1982, column *169*; the hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) on 27 July 1983, column *483* and the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas) on 25 July 1985, column *545*, on 23 July 1985, column *473* and 21 July 1986, column *10*.

Radiation Monitoring

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Energy why Wales is not included in emergency radiation monitoring plans for Hinckley Point nuclear power station; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: Emergency environmental monitoring points up to 40 km from the station have been identified, including some in Wales. In the unlikely event of an accident at the station resulting in significant releases of radioactivity, existing arrangements for environmental monitoring by the CEGB and Government Departments could readily be extended.

Sellafield (FACET)

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) how much the new capital project known as FACET (facility for enhancement throughput of fuels and pins) for Sellafield will cost; how it was approved; and whether he will make a statement;

(2) how many fast reactor stations the new facility for Sellafield known as FACET (facility for enhancement throughput of fuels and pins) is expected to service; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The facility for enhanced throughput for experimental fast reactor fuel (FACET) is a laboratory scale manufacturing plant being constructed by the UKAEA as part of the Research and Development programme on fast reactor fuel development. When complete in 1988, it will enable the UKAEA to manufacture experimental fuel of advanced designs for evaluation in the Prototype Fast Reactor at Dounreay. It will have the capability to manufacture up to eight sub-assemblies a year. The scheme is expected to cost £2·7 million and was approved under the programme letter arrangements that I described on 21 January 1986 at column *217-218*.

Nuclear Power Stations

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he is planning any initiatives to improve communication between the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate and the Central Electricity Generating Board;

(2) if he is planning any initiatives to review the division of responsibility between the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate and the Central Electricity Generating Board for the managing and programming of the licensing process for nuclear power stations; and what is his policy towards the identification of a single agency with overall control of the licensing process.

Mr. Goodlad: Matters concerning the management of the licensing process were considered by Sir Frank Layfield in his report on Sizewell B. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has a quasi-judicial role in the planning process and it would be inappropriate for me to comment on any issues raised in the Report.

Energy Managers

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Energy what further savings he estimates could be made by *(a)* local authorities and *(b)* industry through the appointment of full-time energy managers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The Audit Commission advised local authorities that to achieve potential savings which they estimated at at least £135 million a year, central staff effort of about one person per £1 million energy spend would be cost-effective. The Commission has reported an encouraging response to this recommendation. Energy managers both full and part time have a vital role to play in achieving the further £1·4 billion of energy savings that could be achieved by British industry. It is not necessarily cost-effective for organisations of all sizes to appoint a full-time energy manager but all organisations should have a manager whose responsibilities include energy management.

Coal Imports

Mr. Orme asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will take steps to stop imports of coal from South Africa in line with Her Majesty's Government's support in the European Council for an embargo on such imports; what information he has as to subsequent action by France and Denmark; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: At a meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Twelve, on 15-16 September 1986, it was agreed to impose a ban on new investment, imports of gold coins and of iron and steel. No agreement was reached to ban coal imports. The action taken by France and Denmark pre-dated the European decision.

Energy Requirements

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Energy what are the latest estimates of British energy requirements by the year 2000 and 2010, respectively.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: In general my Department does not produce such estimates. However the eight projections presented to the Sizewell B public inquiry depict a wide range of possible future levels for United Kingdom energy requirements in these years.

Nuclear Installations Inspectorate

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Energy, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Yeovil on 19 December, *Official Report*, column *764*, how many Nuclear Installation Inspectorate inspectors have been engaged full-time on each review at all times since March 1983; what other duties have been undertaken by inspectors working on these reviews; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 January 1987, at c. 402-3]: I am advised by Her Majesty's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate of the Health and Safety Executive that none of its inspectors has worked exclusively on the Magnox long-term safety reviews.

The equivalent of about one man year per year was devoted to the reviews during 1983 and 1984 but this group effort has gradually increased to about six man years per year at the present time. Those inspectors concerned with the reviews have also been engaged generally in safety assessment work on the commissioning and operating of gas-cooled reactors.

CIVIL SERVICE

Official Forms

85. **Sir David Price** asked the Minister for the Civil Service whether he will ensure that on all official forms for use by the public adequate space is allowed for completion by members of the public with normal sized hand-writing.

Mr. Luce: Since 1982, standards of good practice have been available to all Departments and are reflected in departmental handbooks such as DHSS's "Good Forms Guide", and MOD's forms design worksheets. Departments are free to use their discretion in applying the recommended standards, but my Department continues to monitor, guide and encourage their efforts on this as on all other aspects of forms work.

Departmental Telephone Numbers

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop asked the Minister for the Civil Service whether the 1987 edition of the Civil Service year book will give the currently correct telephone numbers, where these were altered in autumn 1986; and when the 1987 edition will be available.

Mr. Luce: The 1987 edition of the Civil Service year book was published recently and copies have been placed in the Library. The telephone numbers which were changed as a result of the introduction of the new exchange last autumn have been amended.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Parliamentary Papers (Availability)

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will ensure that parliamentary papers and statements are made available in the Norman Shaw, North issue office at the same time as the main Vote Office; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: All parliamentary papers are made available in the Norman Shaw North issue office and the main Vote Office at the same time when there is no time embargo on the papers.

If papers and statements are held under a time embargo on a Minister's instruction, they are kept in a sealed packet in the main Vote Office. As soon as the papers are released, a supply is sent immediately to the Norman Shaw North issue office.

Norman Shaw, North Building (Photocopying Machines)

Mr. Frank Field asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will detail the current cost of photocopying machines in the Norman Shaw North building; and if he will break down this total into *(a)* rent and *(b)* other costs; and if he will state on how many days during the last year each of the machines was fully working during the entire working day.

Mr. Biffen: The current total monthly hire charge for photocopying machines provided for the use of hon. Members in the Norman Shaw North building, which includes maintenance and consumables other than paper, is £661·51 plus a sum dependent on the number of copies made on each machine. No other costs are separately identifiable.

For the 12-month period ending 31 January 1987 the number of days for each machine on which there is no record of repair or attention being required is as follows:

	Days
Lower Ground Floor	353
Ground Floor	350
First Floor	355
Second Floor	350
Fourth Floor	
small machine	333
large machine	348

Parliamentary Pension Scheme

Mr. David Howell asked the Lord Privy Seal whether he proposes to bring forward any changes to the parliamentary pension scheme to enable right hon. and hon. Members to take advantage of personal portable pensions.

Mr. Biffen: I will be proposing amendments to the parliamentary pension scheme so that membership will no longer be compulsory for right hon. and hon. Members, in order to comply with the requirements of section 15 of the Social Security Act 1986. This will enable Members to participate in personal pension arrangements, if they so wish, instead of the parliamentary scheme.

I expect to bring forward these amendments in time for them to take effect when section 15 of the Social Security Act 1986 comes into force.

THE ARTS

Museums (Visits)

39. **Mr. David Young** asked the Minister for the Arts what plans he has to promote visits to museums by school pupils and students.

67. **Mr. George Howarth** asked the Minister for the Arts what plans he has to promote visits to museums by school pupils and students.

Mr. Luce: Museums have an important educational contribution to make. The national museums and galleries promote educational visits by providing special facilities literature and exhibits. The advent of the GCSE examination, with its increased emphasis on practical and field work, presents museums with an exciting challenge which they are seeking actively to meet.

Arts Council Education Department

42. **Mr. Sedgemore** asked the Minister for the Arts whether he has met the chairman of the Arts Council to discuss the role of the Arts Council's education department in the development of arts policy.

Mr. Luce: Not specifically, but the chairman keeps me fully informed about the council's policies. I have visited the education unit and was able to discuss the subject with the staff there.

Library Authorities (Funding)

43. **Mr. Hayes** asked the Minister for the Arts whether library authorities are making full use of additional sources of public funding available.

Mr. Luce: Depending on their circumstances, library authorities may be eligible for funding from the Manpower Services Commission, the urban programme, the European Community or the Home Office. The evidence is that most authorities pursue these possibilities energetically.

Public Library Service

44. **Mr. Frank Cook** asked the Minister for the Arts when he last met the Library Association to discuss the future of the Public Library Service.

53. **Mr. Barron** asked the Minister for the Arts when he last met the Library Association to discuss the future of the Public Library Service.

Mr. Luce: I last met a delegation from the Library Association on 13 January 1986. I have since met and corresponded with individual officers of the Association on a number of occasions.

North-West

45. **Mr. Pike** asked the Minister for the Arts what plans he has for developing arts provision in the north-west.

Mr. Eastham asked the Minister for the Arts what plans he has for developing arts provision in the north-west.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Minister for the Arts what plans he has for developing arts provision in the north-west.

Mr. Luce: The Arts Council gives some £2 million per annum to the Regional Arts Association and over £3 million per annum direct funding to major bodies. These are substantial contributions to development.

52. **Mr. Stott** asked the Minister for the Arts whether he will pay an official visit to the Drumcroon arts centre in Wigan to discuss the role of North-West Arts in promoting arts education.

Mr. Luce: I am to visit the north-west in the spring and, if the timetable permits, I hope to visit the Drumcroon arts centre. I expect to discuss arts policy issued with North-West Arts during my visit.

Charitable Giving

46. **Mr. Alan Howarth** asked the Minister for the Arts what is his assessment of the benefit to the Arts resulting from the tax concessions on charitable giving made in the Finance Act 1986.

Mr. Luce: I believe that there is great scope for the arts to take advantage of the concessions in the Finace Act 1986 relating to payroll giving by employees and one-off donations by companies for charitable purposes. It is too early yet to estimate the actual benefits.

Leadmill, Sheffield

47. **Mr. Michie** asked the Minister for the Arts whether he will pay an official visist to the Leadmill in Sheffield to discuss the development of young musicians.

Mr. Luce: I expect to visit the Leadmill at the end of this month, and to see what is being done there to help young musicians.

Arts Marketing Scheme

48. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Minister for the Arts by what date applications are due for his arts marketing scheme.

Mr. Luce: Applications must reach the Office of Arts and Libraries by 30 April 1987.

Employment

49. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Minister for the Arts whether he will undertake a study of the impact of the arts on employment.

70. **Mr. Blair** asked the Minister for the Arts whether he will undertake a study of the impact of the arts on employment.

71. **Ms. Richardson** asked the Minister for the Arts whether he will undertake a study of the impact of the arts on employment.

75. **Mrs. Beckett** asked the Minister for the Arts whether he will undertake a study of the impact of the arts on employment.

Mr. Luce: I would refer the hon. Members to my reply earlier today to the question from the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn).

Merseyside

50. **Mr. Loyden** asked the Minister for the Arts whether he will undertake a study of the impact of the arts on the economy of Merseyside.

61. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Minister for the Arts whether he will undertake a study of the economic impact of the arts on Merseyside.

Mr. Luce: The Policy Studies Institute is carrying out a study of the economic importance of the arts, including a regional study of Merseyside. The Merseyside work has already been completed and the findings will be published, together with those of the larger study, later in the year.

Association of Metropolitan Authorities

51. **Mr. Allen McKay** asked the Minister for the Arts when he last met the Association of Metropolitan Authorities to discuss arts policy.

82. **Mr. Straw** asked the Minister for the Arts when he last met with Association of Metropolitan Authorities to discuss arts policy.

Mr. Luce: I met the Association of Metropolitan Authorities on 17 November 1986, and hope to meet it again in March.

National Collections

54. **Sir David Price** asked the Minister for the Arts what steps he has taken to ensure that the buildings which house the national collections are adequate for the task.

Mr. Luce: The Government have made a deliberate shift of emphasis, within the sums made available for the national collections, towards the maintenance and improvement of the museum and gallery buildings. The allocation that I recently announced for 1987-88 represents an increase in real terms of more than 30 per cent. over the allocation in 1979-80. The Government also encourage, and greatly welcome, donations from the private sector towards the refurbishment and expansion of national museum and gallery buildings.

I announced in July of last year that, from 1988-89, the national museums and galleries for which I am responsible will no longer be tied to the Property Services Agency but will become responsible for their own buildings and will be funded accordingly. This change has been welcomed by all the institutions concerned and I am pleased by the way they are working towards taking on these new responsibilities.

Sherman Theatre, Cardiff

55. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received about the future of the Sherman theatre, Cardiff.

Mr. Luce: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member from Gower (Mr. Wardell).

Regional Orchestras

57. **Mr. Stan Thorne** asked the Minister for the Arts if he has any plans to increase financial support for regional orchestras.

Mr. Luce: Funding of regional orchestras is a matter for the Arts Council. I understand that it has not yet announced the 1987-88 allocations.

Regional Arts Strategies

58. **Mr. Dixon** asked the Minister for the Arts what discussions he has had with regional art associations about the role that arts centres can play in regional arts strategies.

60. **Mr. Jim Callaghan** asked the Minister for the Arts what discussions he has had with regional art associations about the role that arts centres can play in regional arts strategies.

68. **Mr. Redmond** asked the Minister for the Arts what discussions he has had with regional art associations about the role that arts centres can play in regional arts strategies.

73. **Mr. Terry Lewis** asked the Minister for the Arts what discussions he has had with regional art associations about the role that arts centres can play in regional arts strategies.

78. **Mr. Seán Hughes** asked the Minister for the Arts what discussions he has had with regional art associations about the role that arts centres can play in regional arts strategies.

Mr. Luce: I have now visited a number of regional arts associations and have discussed the role of arts centres with them.

Local Authority Theatres

59. **Mr. Hayward** asked the Minister for the Arts, whether he will encourage fuller partnership between local authority owned theatres and the commercial sector.

Mr. Luce: It is not for me to tell local authorities how to run their affairs, but I am keenly interested in any ideas for the efficient management of arts enterprises. I know of successful examples of such partnerships, and I should like there to be more.

Works of Art (Storage)

62. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Minister for the Arts if he has an inventory of objects and works of art in storage in the national collections.

Mr. Luce: The cataloguing of collections is carried out by the individual museums and galleries and inventories are not held centrally. I encourage the national museums and galleries to maintain full inventories of their collections wherever practicable. The increasing use of computerised records greatly facilitates this task.

Sponsorship

63. **Mr. Freud** asked the Minister for the Arts what discussions he has had with the tobacco industry in respect of arts sponsorship.

Mr. Luce: None; I regard it as a matter for the arts organisations to decide what sponsorship to accept.

Scottish Arts Council

64. **Dr. Godman** asked the Minister for the Arts, when he last met the chairman of the Scottish Arts Council to discuss the future of the arts in Scotland.

77. **Mr. Ernie Ross** asked the Minister for the Arts when he last met the Scottish Arts Council to discuss the future of the arts in Scotland.

Mr. Luce: I last met the chairman of the Scottish Arts Council on 13 August 1986 when I visited the Edinburgh festival.

News International

65. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Minister for the Arts, pursuant to his reply of 26 January, *Official Report*, column 76, if he will place in the Library a copy of his letter to the Audit Commission regarding the legal costs of Ealing, Camden and Hammersmith and Fulham councils concerning their ban on *The Times*, *The Sun* and other News International publications; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I have placed in the Library a copy of my letter to the Audit Commission of 24 November 1986.

Economic Impact

66. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Minister for the Arts whether he will undertake a study of the economic impact of the arts.

72. **Mr. Robert Sheldon** asked the Minister for the Arts whether he will undertake a study of the economic impact of the arts.

76. **Dr. McDonald** asked the Minister for the Arts whether he will undertake a study of the economic impact of the arts.

Mr. Luce: The Policy Studies Institute is currently carrying out a study of the economic importance of the arts, funded from a variety of sources including the Gulbenkian Foundation and my office. The results will be published later this year.

Films

69. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Minister for the Arts when he last visited the British Film Institute to discuss the role of films in Her Majesty's Government's policy for the arts.

Mr. Luce: I visited the British Film Institute on 5 December 1985, and discussed film policy. I also hope to attend a meeting of the governors of the BFI in the summer.

Sponsorship

74. **Mr. Gerald Bowden** asked the Minister for the Arts what is his latest estimate of new money for the arts arising from the operation of the business sponsorship incentive scheme.

Mr. Luce: This scheme continues to be highly successful. I announced the latest list of 48 awards on 26 January, bringing the total of new money for the arts under the scheme to £11·12 million. 400 businesses have sponsored the arts for the first time.

Young Musicians

79. **Mr. Crowther** asked the Minister for the Arts what steps he intends to take to encourage young musicians.

Mr. Luce: The education of young musicians is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science, but the Arts Council funds a number of bursaries and traineeships for practising professional musicians. I gave a reception for young artists of every kind on 6 January, and I was very pleased to meet a number of young singers and players on that occasion.

Acceptances in Lieu

80. **Mr. Rowe** asked the Minister for the Arts if he has any plans to increase the publicity given to acceptance-in-lieu arrangements.

Mr. Luce: Replies to written parliamentary questions publicise individual acceptances and decisions on allocations as and when they occur; six-monthly summaries are also given. A new leaflet is also in preparation which will describe the present arrangements and supplement the information already available.

Loans (Indemnity)

81. **Mr. Hannam** asked the Minister for the Arts if he has any plans to change the arrangements for indemnity for loans by local authority museums and galleries.

Mr. Luce: Not at present. Indemnities for loans by local authority museums and galleries are granted under the National Heritage Act 1980. Guidelines on the scheme, which is administered by the Museums and Galleries Commission, were issued by the Office of Arts and Libraries in March 1985.

Area Museum Councils

83. **Mrs. Renée Short** asked the Minister for the Arts why the grants due to the area museum councils for 1985-86 were paid late.

Mr. Corbett asked the Minister for the Arts for what reasons grant aid has not been paid to area museum councils for more than 12 months; and when it is expected that payment will now be made.

Mr. Luce: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) on 13 February 1987.

Mr. Corbett asked the Minister for the Arts whether he will list, by each area museum council, the amount of grant last paid, grant outstanding for 1985-86 and grant due for 1986-87; and whether that has yet been paid.

Mr. Luce: The amount of grant allocated to the seven English area museum councils in 1985-86 and 1986-87, and the payments made to date, are as follows:

	1986-87		*1985-86*		
AMC	*Allocation*	*Payments*	*Allocation*	*Payments*	*Outstanding*
North	209,850	209,850	208,100	190,758·37	17,341·63
North West	407,900	407,900	414,000	379,500·00	34,500·00
Yorkshire and Humberside	420,200	420,200	424,800	389,400·00	35,400·00
West Midlands	225,900	225,900	222,750	204,187·50	18,562·50
East Midlands	149,050	149,050	136,750	125,354·13	11,395·87
South West	316,950	316,950	319,950	293,287·50	26,662·50
South East	548,750	548,750	467,650	428,679·13	38,920·87

I have made arrangements to pay a proportion of the outstanding payments at once, and the balance on 1 April of this year.

Public Libraries (Political Material)

Mr. Cartwright asked the Minister for the Arts what consultations he is having with representatives of library interests in discharge of his functions under section 1 of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, to ensure that the Government's proposed code of practice under section 4 of the Local Government Act 1986 does not inhibit the provision of a comprehensive service of political manifestos and other politically related material by public libraries.

Mr. Luce: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Association of County Councils

Mr. Skinner asked the Minister for the Arts when he last met the Association of County Councils to discuss the impact of arts policy on local communities.

Mr. Luce: I have not met the Association of County Councils, but shall be happy to do so if it would like. I have of course discussed arts policy with members and officials of various county councils.

Greater London Council

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister for the Arts if he will list the additional functions and responsibilities undertaken by his Department of a temporary or permanent kind as a result of the abolition of the Greater London Council, stating the total estimated cost to public funds in 1986-87 and the total number of officials involved.

Mr. Luce: None, apart from attendance at meetings of the South Bank board by an official from my office, at an estimated staff time cost of £310 in 1986-87.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Commodity Prices

Mr. Deakins asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the annual change in common agricultural policy guarantee prices for cereals, beef and milk between 1980-81 and the current marketing year.

Mr. Gummer: The information requested was included in a note giving details of the "Common Agricultural Policy prices settlement 1986-87", a copy of which was deposited in the Library of the House in May 1986.

Agricultural Land

Mr. Colvin asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will ensure that the proposals contained in all the policy documents referred to in his statement to the House on agricultural land on Monday 9 February are published in a single comprehensive Green Paper, in order to ensure the widest possible awareness of all the issues involved.

Mr. Jopling: The Government intend to issue together next month a comprehensive set of documents on their policies for agriculture and rural development.

Mr. Colvin asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, when he intends to publish the findings of his Department's alternative land use and a rural environment study.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Government's conclusions were set out in the statements which my right hon. Friends the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretary of State for the Environment made to the House last week.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if farm buildings ancillary to farming operations which are changed to other uses in consequence of his statement of 9 February will be subject to local authority rating; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I have been asked to reply.

The present exemption from rating relates only to those buildings (other than dwellings) which are occupied together with agricultural land and are used solely in connection with agricultural operations on that land. Where there is a change of use and a building is no longer used in this way it will be rated normally.

Beef

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will take steps to encourage the export of poor quality beef becoming available when the EEC milk package is implemented.

Mr. Gummer: Export refunds are payable on beef exported to a wide range of third countries. As it is not eligible for payment of the beef variable premium, cow beef continues to be exempt from clawback. The 6 per cent. devaluation of the green pound agreed in December has helped the competitive position of all United Kingdom beef exports.

Quantity Measurement

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has had any discussions with his partners in the European Economic Community on the introduction of national standard committees for quantity measurement through the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: No.

Milk (Inspection Charges)

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received from milk producers in respect of the proposed public health inspection charges; and how he intends to respond.

Mr. Gummer: Detailed proposals for regulations on charges for work in connection with milk and dairies regulations were issued to interested organisations for comments on 4 December. A number have responded including the National Farmers' Union, the Farmers' Union of Wales and the Milk Marketing Board. We have also received representations from, and on behalf of, a number of individual milk producers including a petition from members of the Isle of Wight branch of the NFU. We have been considering the final form of the regulations in the light of these comments and representations and expect to lay the statutory instrument before Parliament very shortly.

CAP

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received questioning the objectives of the European Economic Community, through the common agricultural policy, of continuing to aim for European self-sufficiency in foodstuffs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The objectives of the Common Agricultural Policy, which are set out in Article 39 of the Treaty of Rome, make no reference to self-sufficiency. I frequently receive representations from a wide range of sources on CAP matters.

Surplus Butter

Mr. Beith asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has any plans to make surplus butter available at reduced cost to retirement pensioners not in receipt of non-contributory social security benefit.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Improvement Scheme Applications

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many agriculture improvement scheme applications have been approved since the commencement of the scheme;

(2) how many agriculture improvement scheme applications have been rejected since the commencement of the scheme;

(3) how many rejected agriculture improvement scheme applications were connected with *(a)* the ADAS drainage design service and *(b)* independent applicants;

(4) how many agricultural improvement scheme applications have included land drainage operations as part or whole of the plan.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Field Drainage Design Service

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what income was generated by ADAS from the field drainage design service from October 1985 to October 1986;

(2) what proportion of income generated by ADAS from the field drainage design service derives from agricultural clients.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Greater London

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the action he has taken since the abolition of the Greater London council to ensure that the functions and responsibilities of his Department and its related non-departmental public bodies dealing with the Greater London area are co-ordinated with each other.

Mr. Jopling: My Department and its related non-departmental public bodies consult on matters of mutual concern.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the additional functions and responsibilities undertaken by his Department of a temporary or permanent kind as a result of the abolition of the Greater London council, stating the total estimated cost to public funds in 1986-87 and the total number of officials involved.

Mr. Jopling: There has been no change in the work of my Department following the abolition of the Greater London council.

Food Aid

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list those commodities available in the United Kingdom for distribution under the European Economic Community food aid scheme which are not being distributed; and if he will give the reasons therefor.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Low-input Farming

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish the results of the experiments on low-input farming conducted at Boxworth experimental husbandry farm; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Botulism

Mr. Hickmet asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will make botulism a notifiable disease when contracted *(a)* by horses or *(b)* by other livestock; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will seek to obtain the articles about botulism in horses and other livestock by the veterinary surgeon Mr. Ricketts of Newmarket and published in recent months in the *Veterinary Recorder* and elsewhere; and if he will make a statement.

(3) if he has any information as to why Westway and Sons has withdrawn 4,000 bales of Horse Hage and offered to buy back Horse Hage supplied to horse owners; and if he will reconsider his decision not to advise the feed merchant and horseowners about this matter;

(4) what representations he has received concerning the supply in Devon and Cornwall of Horse Hage fodder by Westway and Sons; what information he has received that such fodder is or may be a cause of botulism in horses; what action he has taken as a result; and if he will make a statement;

(5) further to his reply of Thursday 12 February 1987, what information he has as to how much time both horses which were destroyed spent stabled at Widecombe-in-the-Moor;

(6) if, in the light of information supplied to him by the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe, he has anything to add to his answer of 12 February on another horse alleged to have eaten the same fodder as the horses which died;

(7) further to his reply of 12 February 1987, whether any horses have died as a result of contracting botulism which have not been recorded by his Department's laboratories;

(8) what has been the incidence of botulism amongst livestock since the introduction of big bale silage; what is the difference between the big bale silage and Horse Hage; and if he will make a statement;

(9) if his Department's veterinary investigation service will make investigations into whether the cause of death on 1 December 1986 of the horse Gamble, stabled at Ponsworthy in Devon, was botulism.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Forestry

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consideration he has given to the report by the Comptroller and Auditor General on forestry and the implications of expanding tree planting; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Solihull (Mr. Taylor) on 11 February 1987 at columns *299-300*.

Suckler Cow Premium

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Devon, North, *Official Report*, 29 January, column *338*, if he is now in a position to announce the rate at which the suckler cow premium will be paid; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 February 1987, c. *42*]: We shall announce the rate of suckler cow premium for this year as soon as a decision has been taken.

Green Pound

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he proposes to request the European Economic Community for a further reduction in the green pound at an early date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 February 1987, c. *42*]: We are considering what action to take on the level of the green pound in the context of the forthcoming price-fixing.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will indicate the percentage gap in the green pound in a comparison between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 February 1987, c. *42*]: Agricultural prices, set in ecu are converted into national currencies using green rates (the green pound in the case of the United Kingdom and the green punt in the case of the Republic of Ireland). For each member state's currency, the difference between the green rates and the market rate against the ecu (the real monetary gap) is expressed as a percentage of the former.

The real monetary gaps applying in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland in the week beginning 9 February 1987 are as follows:

Sector	*United Kingdom*	*Republic of Ireland*
	Per cent.	*Per cent.*
Beef	−26·005	−5·777
Milk	−32·462	−5·777
Pigmeat	−28·732	−5·777
Cereals Sugar	−34·286	−10·546

Beef

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to make adjustments on the exports of cull beef which could assist the farming industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 February 1987, c. *42*]: When reforms of the milk regime were agreed in December, the Council of Agriculture Ministers recognised that consequent cow cullings would put pressure on the beef market. The Commission has accordingly allocated 435 mecu to provide for suitable market management measures to be adopted over the next two years.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will ensure that any surplus beef which may be produced following the period of the EEC milk package does not go into intervention; and what plans he has for the disposal of the surplus.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 February 1987, c. *287*]: Beef from cull cows from the dairy herd is not eligible for intervention. It can meet the needs of a range of market requirements including processing and some export outlets.

Pork

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the imbalance of imports of pork in cash terms from the Dutch producers as against the price which can be obtained in the market by United Kingdom producers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 February 1987, c. *42*]: Imports of fresh pork into the United Kingdom from the Netherlands are prohibited for animal health reasons.

Quotas

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to introduce quotas for other agricultural products; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 February 1987, c. *288*]: Quotas are inflexible. They inhibit enterprise and the rational development of the industry. We have no plans to promote them.

Milk Quotas

Mr. McLoughlin asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many farms in the United Kingdom have milk quotas *(a)* over 2 million litres, *(b)* between 1,999,999 litres and 750,000 litres, *(c)* between 749,999 litres and 500,000 litres, *(d)* between 499,999 litres and 300,000 litres, *(e)* between 299,999 litres and 200,000 litres and *(f)* under 200,000 litres, respectively.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 February 1987]: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Grey Seals

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) whether his Department accepts the conclusions of the Natural Environment Research Council report, "Interactions between Grey Seals and United Nations Fisheries", published in 1984; what research is currently being carried out on interactions between grey seals and fisheries by his Department; and if he will make a statement;

(2) by whom, and where, research projects funded by his Department on *(a)* the ecology of the grey seal or *(b)* interactions between grey seals and commercial fisheries, are being carried out; and over what period of time in each case.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 February 1987, c. *41*]: The report suggests a cautionary approach to the interpretation of the findings because of the complex nature of the questions addressed, with consequent difficulty in arriving at firm conclusions. My Department accepts the report as contributing to the fund of knowledge in this area. As part of the MAFF and DAFS joint external research funding arrangements my Department contributes to the seals research programme of the Sea Mammal Research Unit. This continuing programme covers ecology and fisheries interaction. In addition my Department is funding a survey conducted by Hull university to investigage the scale and cost of seal predation in the fixed net fishery off the north-east coast of England. This is being conducted in two stages, the first stage in relation to the cod fishery has been concluded and a report is in preparation and the second stage concerning the salmon fishery is expected to begin in July this year.

DEFENCE

DROPS

Sir Ian Gilmour asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will list the visits specifically to discuss the demountable rack off-loading pick-up system made to each of the companies he has listed as being involved in his Department's demountable rack off-loading pick-up system programme between 1975 and 1982 by the following Ministry of Defence senior officers involved in DROPS (*a*) VCGS, (*b*) QMG, (*c*) VQMG, (*d*) DGTM, (*e*) D of Q (Org & Dev) and (*f*) DAP(A); and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list the visits specifically to discuss DROPS made to the companies he has listed as being involved in his Department's programme between 1975 and 1982 by his Department's trials and concepts officers working on DROPS between 1975 and 1982; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he can provide an estimate for the number of visits made by representatives of the companies he has listed as having been involved in DROPS between 1975 and 1982 to any of his Department's establishments to discuss DROPS in each of the years 1975 to 1982; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: This information cannot be provided since there is no record of all such visits between 1975 and 1982.

Sir Ian Gilmour asked the Secretary of State for Defence if any member of his Department's procurement executive visited any of the companies involved in DROPS in order to discuss DROPS prior to formal tasking of MOD(PE) in 1982; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Staff of the procurement executive are required to maintain constant contact with firms in the motor vehicle and associated industries in the normal course of their work. Detailed records recording every visit and conversation which occurred in 1982 in this way are not available. There is, however, a record of a visit paid by the then project manager for B vehicle procurement to Boughton's in the spring of 1982, which advised it of the forthcoming competition.

Sir Ian Gilmour asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will say which of those companies he has identified as having been involved in his Department's DROPS researches between 1975 and 1982 participated, except as exhibitors of Boughton's DROPS equipment, in any of the British Army equipment exhibitions held between 1975 and 1982 or in any of his Department's overseas exhibitions held between 1975 and 1982; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Of the companies listed in my reply of 16 December, only Foden and the Boughton Group participated in exhibitions sponsored by the Ministry of Defence during the period mentioned.

Sir Ian Gilmour asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will say which of those companies he has identified as being involved in his Department's DROPS research between 1975 and 1982 provided in that period any equipment on free loan to his Department over any protracted period; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There is no record of any equipment having been provided on free loan for any protracted period between 1975 and 1982 by any of the companies referred to as part of the Department's consideration of bulk load handling concepts.

NATO-Warsaw Pact (Conventional Forces)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has as to the view of other North Atlantic Treaty Organisation countries of the correct way to assess the imbalance of conventional forces between the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the Warsaw Pact.

Mr. Stanley: NATO published a booklet entitled "Force Comparisons" in 1984 which describes the methodology for counting force levels and equipment. The United States publication "Soviet Military Power 1986" and the 1985 FRG White Paper "The Situation and Development of the Federal Armed Forces" follow this procedure, which is also the basis for our own comparisons of NATO and Warsaw Pact forces described in annex A to "The Statement on the Defence Estimates 1986" (Cmnd. 9763-I).

Chief Fire Officer, South Yorkshire

Mr. Redmond asked the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply of Monday 2 February, *Official Report*, column 516, if he will list the dates that he has met the chief fire officer of South Yorkshire in London or his South Yorkshire headquarters in the past three years.

Mr. Stanley: My right hon. Friend has not had any meetings with the chief fire officer of South Yorkshire since he has been Secretary of State for Defence, nor so far as we are aware did his predecessor my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine).

Bofors Gun

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence which Royal Navy vessels are currently fitted with the Bofors light gun.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The following classes of Royal Navy vessels are either fitted with or are fitted to receive the Bofors 40/60 gun:

Frigates/Destroyers
- Type 22 Batches 1 and 2
- Leander Batch 1

Mine Warfare Forces
- ABDIEL
- TON Class MSC/MHC
- HUNT Class MHSC
- RIVER Class MSF

Amphibious Forces
- LPD

Patrol Forces
- CASTLE Class OPV
- ISLAND Class OPV
- BIRD Class

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many new light guns have been ordered by the Royal Navy as replacements for the Bofors gun.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: To date 25 30mm replacement small calibre guns have been ordered by the Royal Navy.

Tigerfish Torpedo

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence what steps were taken by his Department to improve the management of the Tigerfish torpedo project.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We brought the management of the Tigerfish torpedo weapon system under the unified control of a single MOD authority and a single system contractor.

Spearfish Torpedo

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he plans to make changes in the management of the Spearfish project.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No, I do not plan to make any changes to the management of the Spearfish project.

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence what problems there have been with the procurement of Spearfish.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There have been some problems in the development of Spearfish, but these have not been any greater than we would have expected in such a complex and difficult period. I cannot go into technical details for reasons of national security and commercial sensitivity.

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many departments at his Department are responsible for managing the Spearfish project.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: One department in my Ministry is responsible for managing the Spearfish project.

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects the Spearfish torpedo to enter Royal Navy service.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I expect the Spearfish torpedo to enter service by 1989.

Pilots

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the ratio of pilots currently engaged in flying duties to aircraft in the Fleet Air Arm.

Mr. Freeman: Approximately 1·6:1.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the ratio of pilots currently engaged in flying duties to aircraft in the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Freeman: Approximately 1·7:1.

Self-propelled Howitzer

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has for a replacement 155mm self-propelled howitzer.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Further to my statement to the House on 13 January at column 230, a request for quotations has been issued to three United Kingdom and one United States firms to seek a replacement for the 105mm Abbot gun. National armament directors will continue to explore the possibilities of continued collaboration for requirements in the longer term.

Experimental Aircraft

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department plans to provide further funding for the experimental aircraft project.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is intended that any further funding of the experimental aircraft programme by the Ministry of Defence should be through the collaborative European fighter aircraft programme. We are currently discussing with our EFA partners how EAP should be used in this context.

ALARM

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what delays there have been with the air-launched anti-radiation missile;

(2) when he expects the air-launched anti-radiation missile to enter Royal Air Force service.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There have been delays as a result of the difficulties experienced with the rocket motor in the development stage of the project. The Department is studying with the prime contractor, British Aerospace, the implications for the programme.

Defence Projects

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Defence if, pursuant to his answer of 4 February, *Official Report*, column 716, about notification of defence projects, the National Audit Office was informed before 7 October 1986 of each defence project since 1983 which would have been included in the major project statement to the Public Accounts Committee but for considerations of national security, where the project was expected to exceed £250 million.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Yes.

Procurement Policy

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence what was his Department's total procurement expenditure in each year since 1979; and how much was spent in the following regions in England: *(a)* West Yorkshire and Humberside, *(b)* the east midlands, *(c)* the west midlands, *(d)* East Anglia, *(e)* the south-west, *(f)* the south-east and *(g)* the north-west and in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry's equipment procurement expenditure in each financial year since 1979-80 is as follows:

	£ million
1979-80	4,017
1980-81	5,324
1981-82	6,121
1982-83	6,815
1983-84	7,504
1984-85	8,573
1985-86	8,979

Estimates of equipment expenditure by region are only available from 1983-84. Figures, to the nearest £0·1 billion, for the areas specified are as follows:

£ billion

	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86
Yorkshire and Humberside[1]	0·1	0·2	0·2
East Midlands	0·3	0·3	0·3
West Midlands	0·2	0·3	0·3
East Anglia	0·2	0·2	0·2
South West	0·9	0·8	0·9
South East	3·2	3·5	3·8
North West	1·0	1·1	1·0
Scotland	0·4	0·4	0·4
Wales	0·1	0·1	0·2
Northern Ireland	0·1	—	0·1

— less than £50 million.
[1] Figures for West Yorkshire and Humberside are not available.

Orbital Slots

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the answer on 9 February, *Official Report*, column 106, why he will not list all orbital slots filed by his Department at the International Telecommunications Union.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I am now advised that it is possible to provide the information requested by the hon. Gentleman and I regret that this was not done in response to his earlier question. The Department of Trade and Industry, which is responsible for requesting orbital slots for British satellites from the International Telecommuncations Union, has filed the following slots on behalf of the Ministry of Defence: 1 deg. West, 6 deg. East, 53 deg. East and 33 deg. West.

Blackburn ROF

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for Defence which companies have paid visits to the Blackburn Royal Ordnance factory with a view to its purchase; and on what dates.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information requested is as follows:

	Dates
Trafalgar House	14 January 1987
British Aerospace	15 January 1987
GKN	29 January 1987
Ferranti	4 February 1987

RAF Mount Batten

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will outline the practical advantages in training which led to his decision to establish a tri-service defence training establishment at Royal Air Force Mount Batten; and what facilities and skills will be available which are unavailable under the current arrangements.

Mr. Freeman: Experience in the Royal Navy has shown that there are advantages in co-locating the schools responsible for aircrew survival training, aircrew survival equipment and aviation medicine, because strong links exist between these types of training and common problems can then be addressed more easily. Aircrew equipment fitter training can be improved by providing trainees with opportunities to see the equipment actually in use. The RAF also recognise these advantages which are further enhanced by the formation of a joint services training establishment, since there is also considerable commonality between the training tasks of the two services. The essential requirements for this joint training establishment include a sea survival area, a land survival area and facilities such as a swimming pool and decompression chambers. The sea survival area in Plymouth Sound is excellent for training purposes at all states of tide and weather is clear of shipping lanes and free from pollution. The surrounding countryside provides most suitable terrain for land survival training. Facilities such as the swimming pool and decompression chambers will be purpose built and dedicated to survival training whereas existing facilities are sometimes shared and some are in poor condition and in need of renewal. The facilities and skills available at Mount Batten will not be different in kind from those available under the current arrangements, but they will be modern and more effective and efficient because of their co-location. All three services are satisfied that the quality of training will be improved by the formation of the joint establishment.

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Defence what will be the anticipated cost to public funds of establishing the proposed tri-service defence training establishment at RAF Mount Batten; and what annual saving he anticipates from closing each of the existing units which will be merged to form the new establishment.

Mr. Freeman: The capital cost of establishing the proposed tri-service training establishment at RAF Mount Batten is approximately £8 million. The rationalisation will, however, enable the Department to sell some surplus land. When receipts from these sales are taken into account the net expenditure is expected to be about £1 million. Savings in iperating costs are expected to be £780,000 a year once the new establishment is formed.

Royal Ordnance Factories

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list in the *Official Report* the total number of employees, and the total number of redundancies declared by the Royal Ordnance Factories, and the Royal Ordnance Factories plc. for each calendar year since 1973 to date for each Royal Ordnance factory and for the United Kingdom as a whole.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Information in the form requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost and effort, but the following may be helpful:

	Average number of employees	Number of redundancies declared[1]
9 months to 31 March 1975	18,550	13
Year to 31 March 1976	20,556	nil
Year to 31 March 1977	22,535	nil
Year to 31 March 1978	23,169	nil
Year to 31 March 1979	23,235	509
Year to 31 March 1980	22,084	122
Year to 31 March 1981	21,672	1,018
Year to 31 March 1982	20,208	461
Year to 31 March 1983	18,859	91

[1] Redundancy figures are those declared in a calendar year.

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for Defence in what way he intends to consult Parliament before a final decision on the sale of Royal Ordnance Factories plc. is made.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Parliament has given approval to the Government's policy of moving Royal Ordnance plc. to the private sector and has been kept informed of progress. The necessary decisions needed to achieve the Government's objective will be announced in due course, and will no doubt be the subject of appropriate comment and questions.

Ulster Defence Regiment

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many members of the Ulster Defence Regiment, and its Reserve, in 1986 have been found to be members of illegal paramilitary organisations or, separately, legal paramilitary organisations such as the Ulster Defence Association or the Third Force.

Mr. Stanley: I shall answer shortly.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of the manpower strength of the Ulster Defence Regiment, and its Reserve, as between full-time, part-time, male and female, operatives as at 31 December 1986.

Mr. Stanley: The figures requested are as follows:

	Full-time	*Part-time*	*Total*
Male officers	86	183	269
Female officers	11	9	20
Servicemen	2,482	3,034	5,516
Servicewomen	205	525	730

There is no UDR Reserve.

Northern Ireland

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will state the manpower strength of the British Army in Northern Ireland giving details of the number of personnel in the following categories: *(a)* Ulster Defence Regiment, *(b)* Regular British Army and *(c)* British Territorial Army as at 31 December 1986.

Mr. Stanley: The figures requested are as follows:

	Number
Ulster Defence Regiment	6,535
Regular Army	9,920
Territorial Army	3,719

The figures for the Ulster Defence Regiment include both full-time and part-time soldiers. Soldiers of the Territorial Army are not used in support of the RUC in counter-terrorist operations.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Departmental Initiatives (Women)

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list those initiatives of his Department which have been of benefit to women, since 1979, the cost or estimated cost of these initiatives, and the proportion of the total budget of his Department this represents.

Mrs. Currie: Our policies on health, personal social services and social security are designed to benefit both men and women. Spending on the National Health Service in England alone has increased by nearly 26 per cent. since 1978-79 in real terms. There are more doctors and nurses in hospitals and the community. Hospitals are dealing with many more in-patient cases, out-patient cases and day cases than ever before.

There have been many specific initiatives of benefit particularly to women. The maternity services advisory committee, established in 1981, produced three reports on aspects of maternity care, which have been distributed widely within the Health Service and to interested professional and lay organisations. The committee's advice is taken into account when authorities plan, monitor and review their maternity services. The Asian mother and baby project was launched in 1984 and involved the appointment of link workers to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers and so improve antenatal care for women from the Indian sub-continent.

Health authorities have been required to install computerised call and recall schemes, so that women can receive personal invitations to attend for cervical smear tests, by April 1988 at the latest; and to ensure that laboratories avoid backlogs of cervical smears, which should not regularly exceed one month's work. In 1985 Professor Sir Patrick Forrest was invited to consider the case for introducing breast cancer screening by mammography. Professor Forrest's final report has been received and sent for printing. It will be published and the Government will announce their response shortly.

Particular attention has been paid to women smokers. In 1985 £½ million was made available to the Health Education Council for a television campaign to discourage smoking among women. The HEC has also recently produced a new booklet on women and smoking. The latest voluntary agreement on tobacco advertising and promotion prohibits cigarette advertising in magazines where a third or more of the readers are young women, and one of the six new health warnings draws attention to the damage smoking during pregnancy can do to an unborn baby. Although there is considerable work still to be done, smoking amongst women has fallen from 37 per cent. in 1978 to 32 per cent. in 1984.

The Health Education Council, which is largely funded by Government, produces a range of publications aimed specifically at women. The Pregnancy Book, first published in 1984, received a particularly warm welcome. The Government expect that the new health education authority will continue and develop this work.

In addition, the Department provides funds for a number of voluntary organisations which focus particularly on the needs of women, including the Women's National Cancer Control Campaign and Women's Health Concern. Other organisations which receive departmental support, such as the Association of Carers, will also benefit many women. In October 1986 I was given special responsibility for women's health matters. In the social security field there have also been many developments of specific benefit to women. Since November 1983, there has been equal treatment for women in claiming supplementary benefit and family income supplement. Since September 1985 there has been equal treatment between men and women in virtually all aspects of child dependency and adult dependency increases payable with benefits to those below pension age.

The 1987 Hospital In-Patients Amendment Regulations provide for the equal treatment of women receiving benefits in hospital.

From April 1987 maternity allowance and maternity pay will be combined to become statutory maternity pay

and will be paid by the employer. Women who do not qualify for SMP may, however, still receive maternity allowance under new conditions designed to target help more precisely to those with recent work records. SMP will also be available in addition to national insurance widow's benefits, and to any women who pay the married woman's reduced rate national insurance contribution which does not at present bring entitlement to maternity allowance. These new arrangements give pregnant women a greater choice about when to give up work without affecting benefit entitlement.

The Social Security Act 1986 made invalid care allowance payable to married women on the same basis as to single women and men. In November 1984, the severe disablement allowance was introduced to replace non-contributory invalidity pension and housewives' non-contributory invalidity pension. SDA is available to men and women regardless of marital status and therefore does away with the need for the household duties test.

The residual effects of the married woman's half test were abolished from December 1984, enabling over 30,000 women to receive a pension for the first time. These initiatives are only a small proportion of those which have been of benefit to women. It would not be possible to list them all in detail, or to calculate their cost, either as a single figure or as a proportion of the Department's total budget.

Abortions

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in the *Official Report* the numbers of abortions carried out *(a)* on the National Health Service and *(b)* in the private sector; broken down by estimated time span since conception, for the 10 years up to the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Newton: I regret that the exact information requested can be produced only at disproportionate cost. However the hon. Member may find the figures in the table useful.

Notifications of abortions carried out under the Abortion Act 1967 to resident and non-resident women—numbers: category of premises (residents only) and gestation in completed weeks. England and Wales 1976-1985

Gestation weeks	*Total*	*Under 9*	*9-12*	*13-16*	*17-23*	*24 and over*	*Unknown*
1976							
Total	129,673	31,494	68,994	18,801	5,861	218	4,305
Residents:							
(i) NHS	50,569	8,475	30,685	7,509	1,426	92	2,382
(ii) Non-NHS	51,343	16,761	26,184	5,542	1,606	72	1,178
Non-Residents	27,761	6,258	12,125	5,750	2,829	54	745
1977							
Total	133,004	31,804	70,875	19,079	6,319	276	4,651
Residents:							
(i) NHS	52,530	9,008	31,999	7,517	1,613	97	2,296
(ii) Non-NHS	50,147	16,219	25,505	5,398	1,583	86	1,356
Non-Residents	30,327	6,577	13,371	6,164	3,123	93	999
1978							
Total	141,558	33,222	76,426	19,823	6,931	359	4,797
Residents:							
(i) NHS	55,040	9,651	33,039	7,876	1,864	134	2,476
(ii) Non-NHS	56,811	16,988	30,034	6,219	2,017	127	1,426
Non-Residents	29,707	6,583	13,353	5,728	3,050	98	895
1979							
Total	149,746	35,273	80,676	20,771	7,617	438	4,971
Residents:							
(i) NHS	55,558	9,688	33,251	8,040	1,976	120	2,483
(ii) Non-NHS	65,053	19,194	33,883	7,251	2,841	161	1,723
Non-Residents	29,135	6,391	13,542	5,480	2,800	157	765
1980							
Total	160,903	37,197	86,255	22,792	8,933	613	5,113
Residents:							
(i) NHS	60,594	10,779	36,118	8,653	2,288	159	2,597
(ii) Non-NHS	68,333	20,072	35,398	7,663	3,355	222	1,623
Non-Residents	31,976	6,346	14,739	6,476	3,290	232	893
1981							
Total	162,480	48,727	83,433	19,388	9,350	418	1,164
Residents:							
(i) NHS	61,103	13,723	37,868	6,972	1,736	77	727
(ii) Non-NHS	67,478	26,096	30,785	6,652	3,499	158	288
Non-Residents	33,899	8,908	14,780	5,764	4,115	183	149
1982							
Total	163,045	51,692	82,519	18,382	9,899	462	91
Residents:							
(i) NHS	62,409	14,266	40,223	6,059	1,751	54	56
(ii) Non-NHS	66,144	27,462	28,197	6,651	3,667	144	23
Non-Residents	34,492	9,964	14,099	5,672	4,481	264	12
1983							
Total	162,016	53,919	79,232	18,504	9,747	505	109
Residents:							
(i) NHS	62,481	14,167	40,308	6,223	1,650	76	57
(ii) Non-NHS	64,753	29,693	24,572	6,627	3,662	162	37
Non-Residents	34,782	10,059	14,352	5,654	4,435	267	15
1984							
Total	169,993	57,517	82,980	18,279	10,589	532	96
Residents:							
(i) NHS	64,823	14,703	42,037	6,282	1,698	62	41
(ii) Non-NHS	71,565	33,162	27,512	6,483	4,177	198	33
Non-Residents	33,605	9,652	13,431	5,514	4,714	272	22

Gestation weeks	Total	Under 9	9-12	13-16	17-23	24 and over	Unknown
1985							
Total	171,873	56,392	86,438	17,686	10,835	494	28
Residents:							
(i) NHS	65,176	13,975	43,327	6,201	1,606	53	14
(ii) Non-NHS	75,925	34,105	30,845	6,314	4,520	131	10
Non-Residents	30,772	8,312	12,266	5,171	4,709	310	4

From 1976 to 1980 gestation is calculated as the number of completed weeks between last menstrual period and date of operation. In March 1981 a new notification form was introduced which seeks a direct statement of gestation and the basis on which it is derived.

Not stated and unknown gestation is included in Total.

Psychiatric Patients (Guidelines)

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether there are any guidelines on conjugal visits in *(a)* National Health Service psychiatric in-patient facilities, *(b)* regional secure units and *(c)* special hospitals.

Mrs. Currie: No. The provision of such facilities in psychiatric hospitals and regional secure units would be at local discretion. The special hospitals are provided for patients with a propensity to violent and dangerous behaviour, and conjugal visits would not normally be appropriate.

Residential Homes

Mr. Neil Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people in private and voluntary residential and nursing homes in the United Kingdom are having their fees wholly or partly paid by supplementary benefit board and lodging payments; what is the annual cost of such support; and if he will break down the figures by region, by client type, elderly, mentally ill, mentally handicapped and physically handicapped and into residential and nursing homes, respectively.

Mr. Major: In December 1984, the latest available date, 42,000[1] residents of private and voluntary residential care and nursing homes in Great Britain were receiving supplementary benefit to help with their fees at an estimated annual cost of £200 million. These figures cannot be broken down by region, client group or type of home.

The only available information on the number of claimants by social security region and client group is that obtained from a special survey of residents claiming benefit during April to July 1985. The information is contained in a Department of Health and Social Security document "Supplementary Benefit Board and Lodging Allowances, Results of a Special Statistical Exercise (29 April — 29 July 1985)", a copy of which is in the Library.

A special statistical exercise conducted in Northern Ireland in December 1986 indicated that 1,648 people in private and voluntary residential and nursing homes were receiving supplementary benefit towards their fees at an annual cost of about £10·6 million. The numbers in different types of home were as follows:

Home type	Residential home	Nursing home
Elderly	860	390
Mental disorder	27	97
Mental handicap	57	17
Physical disability	61	33
Drug or alcohol dependence	18	—
Terminal illness	—	54
Others	13	21
Totals	1,036	612

Note:

1. Annual Statistical Enquiry, December 1984.

Information relating to the cost by home type is not available.

General Practitioners (Computers)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement about his Department's refusal to finance the computer-based advice systems for general practitioners being established by Dr. Roger Brittan and colleagues at the University of Warwick.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Hospital Closures

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he last upheld the objection of a community health council to the closure of a hospital since 1979; and if he will list those occasions by year and region.

Mrs. Currie: Most proposed closures or changes of use of hospitals are agreed locally with the support of the community health council. Where a proposal is referred to my right hon. Friend he considers all the circumstances, the views of the local community health council and other comments received, in reaching a decision. The table lists those proposals for the closure of whole hospitals, which have been referred to Ministers in this Department since 1979, and have not been accepted.

Region	Hospital
1979	
North East Thames	Elizabeth Garret Anderson
East Anglian	Bowthorpe
1980	
West Midlands	Rugely District
South West Thames	Henderson
1981	
Wessex	Barton on Sea Maternity
Mersey	Royal Liverpool Childrens Heswell Branch
1982	None

Region	Hospital
1983	
North West Thames	St. Johns
1984	
Yorkshire	Shipley
1985	None
1986 (to August)	None

Hospital and Community Health Services

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the capital spend on hospital and community health services for each year since 1974-75 to the latest available date, giving in each case the amount *(a)* in cash terms and *(b)* deflated by the gross domestic product deflator and (i) in gross terms and (ii) in net terms after deducting proceeds from land sales.

Mr. Newton: The information requested is shown in the table.

Hospital and community health services capital expenditure

£ million

Year	Cash		1985-86 prices (as measured by gross domestic product deflator)	
	gross	net	gross	net
1974-75	243·1	234·8	822·2	794·2
1975-76	316·3	314·4	851·3	846·2
1976-77	341·1	338·6	811·1	805·1
1977-78	319·2	314·7	666·4	657·0
1978-79	363·8	356·0	686·3	671·5
1979-80	405·6	395·3	654·7	638·1
1980-81	556·3	540·5	756·9	735·4
1981-82	670·4	650·4	830·3	805·5
1982-83	691·4	672·5	798·6	776·7
1983-84	714·6	681·7	789·9	753·5
1984-85	805·3	754·6	853·6	799·9
1985-86	883·1	797·9	883·1	797·9

Hospital Beds

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many *(a)* acute, *(b)* geriatric and *(c)* psychiatric beds there were in Leeds area health authority in 1979; and what are the latest available figures for Leeds eastern district health authority and Leeds western district health authority.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is given in the table. In Leeds between 1979 and 1985 the number of in-patient cases treated increased by 21·0 per cent. from 76,896 to 93,013 in acute specialties, by 47·7 per cent. from 4,335 to 6,401 in the specialty of geriatric medicine and 38·4 per cent. from 2,229 to 3,085 in psychiatric specialties.

National Health Service Hospitals in Leeds

Health Authority	Average daily number of available beds					
	1979			1985		
	Acute[1]	Geriatric	Psychiatric[2]	Acute[1]	Geriatric	Psychiatric[2]
Leeds Western District Health Authority[3]	1,271	199	1,438	1,367	482	1,167
Leeds Eastern District Health Authority[3]	1,489	783	148	1,261	487	161
Totals	2.760	982	1,586	2,628	969	1,328

[1] Acute is defined as all specialties except Geriatric, Units for younger disabled, G P Maternity, Obstetrics, Psychiatric and Mental handicap.
[2] Psychiatric = Psychiatry children, Mental illness, Adolescent psychiatry units, Forensic psychiatry and Psychogeriatric.
[3] Health District prior to 1982.
[4] Leeds Area Health Authority prior to 1982.

Patient Statistics

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give, for the latest available year, for East Hertfordshire health authority *(a)* the expenditure on contractual arrangements for patient care, *(b)* the number of deaths and discharges of patients treated under contractual arrangements and *(c)* the number of beds they occupied on a given date, breaking these figures down into the categories of (i) medical, (ii) surgical, (iii) pre-convalescent and post-operative, (iv) convalescent, (v) geriatric, (vi) diseases of the chest, (vii) maternity, (viii) mental illness, (ix) mental handicap, (x) rehabilitation, (xi) terminal care and (xii) others, giving details, if applicable.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that this information is not available centrally. The hon. Member may wish to approach the chairman of the East Hertfordshire health authority who may be able to provide the information requested.

Principal General Medical Practitioners

Mr. Stan Thorne asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will state the number of unrestricted

principals analysed by practice structure for England, the Mersey region and Liverpool for the years 1957, 1960, 1970, 1980 and 1985;

(2) if he will state the number of unrestricted principals analysed by age groups for England, the Mersey region and Liverpool for 1957, 1960, 1970, 1980 and 1985.

Mr. Newton: Information for England, Mersey regional health authority, and Liverpool family practitioner committee is given in the tables. No comparable data are readily available for Mersey Region or Liverpool prior to the health service re-organisation in 1974.

Number of Unrestricted Principal General Medical Practitioners
Practice Structure

	Total	Single-handed	Partnerships of 2	3	4	5	6 or more
England							
1957	18,173	—	—	—	—	—	—
1960	18,643	—	—	—	—	—	—
1970	19,099	4,034	4,706	4,872	3,000	1,450	1,037
1974	20,219	3,663	4,269	5,055	3,608	1,985	1,639
1980	21,812	3,089	4,016	5,112	4,208	2,764	2,623
1985	24,035	2,915	3,880	4,986	4,352	3,610	4,292
Mersey RHA							
1974	1,045	193	244	318	192	60	38
1980	1,131	144	246	309	232	125	75
1985	1,221	124	210	276	308	190	113
Liverpool FPC							
1974	251	67	86	69	24	5	—
1980	260	53	78	75	32	10	12
1985	264	40	56	72	64	20	12

Note: No breakdown by practice structure is available for 1957 or 1960.

Numbers of unrestricted principal general medical practitioners

	Total	Age group Under 30	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	70 and over
England											
1957	18,173	—		—		—		—		—	
1960	18,643	—		—		—		—		—	
1970	19,099	2,560		5,764		5,769		3,662		1,344	
1974	20,219	1,115	2,118	2,642	2,814	3,373	2,992	2,336	1,565	708	556
1980	21,812	963	3,118	3,022	2,912	2,925	3,123	2,817	1,606	794	532
1985	24,035	943	3,696	4,132	3,454	3,057	2,863	2,884	1,858	659	489
Mersey RHA											
1974	1,045	71	101	129	125	184	159	127	90	34	25
1980	1,131	73	153	139	138	123	173	161	84	57	30
1985	1,221	66	191	187	153	142	118	165	117	44	38
Liverpool FPC											
1974	251	13	12	17	22	47	50	41	30	11	8
1980	260	8	19	24	23	21	46	50	29	27	13
1985	264	14	26	32	29	24	21	45	36	20	17

Note: No breakdown by age group is available for 1957 or 1960.

Health Centres

Mr. Stan Thorne asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many health centres were established in England in 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980 and 1985.

Mrs. Currie: Information on the establishment of health centres is held from 1965 only. The available information is given in the table.

	1965	1970	1980	1985
Health centres brought into operation	—	61	58	13
Total number of health centres	25	188	1,095	1,133

North Western Regional Health Authority

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) pursuant to his answer, *Official Report*, column 139, 9 February, if he will list in detail those of the auditor's criticisms of the development experiment of computer systems by the North Western regional health authority which have not been met by the authority's response;

(2) in respect of which specific point he has asked the North Western regional health authority to reconsider its responses in relation to tendering and contract procedure; and when this request was made;

(3) in respect of the development and procurement of computer systems by the North Western regional health authority, whether the auditor's report has been published and what other documents relating to this matter have

been made available to the public; and if he will arrange for all such documents including the auditor's report to be placed in the Library.

Mrs. Currie: The auditor's report and the regional health authority's response were considered in public session at the authority's meeting on 27 May 1986, and I am arranging for copies to be placed in the Library. The Department's comments on this response were contained in a letter sent to the authority on 19 September 1986, to which it has assured us that it will be replying very shortly. I will let the hon. Member have a further reply when these matters have been resolved.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish any guidelines given to the North Western regional health authority for priorities in allocating the extra £1·2 million made available.

Mr. Newton: North Western regional health authority, in common with other recipients of this special funding, is expected to allocate the sum made available in 1987-88 to ease the process of planned changes and for projects which will release resources for the future.

The special fund is transitional, for two years only, and all projects should therefore be of limited duration. The fund may be used for revenue or capital projects.

Guidelines on this special fund were issued to regions on 19 January, 1987 and a copy is in the Library.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the £1·2 million extra funding for the North Western, regional health authority.

Mr. Newton: The £15 million special fund made available in 1987-88 to regions receiving lowest growth rates under RAWP is intended to help those regions cope with the transitional costs of improving services both for priority groups and outside the main cities, without damaging inner city services or medical teaching. The £1·2 million extra funding for North Western regional health authority is from this special fund.

Acute Beds

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what, pursuant to his answer of 19 January, *Official Report*, column *448*, was the source of the figure on the number of acute beds in the Blackburn, Hyndburn, and Ribble Valley health authority in 1979 and 1985; and when the information was obtained.

Mrs. Currie: The figures were supplied to the Department by the North Western regional health authority. The date the 1979 figures were received has not been recorded. The 1985 figures were received in the first week of July 1986.

Nuclear Installations (Cancer)

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the Committee on Medical Aspect of Radiation last met to consider allegations of higher than average leukaemia and lymphatic cancer levels among under 25-year-olds living near the atomic weapons research establishment Aldermaston and royal ordnance factory, Burghfield; when it will next meet and from which sources it is calling for statistical, epidemiological and other expert research; and how much original research it is carrying out.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services following the statistical study on cancer incidence and mortality in the vicinity of nuclear installations in England and Wales 1959-1980 carried out by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, if he will publish in the *Official Report (a)* a list of nuclear installations surveyed indicating the approximate area around each in which cancer incidence and mortality was studied and *(b)* in each case: (i) the number of cancers and (ii) the number of deaths for each year specifying: (1) the type of cancer, (2) the age of the person who has contracted the cancer or died and (3) the expected cancer/death rate in each category.

Mr. Newton: The purpose of the investigation was to assemble and publish data as a basis for identifying any prima facie excesses of cancer which might merit further investigation; the study does not itself test casual connections.

The study examined cancer registrations and deaths from cancer around 15 nuclear installations at 14 locations (identified in the table). For cancer registrations data were available for each year 1961-80, and for mortality 1959-80. Sixteen sites of malignancy and some broader aggregations (25 groups of malignancy in all) were considered. The pre-1974 local authority districts adjacent to each nuclear installation were grouped into four distance zones. The data were examined for five-year age-bands (18 groups in all), and for both sexes. Comparison statistics were available for control districts, matched on urban/rural location in the region(s) in which the installation was sited. This work produced a vast amount of raw data (over 12 million separate counts of cancer registrations and deaths). All this information will be available in the report or on microfiche.

Work on this material used various aggregations to explore the trends in patterns of cancer over the time period stated, and also over time since start-up of the installations, and over the distance zones, in comparison with expected values based on standard rates, and in comparison with the control locations. The main thrust of the examination was to seek for patterns of results that distinguished individual chance positives from any set of results indicating possible environmental associations.

To answer the question by presenting data for the 14 locations, for four distance zones, for the 16 main sites of malignancy, for 18 age-groups, for each of the years involved for cancer registrations and cancer deaths, giving observed numbers and expected numbers, would produce a table with over a million numbers in it.

A table has therefore been produced, using myeloid leukaemia as a malignancy of particular interest (as used in the *Official Report*, 15 April 1986 at column 371-372) to illustrate the type of data available. The data have been set out for the 14 locations around the installations, but pooling the material for all distance zones, the total time-span, both sexes, and in three broad age-groups. The numbers of cancer registrations and deaths are given, together with a ratio of these observed numbers to the expected figures based on regional rates, excluding the population in conurbations.

Such figures need careful statistical interpretation. There are, moreover, problems, discussed in the report, about the reliability of some of the data. The authors consider that the conclusions should be based not on these or any other particular figures but on the overall results of the whole study. Interpretation of the figures and decisions on any further work will have to be considered when the full report is available, and in the light of advice from the committee on medical aspects of radiation in the environment.

Number of deaths (1959-1980) from, and newly diagnosed cases (1961-1980) of, myeloid leukaemia by age group (obs), and ratio of observed to expected numbers for specified nuclear installations.
England and Wales

Area		Age-group 0-24 Obs	0-24 Ratio	25-74 Obs	25-74 Ratio	75 and over Obs	75 and over Ratio
Sellafield	I	3	1·057	13	0·677	2	0·355
	M	6	1·934	16	0·855	1	0·194
Springfield	I	21	1·412	184	1·196	79	1·348
	M	11	0·868	183	1·142	85	1·411
Capenhurst	I	10	0·634	139	1·242	52	1·475
	M	17	0·981	159	1·145	52	1·226
Aldermaston	I	8	0·660	74	0·875	36	1·250
	M	10	0·814	72	0·815	32	0·978
Amersham	I	29	1·336	158	0·938	69	1·297
	M	31	1·406	138	0·782	69	1·143
Harwell	I	3	0·726	34	1·159	13	1·363
	M	4	0·953	25	0·816	11	1·018
Winfrith	I	3	0·778	33	0·954	12	0·931
	M	2	0·550	40	1·224	14	0·993
Bradwell	I	4	1·297	22	0·826	5	0·475
	M	5	1·604	31	1·114	15	1·255
Berkeley & Oldbury	I	6	1·026	41	0·969	12	0·937
	M	8	1·442	44	1·097	11	0·788
Hinkley	I	4	1·244	21	0·760	11	1·061
	M	4	1·316	20	0·768	12	1·060
Trawsfynydd	I	[1]	—	[1]	—	[1]	—
	M	0	—	3	0·597	1	0·521
Dungeness	I	0	—	2	0·409	1	0·587
	M	0	—	4	0·781	1	0·518
Sizewell	I	0	—	13	1·111	4	0·741
	M	0	—	9	0·917	4	0·771
Wylfa	I	[1]	—	[1]	—	[1]	—
	M	1	0·960	10	1·195	3	1·020

I Registration of cancer.
M Death from cancer.
[1] No registrations analysed for Wales.

Hospital Complaints Procedure Act

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he intends to implement the Hospital Complaints Procedure Act.

Mrs. Currie: We have undertaken extensive consultation on proposed new arrangements for hospital complaints procedures and received a substantial response. We hope to complete our deliberations on the comments received shortly. Arrangements to issue the directions will be made as soon as possible.

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. John Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy to pay the £5 heating supplement to pensioners who live in communities which are in a high rainfall, wind or high altitude areas, and where weather conditions are worse than average.

Mr. Major: Having recently changed the temperature criterion to 0 deg. Celsius we have no plans for further changes to the arrangements for single payments in periods of exceptionally cold weather.

Allowances

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people were in receipt of *(a)* attendance allowance and *(b)* mobility allowance in Wales for the latest date for which such figures are available.

Mr. Major: The latest available figures for Wales are that there were an estimated 44,000 recipients of attendance allowance (at 31 March 1986) and 40,600 recipients of mobility allowance (at 6 February 1987).

Pension Schemes

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to ensure that the profits that accumulate in a pension fund, held for the benefit of employees, can only be used for the direct benefit of those employees, and not appropriated for other uses by the company or by the trustees in charge of the pension scheme.

Mr. Major: Trust law already requires the trustees of pension schemes to act in the members' best interests. The powers to tax pension fund surpluses which last year's Finance Act gives to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor

of the Exchequer provides a powerful incentive for schemes to use surpluses to reduce contributions or enhance benefits.

Liable Relative Officers

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will place in the Library a copy of the instructions issued to liable relative officers.

Mr. Lyell: It would not be in the public interest to do so. The supplementary benefits handbook does contain general information about the action taken by liable relative officers.

Family Forum

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will state the terms of reference of the Family Trust; what information he has about the proportion of its annual expenditure accounted for by his Department's grant under section 64 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968; what assessment he has made of its activities during 1986 for the purposes of evaluating the cost-effectiveness of his Department's grant; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: I assume that my hon. Friend is referring to Family Forum.

Family Forum aims to:

> increase the understanding of families and family structure, their development and needs, by drawing together the experience and expertise of national member organisations and other in conferences, consultations and working groups;
>
> achieve the same across the country, through individuals, representatives of local branches of national members and other contacts by identifying and discussing family issues which affect them locally;
>
> through the work of its committees, working groups and national and local meetings, publish findings and make recommendations to policy makers on matters relating to family life and welfare;

thereby contributing to an increase in the knowledge, wellbeing, confidence, competence and independence of families.

In 1985-86, the latest year for which audited accounts are available, the grant of £34,500 paid to Family Forum under section 64 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968 amounted to some two thirds of its expenditure.

Officials have kept in touch with the activities of Family Forum and we are currently considering an application for a further three year grant, to run from 1 April 1987.

Royal Liverpool Hospital

Mr. Loyden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what plans there are to reduce further the number of beds at the Royal Liverpool hospital;

(2) if there are any plans to close a surgical ward at the Royal Liverpool teaching hospital; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if there are any plans to make surgical wards into five-day wards at the Royal Liverpool hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The provision of local health services is a matter for individual health authorities. The hon. Member may therefore wish to contact the chairman of the Liverpool health authority.

Mr. Loyden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to seek to reduce the waiting list for patients awaiting treatment at the Royal Liverpool hospital.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Fluoridation

Mr. Terry Davis asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he published the draft guidelines on the fluoridation of water supplies; and when he placed a copy in the Library.

Mrs. Currie: A draft circular giving guidance to health authorities on the implementation of fluoridation schemes was sent to all regional general managers for consultation on 29 January. A copy of the final document will be placed in the Library when it is issued.

Blood Products

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is his Department's assessment of the total cost to date attributable to heat-treating imported blood products; if he will list the hospitals where these costs have been incurred giving in each case the costs incurred; how much of the total costs have been met by *(a)* district health authorities, *(b)* regional health authorities and *(c)* special allocations from his Department;

(2) what was the original completion date proposed for the blood products laboratory at Elstree; what is the completion date now; when Britain will be self sufficient in blood products; and what are the reasons for the development slipping behind schedule.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Meningitis

Mr. Aspinwall asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps are being taken to discover the continuing high incidence of bacterial and viral meningitis in certain localities; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Aspinwall asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many cases of meningitis have been reported in England in each year since 1970; how many were in (i) county of Avon, (ii) county of Gloucester, (iii) Frenchay health authority, (iv) Bristol and Weston district health authority and (v) Bath and West Wiltshire health authority.

Mrs. Currie: Notifications of meningitis are made in respect of local authority areas, not district health authorities. The table shows the readily available information on the number of notifications of acute meningitis, and, of these, the numbers specified as meningococcal meningitis, from 1970 to 1986.

Meningitis notifications in Avon and Gloucestershire 1970-1986

Year	Avon		Gloucestershire	
	Acute Meningitis	*of which Meningo-coccal*	*Acute Meningitis*	*of which Meningo-coccal*
1970	—	—	24	—
1971	—	—	19	—
1972	—	—	14	—
1973	—	—	16	—
1974	20	—	9	—
1975	24	—	17	—
1976	14	—	8	—
1977	19	—	7	—
1978	13	—	14	—
1979	23	—	9	—
1980	17	—	—	—
1981	12	—	7	—
1982	11	—	10	—
1983	9	—	25	—
1984	17	—	16	—
1985	50	8	21	9
[1]1986	59	22	28	17

[1] Provisional
— = not available

Meningitis notifications in England 1970-1986

Year	England	
	Acute Meningitis	*of which Meningococcal*
1970	1,264	497
1971	1,775	564
1972	1,466	587
1973	1,878	899
1974	1,985	1,105
1975	2,426	764
1976	1,737	639
1977	1,227	450
1978	1,577	464
1979	1,304	487
1980	1,643	467
1981	1,309	423
1982	1,198	387
1983	1,155	396
1984	1,152	367
1985	1,447	510
1986[1]	2,001	806

[1] Provisional

Mr. Aspinwall asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what facilities have been provided for the treatment of meningitis in the county of Gloucester;

(2) what facilities have been provided for the treatment of meningitis in the Frenchay health authority;

(3) what facilities have been provided for the treatment of meningitis in the Bristol and Weston district health authority;

(4) what facilities have been provided for the treatment of meningitis in the county of Avon.

Mrs. Currie: Facilities for the treatment of meningitis are available at all the principal general hospitals in these areas.

Mr. Aspinwall asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many cases of meningitis recorded in England have resulted in death in each year since 1970; how many were in (i) county of Avon, (ii) county of Gloucester, (iii) Frenchay health authority, (iv) Bristol and Weston district health authority and (v) Bath and West Wiltshire health authority;

(2) what progress has been made in the use of the anti-meningitis vaccine at present being manufactured.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

AIDS

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list the 10 health authorities which have experienced the most demand on their services from AIDS patients; and if he will give for each the total revenue expenditure in 1982-83 and 1985-86 and the revenue budget for 1986-87 and 1987-88;

(2) what account has been and will be taken of AIDS in determining the size and distribution of joint finance;

(3) what evidence there is from other countries of AIDS victims developing a dangerously infectious state such as would justify use of the Public Health (Infectious Diseases) Regulations 1985;

(4) how many health authorities have drawn up action plans on AIDS; if he will list them; and if he will place the action plans in the Library;

(5) what is his Department's estimate of the total sums spent *(a)* by Government and *(b)* by all sources on AIDS research in: (i) the United Kingdom, (ii) the United States of America and (iii) France;

(6) when he expects to decide whether to extend the practice of handing out free syringes to drug addicts; if he will list the hospitals where the trial is being conducted; and how he will assess the impact of the practice on the spread of AIDS;

(7) on what grounds HIV infection has not been made a notifiable disease;

(8) when his Department first became aware of the threat to haemophiliacs from imported factor VIII in relation to *(a)* hepatitis and *(b)* HIV virus;

(9) when heat-treatment of imported factor VIII was initiated; and when all haemophiliacs were first able to obtain access to safe factor VIII;

(10) what financial support has been made available by his Department to the Terrence Higgins trust;

(11) what consultation took place with the Terrence Higgins Trust before its telephone number was put on the AIDS leaflet;

(12) what is his Department's total grant sought by and given to the Terrence Higgins Trust in each year since the Trust's formation;

(13) whether he will now provide extra funding for sexually transmitted diseases clinics in response to AIDS.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what guidelines have been issued to nursing staff regarding the treatment of AIDS sufferers; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make a statement about the circumstances in which two nurses carrying the AIDS virus have been reinstated following their earlier dismissal; what is the general practice with regard to the employment of nurses carrying the AIDS virus; how many such cases are currently known to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member and my hon. Friend have replies as soon as possible.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether prevalence testing for AIDS has been conducted by the National Health Service in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Newton: I am not aware of any such testing for HIV infection by health authorities.

Mr. Aspinwall asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many haemophiliac patients are being treated for AIDS in (i) the Bristol and Weston district health authority, (ii) Frenchay health authority and (iii) Bath and West Wiltshire health authority.

Mr. Newton: According to the latest reports to the communicable disease surveillance centre, there are only seven live cases of haemophiliac patients with AIDS in the United Kingdom. It would not be right to identify which districts they ae being treated in since this might enable individuals to be identified in breach of medical confidentiality.

Maternity Payments

Dame Judith Hart asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Clydesdale claimed maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Clydesdale are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Clydesdale constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Ayr, Hamilton, Lanark, Wishaw, Cumnock and Dumfries although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the six local offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Ayr	1,381
Hamilton	1,868
Lanark	297
Wishaw	792
Cumnock	431
Dumfries	1,357

It is not possible to predict how many women in Clydesdale will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Dame Judith Hart asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Clydesdale received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Clydesdale are expected to received statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested. But in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, the following number of claims to maternity allowance were made at the Department's offices which cover the constituency although the boundaries are not conterminous:

	Number
Ayr	881
Lanark	187
Cumnock	272
Hamilton	1,239
Wishaw	465
Dumfries	932

It is not possible to predict how many women in Clydesdale will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Dormand asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Easington constituency claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in the Easington constituency are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Easington constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Peterlee and Seaham although their boundaries are not conterminious with the constituency. The number of claims received for maternity grant in each of the two local offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Peterlee	667
Seaham	366

It is not possible to predict how many women in the Easington constituency will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Dormand asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Easington constituency received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in the Easington constituency are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested. But in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 720 claims to maternity allowance were made at Peterlee and 230 claims at Seaham, the Department's offices which cover the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Easington will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Woodall asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Hemsworth constituency claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in the Hemsworth constituency are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Hemsworth constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Hemsworth and Pontefract although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the two local offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Hemsworth	703
Pontefract	958

It is not possible to predict how many women in the Hemsworth constituency will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Woodall asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Keighley constituency received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Keighley are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested. But in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, the following number of claims to maternity allowance were made at the Department's offices which cover the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous:

	Number
Keighley	1,105
Skipton	327

It is not possible to predict how many women in Keighley will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many Welsh women claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of Welsh women who claimed the maternity grant is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. It is not possible to predict how many women in Wales will qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Cunliffe asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Leigh constituency claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Leigh constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Leigh and Wigan although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the two local offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Leigh	1,462
Wigan	2,633

Mr. Cunliffe asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Leigh constituency received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested. But in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year of which figures are available, 1,040 claims to maternity allowance were made at Leigh and 1,900 claims at Wigan, the Department's offices which cover the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

Mr. Douglas asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Dunfermline, West claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested. The Dunfermline, West constituency is covered by the Department's office at Dunfermline although its boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The number of claims received for maternity grant at Dunfermline local office during the 1986 calendar year was 1,226.

Mr. Douglas asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Dunfermline, West received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested. But in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 949 claims to maternity allowance were made at Dunfermline, the Department's office which covers the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

Mr. James Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Scotland claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Motherwell, North constituency are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: In the 1986 calendar year the number of claims for maternity grant in Scotland was 59,419. It is not possible to predict how many women in Motherwell, North constituency will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Copeland claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested. The Copeland constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Barrow in Furness and Whitehaven although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The number of claims received for maternity grant in each of the two local offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Barrow in Furness	1,551
Whitehaven	868

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Burnley and Pendle constituencies claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Burnley and Pendle are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: The Burnley and Pendle constituencies are covered by the Department's office at Burnley. The number of claims received for maternity grant at Burnley

local office during the calendar year 1986 was 2,999. It is not possible to predict how many women in Burnley and Pendle will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in north-west Leicestershire claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in north-west Leicestershire are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund annually after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested. The north-west Leicestershire constituency is covered by the Department's office at Loughborough although its boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The number of claims received for maternity grant at Loughborough local office during the calendar year 1986 was 2,094. It is not possible to predict how many women in north-west Leicestershire will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Faversham claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Faversham are expected to qualify for maternity payment from the social fund annually after April 1987.

Mr. Major: The Faversham constituency is covered by the Department's office at Sittingbourne. The number of claims received for maternity grant at Sittingbourne local office during the calendar year 1986 was 1,593. It is not possible to predict how many women in Faversham will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Rossendale and Darwen constituency claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested. The Rossendale and Darwen constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Rossendale and Blackburn although their boundaries are no conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the two local offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Rossendale	907
Blackburn	2,346

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Rossendale and Darwen constituency received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested. But in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 623 claims to maternity allowance were made at Rossendale and 1,498 claims at Blackburn, the Department's offices which cover the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

Benefits

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he is taking, in the light of the result of a test case involving a former British Shipbuilders worker in Southampton, in September 1986, to ensure that unemployment benefit is paid to former Scott Lithgow workers by the Greenock and Port Glasgow offices of his Department during the first 13 weeks of their redundancy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment my hon. Friend the Member for Pendle (Mr. Lee) to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) on 24 November 1986 at column *57*.

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the benefits and allowances to which a married man with eight children under 11 years is entitled if his gross weekly earnings are *(a)* £90, *(b)* £120 and *(c)* £180 and he is paying average rent and rates (i) if he is working and (ii) if he is unemployed and showing the total net weekly spending power in each case.

Mr. Major: The information requested is given in the table.

Benefits, Allowances and total net weekly spending power at various earnings for a married man with eight children under 11 years and a non-working wife

	£	£	£
Gross Weekly Earnings	90·00	120·00	180·00
Family Income Supplement	43·15	30·10	—
Child Benefit	56·80	56·80	56·80
Rent Rebate	15·51	11·19	2·52
Rate Rebate	6·09	4·64	0·75
Free School Meals	9·00	9·00	9·00
Free Welfare Milk	6·72	6·72	—
Total Income Support	179·25	177·23	165·05

Families with the age and size specified are extremely rare — out of a total of almost 7 million families with children in the country as a whole they are likely to number fewer than 100. If the head of the family was unemployed and claiming supplementary benefit, total income support would total £147·92 per week.

The phenomenon whereby net income can fall as gross earnings rise and income-related benefits are withdrawn will not occur after April 1988 when family credit replaces family income supplement under the terms of the 1986 Social Security Act.

Notes:

1. Assumptions are the same as used in the Department's tax/benefit model tables at July 1986. A copy is available in the Library.
2. The local authority rent for such a family is calculated at £19·60, general rates £8·15, water rates £1·60 per week.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people in *(a)* Dundee and *(b)* Tayside are in receipt of supplementary benefit; and if he will break down the figures showing the number of recipients who are pensioners, one-parent families and unemployed in each case.

Mr. Lyell: I regret that information cannot be given in the precise form requested. Dundee is covered by the Department's local offices at Dundee East and Dundee West but their boundaries are not conterminous with those of Dundee. Tayside region includes areas covered by these

two offices together with areas covered by the Department's local offices at Arbroath and Perth but their boundaries are not conterminous with those of Tayside.

Information about the number of pensioners, unemployed people and others under pension age receiving supplementary benefit from the local offices covering Dundee and Tayside on 10 December 1986—the latest available figures—are shown in the table.

Separate figures for one parent families receiving supplementary benefit are not available.

	Dundee	*Tayside*
Pensioners	6,038	11,242
Unemployed	9,478	15,501
Others under pension age	7,111	11,474
Totals	22,627	38,217

Source: 100 per cent. count of cases in action.

Mr. Terry Davis asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any plans to stop single payments for repairs to owner occupiers in receipt of supplementary benefit.

Mr. Major: No, we have no plans to amend the single payments regulations in relation to single payments for repairs to owner-occupied property.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 17 February 1987

PRIME MINISTER

Moodiesburn

Q66. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Prime Minister if she will pay an official visit to Moodiesburn, Lanarkshire.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Wales

Q95. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Prime Minister when she next proposes to pay an official visit to Wales.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Age Addition

Q105. **Sir David Price** asked the Prime Minister whether she will consider increasing the age addition for those aged 80 years and over.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to do so. However, from April 1988 a higher level of help will be available to pensioners aged 80 and over who are on low incomes through an automatic higher-rate premium in the new income support scheme.

EC Budget

Q118. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Prime Minister what arrangements have been made for the European Council to consider the EEC budget; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: As I informed my hon. Friend on 10 February, at column 159, the agenda for the next European Council has not yet been fixed.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Prime Minister if she will make it the policy of Her Majesty's Government that no commitment will be made on behalf of the United Kingdom in the present Parliament which would have the effect of increasing the United Kingdom contribution to the European Economic Community budget now or in the future above the amount payable under the present formula; and if she will publish in the *Official Report* the percentage increase in the United Kingdom contribution in each of the past three years and the expected increase in the current year compared with the percentage increase in public expenditure at central and local level in the United Kingdom.

The Prime Minister: Yes. I have made it clear that there is no question of the Government putting any increase in the Community's own resources ceiling to the present Parliament.

The net financial obligations on the United Kingdom resulting from successive Community budgets on a calendar year basis are shown in table 3.3.1 in the public expenditure White Paper (Cmnd. 56-II) and the net payments to the European Community budget on a financial year basis in table 3.3. The percentage changes in the net payments to the European Community budget, after taking account of the effects of refunds or abatements, shown in table 3.3, are:

	Percentage
1984-85	+18
1985-86	−12
1986-87	+27
1987-88	−16

The comparable figures for central and local government expenditure are given in table 2.3. The percentage increases are:

	central government	*local government*
1984-85	+8	+ 5
1985-86	+7	+ 1
1986-87	+6	+10
1987-88	+3	+ 4

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Prime Minister whether she will publish in the *Official Report* a list of the economic benefits which the United Kingdom obtained from membership of the European Economic Community in 1986, together with details of the United Kingdom's net contribution to the European Economic Community budget.

The Prime Minister: The Government's assessment of the economic benefits which the United Kingdom obtains from membership of the European Community is contained in their evidence to the Treasury and Civil Service Sub-committee inquiry into the financial and economic consequences of United Kingdom membership of the European Communities (House of Commons 57-II, Session 1984-85).

A final outturn figure for the United Kingdom's net contribution to the EC budget in 1986 is not yet available. A preliminary estimate of £326 million was published last October in the White Paper on the 1986 Community budget (Cmnd. 9907).

BBC Scotland (Police Raid)

Q152. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister whether it was with her authority that Mr. Bernard Ingham and the No. 10 Downing street Private Office were in touch with the Strathclyde police in relation to the seizure of documents at BBC Scotland on 1 February.

The Prime Minister: Ministers have made clear repeatedly in the House that the Government did not intervene in the application for a warrant to search the premises of the BBC in Glasgow. The hon. Gentleman's allegation is totally unfounded. At no time has any member of the No. 10 staff been in touch with the Strathclyde police about the matter.

Moscow

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Prime Minister whether she will now publish the itinerary of her impending visit to Moscow.

The Prime Minister: The arrangements for my visit are under discussion.

Engagements

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 17 February.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 17 February.

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 17 February.

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 17 February.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others, including one with the President of the Congo. I attended a service of thanksgiving for the life and work of Sir Edward Youde, former Governor of Hong Kong. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Committee of Public Accounts (Recommendations)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will list those recommendations of the Committee of Public Accounts since 1983 affecting his Department which have been implemented.

Mr. Butcher: I refer the hon. Member to the Treasury minutes published in response to the relevant PAC reports (Cmnd. 9178, 9325, 9368, 9546, 9696, 9743, 9755, 9776 and 9917). The Committee, on which the hon. Member serves, monitors departmental progress with accepted recommendations.

Anti-dumping Duties

Mr. Faulds asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on the draft regulation under consideration by the European Commission which would extend European anti-dumping duties to cover all the components of products subject to anti-dumping duties.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Government sympathise with the objective of ensuring that anti-dumping action is not undermined by imports of components; but, equally, we attach great importance to encouraging genuine inward investment. We are examining the draft regulation from that standpoint.

Industrial Aid

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about grants available to foreign companies undertaking developments in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Giles Shaw: There is no discrimination in the provision of grants between British and foreign-owned companies undertaking developments in the United Kingdom. The main grants which may be available to qualifying projects are national and regional selective assistance, regional development grants, and support for innovation.

British Shipbuilders

Mr. Forth asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the external financing limit for British Shipbuilders for 1986-87.

Mr. Giles Shaw: In the debate on the British Shipbuilders (Borrowing Powers) Bill on 8 December I announced that British Shipbuilders external finance limit for 1986-87 would be revised formally once we were clearer about how some of the major uncertainties arising from the corporation's clients were to be resolved. In the meantime, I announced a firm limit of £155 million on the financing needs of the continuing businesses in areas the corporation could control.

The position on the major uncertainties is now such as to allow a new EFL of £244 million to be set, which means an increase of £114 million over the existing RFL of £130 million. The largest element of this increase is a cash requirement of £41 million in 1986-87 as a direct result of the receivership of International Transport Management Limited. As I told the House on 8 December, BS has advised that it expects to be able to recover some of these costs in due course.

Provision for this additional funding in the form of public dividend capital is subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate. The increase in the EFL will be charged to the reserve net of some offsetting savings on existing programmes.

Oil

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will publish in the *Official Report*, a table showing imports and exports of *(a)* crude oil and *(b)* petroleum products in terms of weight and value for the United Kingdom and such information as is available to him about the United States of America, Japan, Germany, France, Italy, Holland and Belgium for 1972, 1979, 1985 and to the latest available date in 1986.

Mr. Alan Clark: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Vehicle Imports

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what steps are taken to ensure that complete cars imported by General Motors from their plants in Germany are not being sold at less than the fair market value in their country of origin;

(2) whether he will impose an anti-dumping duty on imports of commercial vehicles from MAN of Germany; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Tobacco

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any evidence that imports of tobacco products from West Germany are being sold here at less than the fair market value in the country of origin after taking into account insurance and freight charges; and if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the volume and value of United Kingdom imports of tobacco products from, and exports to, West Germany in 1970, 1979 and each year from 1983 respectively.

Mr. Alan Clark: The United Kingdom cigarette manufacturing industry has presented evidence that manufacturers in the Federal Republic of Germany (including West Berlin) have adopted marginal costing policies in respect of imports of tobacco products into the United Kingdom. I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) on 3 February, at column 559. The following is the information requested:

	Imports[1]		*Exports*[2]	
	Value £ million	*Volume m/tonnes*	*Value £ million*	*Volume m/tonnes*
1970	[3]0·0	8	1·9	1,066
1979	4·0	566	6·8	1,135
1983	9·9	1,296	10·5	1,293
1984	31·7	6,858	8·3	894
1985	49·1	10,728	11·0	1,234
[4]1986	63·1	[4]13,542	9·4	865

[1] Imports = CIF
[2] Exports = FOB
[3] 0·0 = less than £100,000
[4] Estimated

Trackway (Patent Violation)

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has evidence of the unlawful marketing by the Singapore Government in Malaysia and Thailand of trackway in breach of a British patent held by Laird (Anglesey) Ltd.

Mr. Pattie: My Department has no such evidence. However, the allegation that unauthorised production is taking place in Singapore is under investigation by the licensing branch of the Ministry of Defence.

Guinness plc

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will call for the assistance of the fraud squad of the Metropolitan and City police forces to help in the Guinness investigation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The Guinness investigation is proceeding with all possible expedition and there is close liaison with the Crown Prosecution Service, which is being advised by leading counsel. It is for the Director of Public Prosecutions to decide whether and when to institute police inquiries.

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has received any representations concerning the conduct of members of the firm of stockbrokers Cazenove in the Guinness affair.

Mr. Howard: The Guinness investigation is proceeding expeditiously. My right hon. Friend has received no specific representations about the conduct of members of Cazenoves in the affairs or membership of Guinness plc.

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if his inspectors have sought information on the conduct of members of the firm of stockbrokers Cazenove from the takeover panel of the Stock Exchange in relation to Guinness plc.

Mr. Howard: It would not be in the public interest to give detailed information about the investigation.

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if the inspectors dealing with the Guinness inquiry have submitted to him or to the police any papers or reports concerning the commission of possible criminal offences arising out of their inquiry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The Guinness investigation is proceeding with all possible expedition and it would not be in the public interest to give detailed information concerning the inspectors' investigation while it is in progress.

Regional Policy

Mr. Robert Atkins asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the outcome of the administrative review of regional policy.

Mr. Giles Shaw: As my predecessor informed the House, we have been reviewing the operation of our regional industrial policy instruments. The terms of reference were to review the administrative aspects of regional development grants and regional selective assistance with a view to ensuring that the schemes operate with maximum ease, economy and effectiveness from the standpoint both of Departments and applicants. The review was not concerned with the fundamentals of regional policy, nor with the assisted areas map. In the interests of maintaining stability in regional incentives, we have concluded despite a number of representations that it is too early for changes to be made in the map.

We have been particularly concerned to look at the operation of RDG II which replaced RDG I in November 1984. The new scheme is radically different from the old in that it provides for grant to be calculated by reference either to capital expenditure or to new jobs created and is now available to various service activities as well as manufacturing. Other changes were introduced to improve the cost-effectiveness of RDG in assisting job creation in the development areas. We therefore commissioned a survey by consultants PIEDA into industry's early reactions to the new scheme. This found that RDG II has been generally well received by the business community. Despite its inevitably increased complexity compared with RDG I, the main concepts and rules appear to be understood and the scheme is an important factor in companies' investment decisions. Since November 1984, 12,000 projects have been approved which, if carried out as planned, would qualify for £360 million of grant. £130 million has been paid to date for projects creating 45,000 jobs. It is particularly encouraging that a high proportion of these projects are being carried out by firms with fewer than 200 employees: over 80 per cent. of the total grant has been paid to firms in this category. The grant offices have played a critical role in helping companies understand the new grant and most companies were very complimentary of the help received. A copy of PIEDA's report is being placed in the Library.

It is clear that the decision to administer the RDG 11 scheme from the same offices dealing with RSA has helped in responding to local needs. These arrangements enable the offices to coordinate their delivery of the assistance schemes to applicants and, in England, to liaise effectively with the regional organisations of the Department of the Environment and the Department of Employment, which have their own schemes of financial assistance in pursuit of separate but related policy objectives.

Experience has shown that there is scope for action to ease the administration of the scheme and this will be done, consistent with safeguarding the proper expenditure of taxpayers' money. But, given the encouraging progress to date and the need for stability in regional incentives, we have concluded that no change is called for in the main elements of RDG 11.

Relatively few changes were made in regional selective assistance in 1984. The scheme continues to be an effective and flexible instrument for aiding the creation and safeguarding of jobs throughout the assisted areas. Nevertheless, it is clear that the procedures and information requirements can be daunting to small firms. For grants of up to £25,000 a simplified application form will therefore be introduced and there will also be some simplification of the procedures involved in the determination of eligibility for assistance and the amount of grant.

The Government will continue to look for ways of improving the operation of the incentive schemes so as to maintain a vigorous regional industrial policy which brings good value for money to the taxpayer.

Heavy Vehicles

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing, for each category of heavy vehicles imported from Germany its average landed value in each year since 1983 and in the latest month for which figures are available together with the corresponding rates of exchange between sterling and the German mark.

Mr. Alan Clark [*pursuant to his reply* 16 February 1987]: The information is as follows:

Imports of heavy vehicles from Federal Republic of Germany
Value £000s
Average values of imports (cif)

	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*October 1986*
Average annual exchange rate £1 = Deutschmark	3·87	3·79	3·78	2·86
Dumpers	45	36	29	39
Heavy commercial vehicles	10	9	10	12
Coaches and Buses	77	86	85	94
Breakdown crane lorries	171	156	185	123
Concrete mixer pumping vehicles	58	51	35	62
Road tractors for semi-trailers	22	23	24	26

Sources:
Overseas Trade Statistics, SITC/R2, 782.1 (part), 782.2 (part), 783.1 (part), 783.2.
Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics, February 1987 table F1.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

St. Helena

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to place an order for a replacement vessel for the St. Helena service.

Mr. Chris Patten: We are pressing ahead with the necessary design and procurement work as rapidly as possible. The order will be placed by the St. Helena Government as soon as this work is completed.

Committee of Public Accounts (Recommendations)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will list the recommendations of the Committee of Public Accounts since 1983 relating to overseas development matters and affecting his Department which have been implemented.

Mr. Chris Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the Treasury minute published in response to the relevant Public Accounts Committee report (Cmnd. 9696 and HC 517). The Committee, on which the hon. Member serves, monitors departmental progress with accepted recommendations.

EMPLOYMENT

YTS

63. **Mr. James Hamilton** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the progress of the educational content of the YTS.

Mr. Trippier: Off-the-job training-education in YTS is a programme of learning which takes place outside the day-to-day pressures of the workplace; all two-year YTS programmes must include a minimum of 20 weeks off-the-job training-education.

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General how many and what percentage of YTS trainees have contracts of employment.

Mr. Trippier: I regret that the information is not readily available in the form requested and could be obtained only at a disproportionate cost. However, around 5 per cent. of young people joining YTS between April and December 1985 had contracts of employment at the time their training began.

Review of Vocational Qualifications

64. **Mr. Lofthouse** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the progress of the review of vocational qualifications and its implementation.

Mr. Trippier: The Government endorsed the main recommendations of the review in their White Paper "Working Together—Education and Training" (Cmnd. 9823) and established the National Council for Vocational Qualifications on 1 October last year in order to oversee their implementation. The national council is currently developing the design criteria for the national vocational qualification and expects to make its first accreditations in the summer in accordance with the timetable set by the White Paper.

Job Training Scheme

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General if he will show for each pilot job training scheme area by male-female, by age group (18 to 25 years and 25 years plus) the number of entrants per week and the cumulative total of filled places per week for each week since the programme started.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The following table shows for each of the pilot areas from the start of the programme the number of entrants per week and the weekly cumulative

totals of trainees in training. The information on breakdown by sex and age group is not available in the form requested, but the second table gives a percentage breakdown for entrants in each area up to 6 February.

Table 1

New JTS-entrants per week[1] and weekly cumulative totals of trainees in training[2]

Week ending

Area	*7 November 1986*		*14 November 1986*		*21 November 1986*		*28 November 1986*		*5 December 1986*		*12 December 1986*	
	1	*2*	*1*	*2*	*1*	*2*	*1*	*2*	*1*	*2*	*1*	*2*
Dundee	—	—	—	—	19	19	—	19	17	36	—	36
Billingham	—	—	9	9	12	17	3	20	—	14	16	23
Huddersfield	—	—	—	—	—	—	14	13	11	21	11	31
Preston	6	6	5	11	10	21	15	35	17	44	12	49
Stoke	—	—	3	3	16	19	14	32	20	52	24	74
Leicester	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Port Talbot	—	—	—	—	—	—	30	26	29	54	22	73
Plymouth	3	3	12	15	17	30	1	30	31	58	34	85
Crawley	—	—	—	—	—	—	10	10	11	19	11	28
Ealing	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	2	8	10	2	12

Table 1

New JTS-entrants per week[1] and weekly cumulative totals of trainees in training[2]—continued

Week ending

Area	*19 December 1986*		*9 January 1987*		*16 January 1987*		*23 January 1987*		*30 January 1987*		*6 February 1987*	
	1	*2*	*1*	*2*	*1*	*2*	*1*	*2*	*1*	*2*	*1*	*2*
Dundee	15	51	—	49	21	70	38	100	13	111	30	136
Billingham	7	28	16	39	13	51	—	51	19	69	18	80
Huddersfield	14	41	19	54	9	62	5	68	18	84	23	99
Preston	22	69	17	81	28	102	6	106	23	124	10	127
Stoke	12	86	15	99	13	107	12	116	20	135	18	148
Leicester	—	—	—	—	16	16	18	33	21	50	23	66
Port Talbot	4	76	15	85	15	95	13	98	32	115	43	125
Plymouth	—	78	30	104	39	125	32	153	20	170	48	205
Crawley	22	49	18	61	4	65	—	65	19	83	10	94
Ealing	2	14	4	16	9	25	13	32	11	47	8	51

Table 2 New JTS: Percentages of entrants up to 6 February 1987 male/female 18-24 years old and over 25

Area	*Male Per cent.*	*Female Per cent.*	*Under 25 Per cent.*	*Over 25 Per cent.*
Dundee	80	20	58	42
Billingham	71	29	39	61
Huddersfield	65	35	55	45
Preston	81	19	45	55
Stoke	73	27	50	50
Leicester	83	17	40	60
Port Talbot	80	20	48	52
Plymouth	73	27	77	23
Crawley	73	27	16	84
Ealing	62	38	57	43

Labour Statistics

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General, from the 1984 and 1985 labour force surveys, if he will publish a table for each region of Great Britain and Greater London, by male-female, and claimant status, the numbers of people not in the labour force who had not looked for a job in the four-week reference period, but were available to start work within two weeks, and declared that they would take a job if one were available; and how many people not in the labour force who had not looked for a job in the four-week reference period, were available to start work within two weeks.

Mr. Lee: The available information is given in the table. It is not possible to provide a reliable analysis of the regional figures by claimant status.

People not in the labour force who said they had not looked for a job in the four week reference period but would like work and were available to start work within two weeks
Great Britain

Thousands

	Men		*Women*		*Total*	
	Spring 1984	*Spring 1985*	*Spring 1984*	*Spring 1985*	*Spring 1984*	*Spring 1985*
Claiming benefits	142	174	79	89	221	263
Not claiming	258	204	771	737	1,029	941
Total	400	378	850	826	1,250	1,204
of which						

	Men		Women		Total	
	Spring 1984	*Spring 1985*	*Spring 1984*	*Spring 1985*	*Spring 1984*	*Spring 1985*
South East	106	93	240	213	346	306
(including Greater London)	(48)	(41)	(108)	(84)	(156)	(125)
East Anglia	9	11	25	26	35	37
South West	29	21	63	48	93	68
West Midlands	54	39	85	87	139	126
East Midlands	26	34	60	57	86	92
Yorkshire and Humberside	33	37	77	74	109	111
North West	57	59	118	118	175	176
North	36	25	56	62	92	87
Wales	19	27	39	52	58	79
Scotland	29	33	89	89	118	122

Note:
The figures, which came from the labour force survey, are subject to sampling errors.
In some cases the figures may appear not to add because of rounding.

Mr. Murphy asked the Paymaster General what is the current percentage of employment in the Welwyn, Hatfield constituency; and what are the comparable figures for *(a)* Hertfordshire and *(b)* the country as a whole.

Mr. Lee: Current figures are not available. The latest comparable information comes from the 1981 census of population and is shown in the following table:

Persons in Employment as a percentage of all those aged 16 and over

	Per cent.
Welwyn, Hatfield parliamentary constituency	62·2
Hertfordshire	61·1
Great Britain	55·0

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General if he will publish figures for each year since 1957 of *(a)* the number of employees in employment, *(b)* the number self-employed, *(c)* the unemployment rate and *(d)* the number available for work.

Mr. Lee: For the period June 1959 to March 1986, the latest estimates of employees in employment, the self-employed and the size of the working population in Great Britain are to be found on page 4 of historical supplement No. 1 to the February 1987 *Employment Gazette*. A copy is in the Library.

Employment estimates for June and September 1986 (the latest date for which figures are available) are as follows:

	June	*September*
Employees in employment	21,074,000	21,169,000
Self-employed	2,665,000	2,696,000
Working population	27,164,000	27,386,000

Comparable figures are not available for 1957 and 1958.

The following table gives unemployment rates for Great Britain for June of each year from 1957 expressed as a percentage of the working population. Figures for years from 1957 to 1971 relate to unemployed registrants, and for 1971 to date to unemployed claimants. Comparisons over such a long period are difficult to make because of changes in the method of collection and compilation of the data.

	Unemployed registrants	*Unemployment Percentage Rate*
1957		1·0
1958		1·6
1959		1·6
1960		1·2
1961		1·1
1962		1·5
1963		1·9
1964		1·3
1965		1·1
1966		1·0
1967		1·9
1968		2·0
1969		1·9
1970		2·1
1971		2·8
	Unemployed claimants	
1971		2·7
1972		3·0
1973		2·1
1974		2·0
1975		3·2
1976		4·8
1977		5·1
1978		5·0
1979		4·5
1980		5·5
1981		8·8
1982		10·2
1983		11·1
1984		11·0
1985		11·4
1986		11·5

Committee of Public Accounts (Recommendations)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Paymaster General whether he will list those recommendations of the Committee of Public Accounts since 1983 affecting his Department which have been implemented.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer the hon. Member to the Treasury minutes published in response to the relevant Public Accounts Committee reports (Cmnd. 9178, 9743, 9776 and 9808). The Committee, on which the hon. Member serves, monitors departmental progress with accepted recommendations.

Professional and Executive Recruitment

Mr. Lawler asked the Paymaster General what proportion of the executive recruitment market is handled by Professional and Executive Recruitment: and what plans the Government have for its future.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The nature of the market for the wide range of executive recruitment consultancy services is such that it is not possible to calculate a figure for the market share of Professional and Executive Recruitment. We have no present plans to change the basis of operation of the service, but its future is kept under review.

EXPO 88

Mr. Sayeed asked the Paymaster General whether the British Tourist Authority is intending to fund any special promotion of British tourism during the six months of the EXPO 88 Leisure in the Age of Technology exhibition.

Mr. Trippier: The British Tourist Authority is already discussing with the travel trade and the national and regional tourist boards the opportunities which EXPO 88 might offer for promoting British tourism. I expect to review the BTA's initial conclusions with the authority's chairman in the near future.

Wages

Mr. Favell asked the Paymaster General what is the average weekly wage of under 21-year-olds in *(a)* the public sector and *(b)* the private sector.

Mr. Trippier: The information requested is not available. Figures for full-time adult employees in the private and public sector for April 1986 are published in table 1 of the 1986 "New Earnings Survey", report part A, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Cancer Screening

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Paymaster General (1) what steps his Department is taking to encourage employers to provide cervical cancer testing facilities at the place of work; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will seek information from the baking industry and the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union about the agreement reached on provision of cervical cancer testing facilities at the place of work or for paid release for off-site testing.

Mr. Trippier: The provision of cervical cancer testing facilities is in general a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services. I appreciate that the work place provides an excellent forum for carrying out activities, such as cervical cancer screening, aimed at preventing disease in the general population. The Health and Safety Commission encourages employers to use the work place for such preventative purposes and I fully support the commission in this.

Primarily, however, the provision of work place screening facilities is a matter for agreement between employers and their employees. I have seen the agreement reached recently within the National Joint Committee of the Baking Industry in England and Wales, on which the baking industry employers and the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers' Union are represented. I understand that this agreement provides for work place testing by the National Health Service where this can be arranged. Where not, women employees are allowed full time off with pay to attend off-site testing centres. Other industries may wish to consider adopting schemes on these lines.

Construction Industry Training Board

Mr. Latham asked the Paymaster General what is the current level of cash reserves of the Construction Industry Training Board; what was the amount of *(a)* levy collected and *(b)* grants paid out in the last financial year; and what are the equivalent projected figures for the current financial year.

Mr. Trippier: As at 31 March 1986 the level of cash reserves of the Construction Industry Training Board was £58·6 million. The projected level of cash reserves at 31 March 1987 is £65 million. The amount of levy collected in the 1985-86 financial year was £47·4 million and £30·6 million was paid out in grants (including industry support for YTS trainees). The projected figures for the current financial year are £50·9 million for levy and £40 million for grants.

Non-statutory Training Organisations

Mr. Latham asked the Paymaster General what representations were made to the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier), when he attended the Confederation of British Industry's conference on non-statutory training organisations, regarding the relationship between the Manpower Services Commission and non-statutory training organisations; and what action has been taken in the light of those representations.

Mr. Trippier: I attended the CBI's conference for non-statutory training organisations on 3 November 1986 and was impressed by the commitment to training shown by those present. The discussion showed that NSTOs greatly value the assistance of the Manpower Services Commission and that the MSC's statement on the ideal outcomes of the effective NSTO provides helpful guidance.

Mr. Latham asked the Paymaster General what is the current level of *(a)* financial support and *(b)* practical advice offered by the Manpower Services Commission to non-statutory training organisations; and what are the specific figures for the Pre-cast Concrete Training Industry Association.

Mr. Trippier: Most of the money non-statutory training organisations receive from MSC is for training grants claimed by employers under the national priority skills scheme. The current value of these grants in the current financial year to date is £6·6 million. Grants received in the current financial year by the Pre-Cast Concrete Training Industry Association total £4,800. MSC staff provide advice to all NSTOs, including the Pre-Cast Concrete Training Industry Association, on a wide range of training matters.

Mr. Latham asked the Paymaster General whether he will make a statement on the achievements to date of non-statutory training organisations since the abolition of 16 statutory training boards in 1982; what is the number of such organisations known to his Department; and what proportion of firms they cover for the industries which they serve.

Mr. Trippier: Non-statutory training organisations have made good progress since 1982 in securing sound training arrangements across their sectors. NSTOs have a vital role in identifying and meeting current and future skill requirements and assisting their sectors to meet them. I look forward to receiving their action plans for setting and maintainance of standards of competence in response to para 5.23 of the White Paper "Working Together — Education and Training" (Cmnd. 9823). There are 102 NSTOs recognised by the Manpower Services Commission. Information on the proportion of firms NSTOs cover is not readily available.

Job Training Scheme

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Paymaster General what is his policy with regard to the role of further education in the proposed job training scheme.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Training programmes under new JTS will consist of a planned mix of directed training and practical experience. Colleges of further education will be able to contribute to the scheme either as managing agents, or by offering directed training to other managing agents.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Paymaster General what are the implications for equal opportunities of the eligibility rules for the new job training scheme.

Mr. Kenneth Clark [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 February 1987]: The eligibility rules of the new job training scheme will be fully constant with our commitment to equal opportunities.

Employment, Training and Enterprise Measures

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Paymaster General, pursuant to his reply of 5 February to the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels), *Official Report*, column *764*, if he will disaggregate the figure of 6½ million people who have benefited from the employment, training and enterprise measures run by his Department and the Manpower Services Commission since May 1979, indicating so far as is possible how many people have benefited from each measure in each year since that date.

Mr. Lee: The breakdown of the number of people on each scheme in each year since May 1979 is as follows:

	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*[1]
Adult Training	110,538	111,468	102,696	85,250	109,850	131,800	269,650	252,500
YOP YTS	216,400	360,000	553,000	543,000	353,979	395,000	404,000	360,000
YWS	—	—	—	174,266	130,000	66,182	66,000	2,800
CI	5,806	6,160	6,868	6,982	9,612	9,532	9,661	9,000
STEP CP	22,400	18,400	27,554	51,645	136,968	161,437	241,159	300,000
JRS	68,164	24,239	38,674	46,134	44,045	14,895	11,970	12,000
JSS	—	—	—	180	656	260	268	1,600
EAS	—	—	—	2,132	28,453	46,816	60,167	86,000
NWS	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	50,000

[1] Estimates.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

South Africa

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he is taking to uphold the United Nations ban on arms sales to South Africa; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Our policy on the United Nations arms embargo against South Africa remains unchanged: we fully implement the embargo.

Namibia

Mr. Cabora asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps Her Majesty's Government are intending to take to secure the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 435 on the independence of Namibia.

Mrs. Chalker: We shall continue to press for the early and unconditional implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 435. We consider that its peaceful implementation can only be secured through negotiation, and shall accordingly continue to support the mediating efforts of the United States Government and the United Nations Secretary General.

Afghanistan

Mr. Sackville asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards relations with Afghanistan in the light of the Amnesty International report on that country, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Eggar: We do not have normal Government-to-Government dealings with the regime in Kabul which is clearly unacceptable to the majority of Afghan people. As I told my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) on 13 February, we are deeply concerned at the horrifying evidence of denial of human rights in Afghanistan described in the Amnesty International report on torture.

Committee of Public Accounts (Recommendations)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will list those recommendations of the Committee of Public Accounts since 1983 affecting his Department which have been implemented.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the Treasury minutes published in response to the relevant PAC reports (Cmnd. 9178 and 9452 and 9638). The Committee, on which the hon. Member serves, monitors departmental progress with accepted recommendations.

Visas (Appeals)

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of those refused an application for a temporary visa in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh have lodged an appeal to the independent appellate authorities.

Mr. Eggar: From 15 October until the end of December the figures available show that a little over 10 per cent. of those refused short-term visas in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh have so far lodged appeals at our missions in the subcontinent.

Lebanon

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on steps taken by Her Majesty's Government with respect to relieving conditions in the Palestinian camps in the Lebanon.

Mr. Renton: We have urged all parties concerned to end the fighting and to facilitate humanitarian relief work. We are ready to provide help through the international agencies involved immediately it becomes possible to take more substantial supplies into the camps.

Visa Office, Lagos

Mr. Anderson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to meet the problems caused by the decision of the Nigerian Government to close the British visa office in Lagos; how many applicants he estimates to be affected by the decision; how much notice he was given of the decision; and what were the reasons given for it.

Mr. Eggar: Discussions are continuing with the Nigerian Government to seek solutions to a number of practical problems involving traffic and security at our new visa office in Lagos which the Nigerian Ministry of External Affairs raised with us on 11 February. Pending the outcome of these discussions, the new office is closed. In the meantime, only an emergency visa service for exceptional compassionate cases can be maintained. In the first week of the visa regime, we received 1,153 applications in Lagos. The Deputy High Commission in Kaduna continues to operate normal visa services.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the problems facing visa applicants seeking access to the British High Commission in Lagos.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) earlier today.

TRANSPORT

Ports (Security)

Mr. Pendry asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to introduce security checks at ports in line with the procedures adopted by the Civil Aviation Authority.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend has no statutory powers to direct port authorities and shipping companies on security matters, as he has in the case of airport authorities and airlines. My Department has, however, issued guidance to the shipping industry on the protection of shipping against terrorism and sabotage. In addition, the International Maritime Organisation has recently recommended to its member states certain measures to strengthen security at ports and on board ship, primarily in relation to passenger cruise ships. We fully support the IMO's initiative and in the light of its recommendations we are reviewing with port authorities and shipping companies the arrangements that they already operate.

Rail Closures

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to refuse any application for closure of parts of the passenger rail system within the next financial year.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend set out his policy objectives for British Rail on 21 October 1986. They made it clear that the Government are not asking for a programme of major route closures. Any application for closure by BR is considered on its merits.

SCOTLAND

Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975

Mr. Allan Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received concerning the repeal of section 413 of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975; and what response he has given.

Mr. Rifkind: My Department issued a consultation document in August 1986 proposing that my present responsibility for children committed by the courts for residential training under section 413 of the 1975 Act should cease. Some respondents favoured repeal of section 413; others, including the Sheriffs Association, argued in favour of retaining a disposal for the courts in summary procedure which would allow the courts to commit children to residential care. I have concluded in favour of amending section 413. Amendments have been tabled to the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill, to be debated today in another place, which make revised provision under section 413 whereby a child prosecuted and found guilty of an offence may be ordered by a sheriff to be detained for up to one year in residential care in such place as the local authority may direct. The amendments also have the effect of withdrawing the power to commit young people under section 413 orders to penal establishments.

Mr. Allan Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any plans to meet the Scottish Association of Directors of Social Work to discuss section 413 of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I have at present no plans to do so. The association was consulted in August 1986 on proposals for amendments to section 413 which would transfer to local authorities my responsibilities for children committed to residential training in summary criminal proceedings. Amendment to this effect has been tabled to the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill in another place. Following passage

of the Bill, my Department will consult with interested parties, including the association, on the timing and detailed implementation of the changes proposed.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish details of waiting lists for treatment at National Health Service hospitals in Scotland and by health board area in each year since 1983, including waiting lists for day care centres in each figure.

Mr. John MacKay: Information relating to day care centres is not available centrally. The numbers on hospital waiting lists at 31 March in each year since 1983 are as follows:

	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*[1]
Scotland	96,921	85,471	79,413	81,250
Argyll and Clyde	7,694	7,544	7,490	7,053
Ayrshire and Arran	5,138	4,731	5,147	5,258
Borders	345	317	306	400
Dumfries and Galloway	3,244	2,757	2,602	2,906
Fife	7,266	6,422	5,773	5,313
Forth Valley	3,790	3,327	2,777	2,746
Grampian	11,296	9,444	9,269	9,431
Greater Glasgow	22,997	18,536	16,781	17,641
Highland	1,785	1,988	2,040	2,984
Lanarkshire	9,052	8,151	6,716	6,474
Lothian	16,271	13,862	13,474	14,094
Orkney	48	57	55	53
Shetland	164	107	155	146
Tayside	7,724	8,164	6,749	6,658
Western Isles	107	64	79	93

[1] 1986 data are provisional.
Note: All data exclude joint user and contractual hospitals.

Fat Cattle

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the comparative price per kilo for fat cattle for the year 1986 and the latest price at the market sales in 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: On average, Scottish certified cattle are currently being sold at several pence per kilo less than at the same time last year. Although this drop in price is partially offset by the recently increased beef variable premium, I share producers' hopes for an improvement in market prices.

Inverness Prison

Sir Russell Johnston asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of staff employed in Inverness prison in the various categories; how this compares with the approved complement; whether rostered posts include the five posts in the special unit; and what is the level of overtime required.

Mr. Lang: The numbers of staff employed in each category in Inverness prison and the corresponding approved complements are shown in the table:

Inverness prison

	Complement at 1 February 1987	*Staff in post at 1 February 1987*
Governors	2	2
Discipline	53	57
Nurses	2	2
Caterers	2	2
Instructors	2	2
Works	7	6
Clerks	3	3
Typist	1	1
Total	72	75

Note:
The above staff in post figure includes two governor grades, 70 uniformed prison officer grades and three civilian grades.

The unit posts are not shown on the roster but two discipline senior officers (one for each of the early and late shifts) included in the complement to cover duties in the unit when the unit is occupied. The other posts in the unit are covered on overtime. Separate overtime figures for the unit are not available but during the period April to November 1986 the average weekly overtime per man at Inverness prison was 7·29 hours; this compares with an average of 7·54 hours per man for the Scottish prison service as a whole.

Chernobyl Radiation

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the highest levels of radiation found in each of the following sampled animals in Scotland since the Chernobyl incident *(a)* sheep, *(b)* cattle, *(c)* deer, *(d)* grouse, *(e)* salmon, *(f)* pheasant and *(g)* rabbit; and if he will also give the date and location of sampling.

Mr. Rifkind: The information for animals sampled by my Department is as follows:

	Highest Level (Becquerels per kilogram)	*Date of Sampling*	*Location*
(a) Sheep	4,218	9 July 1986	Dumfries and Galloway region
(b) Cattle	435	6 June 1986	Highland region
(c) Deer	2,281	9 December 1986	Dumfries and Galloway region
(d) Grouse	3,550	4 August 1986	Dumfries and Galloway region
(e) Salmon	121	16 September 1986	Dumfries and Galloway region
(f) Pheasant	295	19 December 1986	Dumfries and Galloway region
(g) Rabbit	830	28 August 1986	Dumfries and Galloway region

Paper Mill, Irvine

Mr. Pollock asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total number of jobs expected to be associated with the development by Kymmene-Stromberg of a new pulp and paper mill at Irvine.

Mr. Rifkind: The Kymmene-Stromberg paper mill at Irvine is expected to employ 480 people full time when the plant becomes fully operational in 1991.

In addition to direct employment at the paper mill, it is expected that 300 jobs will be required in harvesting and hauling timber for the mill with a further 100 jobs in other supporting service industries. The majority of these jobs will be in Highland and rural areas.

It is also estimated that up to 1,000 workers will be employed at peak during the construction of the mill over the next two years.

Caithness and Sutherland (Flow Country)

Mr. Corrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the Forestry Commission has any plans to extend its present consultation arrangements with the Nature Conservancy Council over planting in the flow country of Caithness and Sutherland.

Mr. John MacKay: The Forestry Commission has decided to extend its consultation arrangements with the Nature Conservancy Council to cover all grant applications arising in the local authority districts of Caithness and Sutherland, including those still awaiting approval. This will allow time for the nature conservation interest in this unique area to be more clearly defined by the council.

Benefits

Mr. Bill Walker asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the total number of individuals in receipt of housing benefit in Scotland in 1985 and 1986, respectively.

Mr. Lyell: I have been asked to reply.

The information is as follows:

Estimated numbers of housing benefit recipients in Scotland (Thousands)

	Rent Rebate	*Rent Allowance*	*Rate Rebate*
1985	571	64	779
1986	586	78	815

NATIONAL FINANCE

Value Added Tax

Mr. Alton asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the proposed changes to the value added tax calculations on special schemes for retailers; and what impact this will make on mail order companies.

Mr. Brooke: The consultative paper "VAT: Small Business Review" contained 15 proposals, most of which are recognised as beneficial to small retailers. The proposal to abolish the standard method of reckoning gross takings would impact on those retailers, including mail order companies, which provide self-financed credit facilities. The Government are considering representations from the mail order industry which argue that this particular proposal is unjustified and would cost businesses in excess of £25 million a year.

EC Budget Council

Mr. Hirst asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the latest meeting of the European Community Budget Council.

Mr. Brooke: The Budget Council met in Brussels on Thursday 12 and Friday 13 February for further discussion on the 1987 Community budget. I represented the United Kingdom.

The Council reached agreement by qualified majority on new proposals for the 1987 budget which provide for total expenditure of some 37·4 billion ecu in commitment appropriations and some 36·3 billion ecu in payment appropriations (£23·5 billion and £22·8 billion respectively.

All conversions are made at the 1987 budget exchange rate of 1·5939 ecu to the £.).

The proposals leave some 660 mecu of headroom inside the 1·4 per cent. VAT ceiling.

On agricultural guarantee expenditure, the Council's proposals continue to respect the budget discipline guideline limit. The Council has committed itself to reach decisions as soon as possible on Commission proposals for implementing the Agriculture Council's decisions on 16 December 1986 concerning the milk and beef sectors and on proposals which the Commission is to put forward shortly about covering the rest of the overrun of agricultural expenditure foreseen during the current year.

On non-obligatory expenditure, the Council agreed to accept the proposals for increases in individual lines voted by the European Parliament at its December plenary on the basis that these would be offset by negative reserves of 181·1 mecu (£114 million) for commitment appropriations and 88·9 mecu (£56 million) for payment appropriations. The Council's proposals assume that the Parliament will commit itself to making the necessary transfers and reductions in substantive budget lines in good time before the end of the year so as to extinguish the negative reserves and ensure that the budget totals for non-obligatory commitment and payment appropriations are respected. On payment appropriations, the Council's proposals continue to respect the maximum rate of increase. On commitment appropriations, the Council decided to exceed its November second reading proposals by some 5·2 mecu (£3 million) on the basis that the actual rate of increase over 1986 of 8·1499 per cent. when rounded to one decimal place would still be consistent with the 8·1 per cent. maximum rate. The Council also stated its intention to carry forward into 1987 some 22 mecu (£14 million) of associated non-obligatory commitment and payment appropriations not used in 1986.

I argued at the Council that, given the severe financial problems of the current year, the Community could not afford to increase substantive provision on individual payment appropriation lines even if the increases were offset by a negative payment reserve. While acknowledging that significant shortfalls of expenditure were virtually certain to occur on individual lines and could be used to extinguish the negative payments reserve, I argued that any such savings should be kept in hand in case they were needed to deal with the estimated deficit of over 800 mecu

(£502 million) carried forward from 1986 or the large threatened overrun in agricultural guarantee expenditure. I argued also that it would be more prudent to make specific provision in the Financial Regulation to govern and limit the use of negative reserves before including them in the budget. On behalf of the United Kingdom, I voted against the Council's proposals on these grounds, even though the totals stick closely to budget discipline. The other Member states all voted in favour.

The Belgian presidency will present the Council's proposals to the Parliament's plenary in Strasbourg this week.

Exchange Rate (Fluctuations)

Mr. Chapman asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of consultations on the "Provisional Statement of Practice" issued by the Inland Revenue on the tax treatment of exchange rate fluctuations.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Following the issue of the provisional statement of practice [SP3/85 (provisional)] and the invitation to comment on its scope and content, the Inland Revenue received 28 responses from the major representative bodies and other interested parties. These have been carefully considered, and in the light of these comments the Inland Revenue are now, with my approval, issuing a full statement of practice to replace the provisional statement. This is intended as a general statement on the taxation of exchange rate fluctuations within existing law. I am placing a copy of it in the Library of the House.

We hope the new statement of practice will provide a useful and practical guide for traders and their advisers. However, this is an area of taxation which is widely recognised as highly technical and complex. We are anxious to see if a better solution can be found through legislation. Interested parties are invited to submit detailed representations to the Inland Revenue. We have certainly not ruled out the possibility of major legislative reform, but before committing itself, the Government would need to be satisified that a scheme could be devised which could be applied effectively in practice and reflect a broad measure of agreement without entailing an unacceptable cost to the Exchequer.

EC Economic and Finance Council

Mr. Chapman asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the latest meeting of the European Community's Economic and Finance Council.

Mr. Brooke: The Community's Economic and Finance Council met in Brussels on 9 February. I represented the United Kingdom.

The Council approved, by qualified majority, a Commission proposal on export credits, revising the details of the negotiating mandate on tied aid credits agreed by the Council in April 1986. The proposal, which the Commission is putting forward in OECD discussions, is intended to increase discipline in the use of tied aid credits, thereby reducing their distorting effect on international trade.

The Council had an exchange of views on the international monetary situation and on the economic situation in the Community. Discussion on the latter will continue at the Council's March meeting.

At my request, the Council also discussed the Commisison's proposal to delay reimbursement to the Member states of losses incurred on the disposal of butter stocks, which was considered substantively by the Council of Agriculture Ministers.

Gross Domestic Product

Mr. Forth asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to the rate of growth of gross domestic product over the last five years in *(a)* Italy and *(b)* the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lawson: The United Kingdom's economy has grown twice as fast as Italy's over the last five years. Real growth has been over 14 per cent.—double that of Italy, and faster than in any of the major industrialised countries except Japan.

The latest comparison by the OECD suggests that Britain's economy is about 14 per cent. larger than Italy's, and living standards per head are about 15 per cent. higher.

Even if GDP is compared at market exchange rates, without any allowance for differences in purchasing power, it is about 8 per cent. higher in the United Kingdom than in Italy, and about 9 per cent. higher per head of population.

The detailed figures for 1986 are as follows:

	Purchasing power of GDP		*GDP at market exchange rates*	
	Level ($bn)	*Per capita ($)*	*Level ($bn)*	*Per capita ($)*
United Kingdom	645	11,400	545	9,600
Italy	565	9,900	505	8,800

Source: OECD/Eurostat estimates.

Incomes

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what evidence he has concerning the contribution by manufacturing industry to the increase in incomes over the past two years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The latest information analysing total incomes by industry is that covering years up to 1985 contained in table 2.1 of the 1986 edition of "United Kingdom National Accounts" (the CSO Blue Book) which is available from the House of Commons Library.

Maintenance Payments

Mr. Favell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will state the cost of the revenue forgone of allowing court maintenance payments to children against tax during the last fiscal year.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Government Trading Funds

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table updating the reply of 20 November 1984, columns 97-98, on the financial performance of Government trading funds.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table updating the reply of 25 October 1984, columsn 678-79, on the numbers of employees in Government trading funds; if he will additionally provide comparable information on the royal dockyards, Ordnance Survey and the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish an analysis of manpower reductions or changes in central Government trading funds for the years 1979-80 to 1985-86 using the same categories as in his Department's annual report on manpower reductions to the Treasury and Civil Service Committee.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him on 25 October 1984 by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Rees) at column *678*.

Annual reports to the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee on manpower reductions in the Civil Service for the years 1984-85 and 1985-86 were not published by the Select Committee but copies were placed in the Library of the House for the convenience of hon. Members.

Public Sector Finance

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* showing for the Royal Ordnance plc, the Royal Mint, Crown Suppliers, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, the royal dockyards, Ordnance Survey, and the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority for the years 1974-75 *(a)* the proportion of turnover accounted for by central Government, *(b)* the proportion of turnover accounted for by the United Kingdom public sector and *(c)* the proportion of turnover which is exported.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Banking Regulation

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met the Governor of the Bank of England to discuss the Bank's role in the regulation of the banking system.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Treasury and the Bank of England are in frequent touch about banking supervision issues. However, it is not the practice to disclose the matters discussed between my right hon. Friend the Chancellor and the Governor.

Civil Service (Payroll Giving Scheme)

Mr. Yeo asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps have been taken to enable Civil Service employees to donate money to charity under the payroll giving scheme when the scheme comes into effect on 1 April.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 February 1987]: I intend that a scheme will quickly be arranged once one or more suitable collection agencies are registered.

WALES

AIDS

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales what guidance his Department has given to education authorities in Wales about educating young people on the danger of AIDS; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The Welsh Office, together with the Department of Education and Science, issued to local education authorities and other appropriate bodies in June 1986 a booklet "Children at School and Problems Related to AIDS".

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

State Security

Mr. Bill Walker asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland why it was necessary to seek a warrant covering all six programmes in the British Broadcasting Corporation series, "The Secret Society"; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The petition and crave for the warrant are linked back to highly classified information in the possession of the BBC referred to in the article in the *New Statesman* magazine of 23 January 1987. If the material sought had been readily and immediately available, the necessity for taking possession of material relating to all six programmes in the series, "The Secret Society", and for a sifting out operation which has had to be carried out since 1 February and which has already resulted in the return of material relating to five of the six programmes to the BBC, would have been avoided. However, as my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary explained in the debate on 3 February 1987, the material on which the programmes were based was so interwoven that it was not possible immediately to disentangle one kind of material from another. That accurately reflected the advice given by the BBC to the police and reported to the procurator fiscal.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Parliamentary Procedures

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the measures introduced by his Department since 1979 that were not subject to parliamentary procedure and therefore not debated in the House of Commons.

Mr. Tom King: All primary legislation for Northern Ireland (Bills and Orders in Council under the Northern Ireland Act 1974) is subject to parliamentary procedure. The Northern Ireland Statutory Rules and Orders, available in the Library, indicate the volume and nature of subordinate legislation and identify those Statutory Rules and Orders which were laid before Parliament.

Youth Committee

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the Northern Ireland Youth Committee.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Youth Committee for Northern Ireland is in the process of being reconstituted and an announcement will be made shortly.

Life Prisoners

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) in how many cases in each year, since the introduction of the review procedure for life-sentenced prisoners, on which the board had recommended that a release date be given, he has rejected the review board's recommendation;

(2) what is the procedure for the review of life sentences for prisoners convicted of offences in Great Britain but serving their sentences in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Guinness plc

Sir Alex Fletcher asked the Attorney-General if he will refer to the Director of Public Prosecutions, with a view to a request for inquiries by the police, the allegations that criminal offences were conducted by or on behalf of Guinness plc during its takeover of Distillers plc; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General: The DTI inquiry into Guinness is proceeding and there is already close liaison with the Director of Public Prosecutions, who is being advised by leading counsel. The question whether to request police inquiries is among those now under active consideration by the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Electronic Data System Limited

Mr. Dalyell asked the Attorney-General what action the Director of Public Prosecutions proposes to take in the case of alleged infringement of immigration rules by Electronic Data System Limited.

The Solicitor-General [*pursuant to the reply, Official Report,* 30 January 1987, c. *407*]: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Department on 4 February 1987 at column *682* and confirm that at no time was the matter referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions and he is not proposing to take any action.

ENVIRONMENT

Houses (Radon Levels)

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his statement on 27 January, *Official Report,* column 189, concerning radon levels in houses, what estimated relevant expenditure will be incurred by his Department during the current year and 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: As I indicated on 27 January, there will be a Government-funded survey to identify the houses in Devon and Cornwall with the highest radon levels and a measurement service provided by the National Radiological Protection Board to enable people living in any area where radon concentrations might be above or near the action level to find out the radon concentration in their houses at no cost to themselves. A price for this work has not yet been agreed with NRPB; I will write to the hon. Member with this information in due course.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Yeovil on 9 February, *Official Report,* column *115,* concerning advice given by officials of his Department in 1971, what was the maximum annual exposure to radiation calculated for residents of that property; whether any factors contributing to that calculated maximum exposure have been subject to revision since 1971; whether exposure from radon gas was part of the 1971 calculations; if he has any plans to undertake further investigations of radioactivity in or near that property; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The maximum annual exposure to radiation calculated in 1971 for residents of the property referred to in my reply to the hon. Member on 9 February was 1,200 millirems (12 milliSieverts). However, as this measurement was designed to assess the potential health implications arising from the location of the property at an old uranium mine, only the gamma dose rate was calculated. Subsequent attempts to measure the alpha dose rate arising from radon and its decay products at this property have been made by the National Radiological Protection Board as part of its preliminary radon surveys, but the occupants have not been prepared to take part in the surveys. I understand that they will receive a further invitation to participate in the systematic survey which I announced on 27 January.

Job Creation (Cost)

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the average cost per job created by urban development grant schemes.

Mr. John Patten: The 228 urban development grant projects so far approved represent £106 million of UDG and other public expenditure. It is estimated that, when completed, these projects will accommodate some 24,000 permanent jobs and will also have brought about 12,500 man years of construction activity and £441 million of private sector capital investment, as well as providing nearly 5,000 houses and flats and bringing into use 900 acres of urban land. Some offers of UDG are in whole or in part justified on grounds other than direct job creation, and average cost per job is not therefore a measure which fully reflects the performance of the programme.

Nuclear Waste

Sir Trevor Skeet asked the Secretary of State for the Environment which nuclear power stations are used for the retention of nuclear waste.

Mr. Waldegrave: Nuclear waste is stored temporarily at all nuclear power stations pending disposal at Drigg.

NIREX

Sir Trevor Skeet asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether it is his intention to introduce legislation to give NIREX powers for compulsory purchase.

Mr. Waldegrave: No.

Circuit Breakers

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to how many local authorities have installed circuit breakers in property which they are responsible; how many new homes have such equipment; if he has had discussions with contractors in the private and public sectors about such installations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: The Department does not have any information on the numbers of local authorities that have installed circuit breakers in their property nor on new homes fitted with such equipment. No discussions with contractors in the private or public sectors have been held, but I understand that the Institute of Electrical Engineers already recommend that electric sockets used for outdoor appliances should be protected by residual circuit breakers.

Parish Council Elections

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those parish councils whose revised electoral arrangements have been submitted to his Department for approval but for whom no review order has yet been made; if he will indicate the date of submission in each case; and whether all such orders will be made and delivered by 6 March to enable the local elections in those authorities to be held under the new arrangements.

Mr. Chope: Under section 50(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the electoral arrangements for parishes are the responsibility of the district council.

Children's Play

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what response he has made to the proposals put to him by the National Play Advisory Committee entitled Playboard and the future of central Government funding, for a national play service; and whether he intends any further response during the current discussions between the Sports Council and Playboard.

Mr. Tracey: I have met representatives of the National Play Advisory Committee to discuss their concerns about and their proposals for the future development of children's play. As I have explained to them, the Government remain convinced that the proposals for Playboard's role and functions to be merged with those of the Sports Council represent the most cost-effective use of public funds for the greater benefit of children's play.

Nature Conservancy Council

Mr. Rogers asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people are and have been employed in the Nature Conservancy Council in each year since 1979 according to age, sex, occupation and profession.

Mr. Waldegrave: The information is not available in the form requested. However, I am advised by the Nature Conservancy Council that the number of permanent and casual staff employed as at 1 April of each year since 1979 is as follows:

at 1 April

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Administration—Clerical Assistant to Under-Secretary	171·00	164·00	140·00	159·50	161·00	157·00	[1]180·00	[2]186·50
Scientific—Assistant Scientific Officer to Deputy Chief Scientific Officer	179·50	173·00	171·00	175·50	168·50	173·50	165·00	180·00
Field—All grades	123·00	124·00	123·50	126·50	123·50	124·50	121·00	147·50
Typing Secretarial	52·00	53·00	48·00	46·25	48·25	41·75	50·75	54·25
Ancillary	15·00	14·50	15·00	14·50	16·25	15·75	13·75	9·25
Technical—Professional and Technoligcal Officers and Cartographers	36·00	33·00	26·00	29·50	28·50	29·50	30·50	36·50
Other Professional	13·00	13·00	11·00	10·00	9·00	9·00	8·50	9·00
Total	589·50	574·50	534·50	561·75	552·00	550·25	582·50	685·00
Casual	n.a.	34·00	47·00	65·75	55·25	55·25	176·50	181·50

[1] Not including 13 within unified grades (3-5).
[2] Not including 62 within unified grades (3-7).
n.a. = not available.

Mr. Rogers asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many graduate staff are employed by the Nature Conservancy Council, by occupation, grade and categorised under the subject of their first degree.

Mr. Waldegrave: This information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Rogers asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many full-time geologists are employed in the Nature Conservancy Council; in what grades categories; and on what form of contracts;

(2) how many full-time biologists are employed in the Nature Conservancy Council; in what grades and categories; and on what form of contracts;

(3) how many full-time geological assistants and technicians are employed in the Nature Conservancy Council; in what grades and categories; and on what form of contracts;

(4) how many full-time biological assistants and technicians are employed in the Nature Conservancy Council; in what grades and categories; and on what form of contracts.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am advised that the Nature Conservancy Council employs 17 full-time geologists

(including geomorphologists). These comprise 10 permanent appointments (one grade 7, four SSO, five HSO), four limited period appointments (two HSO, two SO) and three casual appointments (one SSO, one HSO, one SO).

Twenty-nine biologists are employed full time by Nature Conservancy Council (10 grade 7, nine SSO and nine HSO) on permanent appointments and one period appointment. In addition there are a number of limited term and casual appointees employed on finite projects under Nature Conservancy Council's commissioned research programme.

Geological Conservation Review

Mr. Rogers asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how the geological conservation review is co-ordinated and supervised; and how it will be co-ordinated and supervised in the future.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am advised that the Geological conservation review is a key part of the NCC's earth science conservation programme. All work on the selection and safeguard of GCR sites and the publication of the review is co-ordinated by professional geologists and geomorphologists employed within the earth sciences division of the Chief Scientists Directorate. A professional overview on publication strategy is provided by a committee consisting of earth scientists from NCC's council, advisory committees and staff. There are no plans to change the existing arrangements.

Mr. Rogers asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what localities throughout Great Britain have already been selected for conservation by the geological conservation review unit; when they were first identified as being worthy of conservation; and when notification was completed under the provisions of section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act as amended in 1985.

Mr. Waldegrave: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, the Nature Conservancy Council estimates that about one third of the sites originally identified as potential geological sites of special scientific interest have been notified under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Rogers asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the figures for support through the survey monitoring budget for geological sites of special scientific interest and biological sites of special scientific interest.

Mr. Waldegrave: I understand from the Nature Conservancy Council that because many sites are of special interest for both geological and biological reasons, monitoring costs cannot be separated in the way suggested.

Mr. Rogers asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy towards the statement by the chairman of the Nature Conservancy Council on page 7 of the 12th annual report (1985-86) regarding the priority to be given to the renotification of sites of special scientific interest; and what is his assessment of progress to date on these renotifications.

Mr. Waldegrave: I agree that the notification and renotification programme for sites of special scientific interest should have priority. The Nature Conservancy Council is still on schedule to achieve the targets set out in the 12th annual report.

Trafford Park

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he had with local people about the composition of the board of the urban development corporation for Trafford Park; why no representative of trade unions was placed on the board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I have discussed the membership of the Trafford Park development corporation with the local authorities concerned and with industrialists in the area. I consulted the local authorities, on behalf of my right hon. Friend, about the proposed appointment of members with special knowledge of the locality.

None of the board members are representatives of particular interests; they have been chosen because of their ability to do the job. Any further appointments to the board will be made on the same basis.

Urban Programme Assistance

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those authorities to receive urban programme assistance in 1987-88; and if he will give the proposed allocations to those authorities.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) on 30 January at column *457-60*.

British Coal (Housing)

Mr. Barron asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with British Coal about the sale of its PRC homes; what advice he has given on this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy and I have discussed this matter with British Coal. British Coal's housing disposal policy, including its application to PRC properties, must be a matter for British Coal to decide.

Tillingham Hall, Essex

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to be able to issue a decision about the proposed development at Tillingham Hall, Essex; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: I have today issued a decision letter on three appeals by Consortium Developments Limited. Two related to identical applications for planning permission for a comprehensive development including 5,100 dwellings in the metropolitan green belt between Havering and Basildon. The third appeal was against failure to decide an application for a consequential extension of the Upminster sewage treatment works.

I have considered carefully the report of my inspector following the public inquiry held between 18 March and 15 May 1986. As far as the Tillingham Hall site is concerned, I have concluded that, whilst recognising the

merits of the proposals, there is no justification for allowing this development in the metropolitan green belt. I have dismissed the third appeal since planning permission for the proposed development at Tillingham Hall is not to be given.

These decisions illustrate the Government's strong commitment to the maintenance of approved green belts.

Housing Subsidy

Mr. Robert B. Jones asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what conclusions he has reached on the consultations dated 19 September and 18 December 1986 about housing subsidy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: After consultation with the local authority associations and the Audit Commission, I have decided to proceed with the proposals which were put to the local authority associations in September about sinking fund rates, in order to limit the payment of housing subsidy in advance of need. These proposals affect cases in which authorities decide to slow down repayments of debt by increasing the accumulation rate for their sinking funds. In future, in order to strike a better balance for subsidy purposes between short term and long term considerations, such authorities will be required (in the absence of exceptional circumstances) to use their actual sinking fund rate in subsidy calculations, if it is 8 per cent. or lower; and to use a notional rate of 8 per cent. for subsidy purposes, if their actual sinking fund rate is higher than 8 per cent. Applications currently with the Department will be decided in accordance with the previous practice for 1985-86 and 1986-87, but the revised treatment will apply to those authorities from 1 April 1987. Proposals are being made today to the other authorities concerned for modifying previous special determinations, as from 1 April 1987, to accord with the revised treatment. I emphasise that these decisions relate solely to payment of housing subsidy, and do not imply a Government view about what sinking fund rate may be appropriate for different authorities.

In relation to capitalisation of repairs, the proposals put to the local authority associations in December were designed primarily to prevent a risk of double subsidy where extensive use of capitalisation depresses an authority's revenue expenditure on management and maintenance below the notional amount allowed in the subsidy calculations. I have concluded that these proposals ought to proceed, but in order to allow the authorities most directly affected time to adjust they will have the opportunity of applying for a special determination which would allow them to use, for 1987-88 only, an alternative method of preventing double subsidy suggested by the local authority associations which will spread the impact on their finances over a longer period.

Insulation

Mr. Faulds asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to the reply to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight), *Official Report*, 28 January, column *244*, when he expects consideration of future arrangements for help with the cost of materials for draught-proofing to be completed; what representations he has received from Neighbourhood Energy Action on this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: An announcement on future arrangements for help with the cost of materials for draughtproofing will be made in due course. I have recently received a letter from the NEA about this.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prison Officers

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of times on which prison officers were sent on detached duties at each London prison during the month of December 1986; and how many officers were involved in each case.

Mr. Mellor: The number of times on which prison officers were sent on detached duty at each London prison during December 1986 is shown in column A. Column B gives the total number of officer days involved.

	A	*B*
Brixton	15	264
Holloway	1	2
Pentonville	23	159
Wandsworth	19	215
Wormwood Scrubs	28	310

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women at prison officer training schools on 31 January 1987.

Mr. Mellor: On 31 January 1987 there were 70 men and 10 women undergoing training at the prison officer training schools.

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the number of women prison officers who have resigned from the service at Holloway prison during the last year; and what survey has been, or is to be, held to find out the reasons for their leaving the service.

Mr. Mellor: During 1986 a total of 41 women members of the prison officer class at Holloway prison resigned. The reasons have been analysed in the course of a review of personnel management issues at Holloway.

Prisons (Administration)

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department who is designated to take charge of one of Her Majesty's prisons in the event of any local police officers being called in to run such a prison; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Police officers entering a prison department establishment to assist in the maintenance of order act under the command of the senior police officer present. The prison governor remains responsible for the management of the establishment.

Fresh Start Project

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the number of meetings in the last 12 months, and their dates, at which his officials have met officers of the executive committee of the Prison Officers Association to discuss the fresh start project.

Mr. Mellor: Officials discussed the fresh start proposals, or contributory developments, with NEC members or officials of the Prison Officers' Association on 14 occasions, the dates concerned being:

1986
3 March
27 March
13 May
30 May
31 July
16 September
15 December
18 December

1987
12 January
19 January
26 January
29 January
6 February
12 February

In addition fresh start was touched on incidentally during other meetings.

Crown Immunity

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to seek the removal of Crown immunity on prisons in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: None. I am satisfied that our existing arrangements are effective and can see no justification for the removal of Crown immunity from prisons.

Prison Officers (Training)

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women who passed their training courses at prison officers training schools in England and Wales during 1986.

Mr. Mellor: The figures are 883 men and 125 women.

Fresh Start Scheme

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what additional financial funding is to be made available to introduce fresh start; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: No additional funds have been set aside at this stage for the introduction of fresh start and it would not be appropriate for me to say any more while negotiations with the trade unions are in progress. When they are concluded the Government will have to assess whatever emerges in value for money terms.

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what extra staffing he expects to recruit for the introduction of fresh start; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The precise staffing requirement of fresh start cannot be determined until each establishment has been reviewed and a complement derived in accordance with fresh start principles and normal consultative arrangements. The current view is that the overall numbers of staff in the service should be sufficient.

Prison Department (Estates)

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the prison department establishments in England and Wales and give the total acreage of the prison estate; when the last valuation was carried out on all buildings and land; and what was the total value.

Mr. Mellor: Prison service establishments in England and Wales are:

Acklington
Albany
Aldington
Ashford
Ashwell
Askham Grange
Aylesbury
Bedford
Birmingham
Blantyre House
Blundeston
Bristol
Brixton
Brockhill
Buckley Hall
Bullwood Hall
Camp Hill
Campsfield House
Canterbury
Cardiff
Castington
Channings Wood
Chelmsford
Coldingley
Cookham Wood
Dartmoor
Deerbolt
Dorchester
Dover
Drake Hall
Durham
East Sutton Park
Eastwood Park
Erlestoke
Everthorpe
Exeter
Featherstone
Feltham/Finnamore Wood
Ford
Foston Hall
Frankland
Gartree
Glen Parva
Gloucester
Grendon/Springhill
Guys Marsh
Haslar
Hatfield/Gringley
Haverigg
Hewell Grange
Highpoint
Hindley
Hollesley Bay
Holloway
Hull
Huntercombe
Kingston
Kirkham
Kirklevington
Lancaster
Latchmere House
Leeds
Leicester
Lewes
Leyhill
Lincoln
Lindholm
Liverpool
Long Lartin
Lowdham Grange
Low Newton
Maidstone
Manchester
Medomsley
Morton Hall
New Hall
Northallerton
Northeye
North Sea Camp
Norwich
Nottingham
Onley
Oxford
Parkhurst
Pentonville
Portland
Preston
Pucklechurch
Ranby
Reading
Risley
Rochester
Rudgate
Send
Shepton Mallet
Shrewsbury
Stafford
Standford Hill
Stocken
Stoke Heath
Styal
Sudbury
Swansea
Swinfen Hall
Thorn Cross
Thorp Arch
Usk
The Verne
Wakefield
Wandsworth
Wayland
Wellingborough
Werrington
Wetherby
Whatton
Winchester
Wormwood Scrubs
Wymott

The total acreage of the prison estate is about 20,000 acres. No total valuation of the buildings and land has been undertaken; the figure would vary considerably according to the basis of valuation.

Metropolitan Police Vehicles (Accident Statistics)

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers, and how many members of the public were killed, and how many were injured, in accidents involving metropolitan police

vehicles in the years 1984, 1985, and 1986; and how many of these deaths and injuries in each year resulted from accidents for which police drivers were assessed by the police to have been wholly or partly responsible.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis has provided the following information in relation to police vehicle accidents involving deaths:

Fatal accidents involving Metropolitan Police vehicles

	1984	*1985*	*1986*
Number of fatal accidents	10	6	4
Number of police officers killed	1	0	1
Number of civilians killed	11	7	4
Number of accidents in which police assessed as blameworthy	[1]1	1	[2]0

[1] Assessment on 2 accidents not yet completed, pending the outcome of court proceedings.
[2] Assessment on 3 accidents not yet completed.

Detailed information on the numbers injured in police vehicle accidents was not collected prior to October 1985, but there were 99 police vehicle accidents involving injury in 1984 and 76 such accidents between 1 January and 30 September 1985 (inclusive). The figures since then are given in the table.

Injuries in accidents involving Metropolitan Police vehicles (Number of injuries arising from accidents where the police were assessed as blameworthy given in brackets).

	[1]*1985*	*1986*
Number of police officers injured	144 (9)	455 (94)
Number of civilians injured	122 (20)	399 (56)

[1] October to December.

Official Secrets Act 1911

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has for the reform of section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911.

Mr. Hurd: We have no such proposals at present.

Committee of Public Accounts (Recommendations)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will list those recommendations of the Committee of Public Accounts since 1983 affecting his Department which have been implemented.

Mr. Hurd: I refer the hon. Member to the Treasury Minutes published in response to the relevant reports of the Committee of Public Accounts (Cmnd. 9696, 9743, 9859, 9917). The Committee, on which the hon. Member serves, monitors departmental progress with accepted recommendations.

Myra Hindley

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, pursuant to his answer of 2 February, *Official Report*, column *475*, he will estimate the cost to the Metropolitan police of the helicopter used to transport Myra Hindley; why this cost was not charged to the Greater Manchester police under mutual aid procedures; whether the cost of police overtime charged cover the costs of transport for each police force; what costs to police forces arose other than as a result of overtime; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the additional cost of using a Metropolitan police helicopter to transport Myra Hindley to and from Saddleworth moor is esitmated at £1,200. The Metropolitan police may not seek any payment for the use of their helicopters because they do not hold an air operator's certificate under the Air Navigation Order 1985.

The cost of police overtime does not include transport costs. Apart from overtime the only other additional cost which is readily available is £460 for the provision of catering facilities for police officers at Saddleworth moor.

District Councils (Electoral Arrangements)

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list by population size those district councils whose revised electoral arrangements had been submitted to his Department within the required time scale, but for whom the necessary review orders have yet to be made; when he expects to sign those orders currently outstanding; and whether all such orders will be made and delivered by 6 March to enable the local elections in those authorities to be held under the new arrangements.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The table shows the eight districts in respect of which we have received reports from the local government boundary commissions and have not yet made electoral arrangements orders.

All the reports were submitted in November or December last year. Because of the amount of administrative effort entailed in considering reports and preparing orders, where a report is received late in the year it may not be possible to make the necessary order in time for the local elections the following May.

Priority is being given to the implementation of the reports on the Welsh districts, where the new orders will replace arrangements made in 1973. We expect to make orders for Dinefwr and Preseli shortly, and we hope to make an order for Montgomeryshire by 6 March. An order was made in respect of Carmarthen on 11 February.

The reports in respect of the English districts are being considered in order of receipt. We hope it will be possible to make orders by 6 March in respect of the first three reports received (relating to South Ribble, Kingswood and Chelmsford); but there will not be enough time to implement the Commissions' reports on Blyth Valley and Warrington before the May elections. The local authorities concerned have been informed.

District council	*Population*[1]	*Date report submitted*
Warrington	177,500	17 December 1986
Chelmsford	147,900	2 December 1986
South Ribble	99,200	1 December 1986
Kingswood	87,900	2 December 1986
Blyth Valley	78,000	11 December 1986
Preseli	70,300	4 December 1986
Montgomeryshire	48,900	18 December 1986
Dinefwr	37,100	27 November 1986

[1] Registrar-General's mid-1985 estimates.

Immigrants (Expenditure)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 5 February, *Official Report*, column *792*, how much money has been allocated under section 11 of the Local Government Act

1966 since 26 March 1986, in each local authority, to post-school educational institutions; and if he will give a breakdown as to the various purposes for which these funds have been allocated.

Mr. Waddington: Grant under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 is paid to local authorities on the cost of employment of staff to help meet the special needs of people of Commonwealth origin. The following posts on which grant has been sought and approved since 26 March 1986 are in post school education. An accurate estimate of our commitment in respect of these posts in the current year cannot be given before claims have been made. The table therefore shows a figure for grant based on the estimates made by local authorities at the time of application.

Local Authority and Post	*Estimated Grant 1986-87 (£)*
Lancashire	
Co-ordinator, race equality unit (Lancashire Polytechnic); co-ordinator of units activities generally.	13,214
Warwickshire	
500 hours English home tuition: teaching of English as a second language.	2,780

Remand Population

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what, for the latest available, was the total remand population in England and Wales;

(2) for the latest date available what was the total remand population for the south-east region.

Mr. Mellor: The latest available information is for 31 December 1986, when the remand population is seasonally low. On that date about 10,010 untried or convicted unsentenced prisoners were held in prison department establishments in England and Wales of whom about 3,710 were held in the south east region of the prison department.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures he is taking to seek to reduce the remand population.

Mr. Mellor: Our measures to limit the untried prison population include: exploring the reasons why bail is objected to, or refused; giving the Crown prosecution service the duty of reviewing and presenting any police objections to bail; encouraging probation service experiments to see if the courts can usefully be given better information when deciding whether or not to grant bail; seeking to ensure that enough places are available in bail and other hostels; and introducing statutory time limits on periods in custody in criminal proceedings, which we shall apply from April 1987 in three police areas before extending them throughout England and Wales. The Lord Chancellor is taking further steps to tackle Crown court delays, finding more resources and introducing management measures to make the best use of them. Ultimately, it is up to the court to determine whether a person is kept in custody or not.

Bail

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to introduce legislation to facilitate greater use of bail by the courts.

Mr. Mellor: The Bail Act 1976 contains a general presumption in favour of bail, subject to certain exemptions. We have no plans to introduce legislation to amend these exceptions, but if the hon. Member has any specific proposals I should be ready to consider them.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list information available to him as to the main grounds upon which bail is refused in magistrates' courts.

Mr. Mellor: The main circumstances, as specified in the Bail Act 1976, in which a defendant need not be granted bail are if the court is satisfied that there are substantial grounds for believing that the person, if released on bail, would abscond or would commit an offence while on bail or would interfere with witnesses or otherwise obstruct the course of justice. When considering whether any of those exceptions to the right of bail applies, the court has to have regard to relevant considerations including the nature and seriousness of the alleged offence and the probable method of dealing with the defendant for it. An analysis of the specific reasons given by magistrates' courts for refusing bail is not available and could not at present be provided without disproportionate cost.

Remand Prisoners

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what resources he is allocating to the probation service to assist its work with remand prisoners.

Mr. Mellor: Most probation officers spend some of their time helping in connection with persons on remand. In particular, probation committees assign probation officers to prison department establishments, where they play an active role in the throughcare of all inmates, including those on remand. The cost of the salaries and allowances of the probation officers so assigned, of whom there were 493 on 31 December 1986, is reimbursed in full by Prison Department.

In addition to this general current work, the probation services in Hereford and Worcester, Leicestershire, Greater Manchester, Northumbria, Staffordshire and the West Midlands are experimenting with a number of different schemes, mainly court-based, which are aimed at reducing the remand prison population; and the inner London probation service is planning to start a scheme next week, based at Wormwood Scrubs prison. With one exception, all these experimental schemes are being provided for from within existing probation service resources, which are 80 per cent. funded by the Home Office and 20 per cent. funded by the local authorities. The salary and allowances of the leader of the two-year pilot project at Brockhill remand centre is being reimbursed in full by prison department.

Detained Youths

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many youths aged *(a)* under 14 years, *(b)* 14 years, *(c)* 15 years and *(d)* 16 years,

respectively who are currently detained under section 53(2) of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933, are being held in penal establishments.

Mr. Mellor: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list these occasions since 1984 when the Metropolitan police have received assistance from other police forces *(a)* within the United Kingdom and *(b)* outside the United Kingdom;

(2) if he will list the occasions since 1984 when the Metropolitan police has seconded or otherwise provided officers to assist other police forces *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* outside the United Kingdom.

Mr. Douglas Hogg [*pursuant to his reply*, 29 January 1987, c. *341*]: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that two police officers have been seconded to the Kent force and one to the City of London police through arrangements for management exchanges which were introduced by the Metropolitan police on 1 January 1987. The Metropolitan police received three officers from those forces in return. There is no central record of the occasions, other than under the mutual aid arrangements, when the Metropolitan police provided or received other assistance. I understand that since 1984 the Metropolitan police have not received mutual aid from other forces.

The following officers have been seconded overseas since 1984:

Rank				*Location*
Detective Sergeant	1 November 1975	—	Present	Hong Kong
Commander	1 May 1976	—	9 February 1986	France
Chief Superintendent	1 August 1980	—	31 March 1984	Gibraltar
Detective Chief Inspector	1 August 1981	—	8 September 1986	France
Chief Inspector	5 October 1981	—	2 May 1984	Dominica, West Indies
Detective Sergeant	4 March 1982	—	7 June 1984	Hong Kong
Chief Superintendent	6 March 1982	—	Present	Kiribati
Detective Sergeant	1 September 1982	—	25 February 1985	Hong Kong
Detective Inspector	3 January 1983	—	20 May 1985	Hong Kong
Detective Inspector	5 January 1983	—	12 May 1985	Hong Kong
Detective Sergeant	5 January 1983	—	Present	Hong Kong
Detective Chief Inspector	28 February 1983	—	Present	The Hague
Chief Superintendent	8 March 1983	—	7 March 1985	Falklands
Detective Sergeant	27 September 1983	—	26 September 1985	Hong Kong
Sergeant	2 December 1983	—	22 June 1984	Falklands
Police Constable	2 December 1983	—	22 June 1984	Falklands
Police Constable	2 December 1983	—	22 June 1984	Falklands
Police Constable	2 December 1983	—	22 June 1984	Falklands
Detective Chief Inspector	2 February 1984	—	15 February 1984	Royal Cayman Islands
Detective Inspector	19 September 1984	—	Present	Hong Kong
Sergeant	14 October 1984	—	13 November 1984	Oman
Detective Inspector	29 October 1984	—	31 October 1986	Royal Cayman Islands
Chief Superintendent	January	—	March 1985	Oman
Detective Chief Inspector	5 February 1985	—	17 November 1985	Uganda
Detective Inspector	7 March 1985	—	15 April 1985	Turks and Caicos Islands
Detective Sergeant	7 March 1985	—	15 April 1985	Turks and Caicos Islands
Superintendent	13 April 1985	—	21 April 1985	Anguilla
Sergeant	8 May 1985	—	7 May 1986	Royal Cayman Islands
Detective Inspector	15 July 1985	—	Present	Royal Cayman Islands
Detective Sergeant	27 August 1985	—	Present	Hong Kong
Chief Superintendent	31 August 1985	—	25 September 1985	Oman
Superintendent	31 August 1985	—	25 September 1985	Anguilla
Detective Superintendent	4 November 1985	—	15 December 1985	Bahamas
Detective Chief Inspector	8 January 1986	—	Present	Hong Kong
Deputy Assistant Commissioner	11 January 1986	—	Present	Jamaica
Detective Superintendent	28 August 1986	—	Present	Hong Kong
Detective Inspector	28 August 1986	—	Present	Hong Kong
Detective Inspector	28 August 1986	—	Present	Hong Kong
Detective Sergeant	28 August 1986	—	Present	Hong Kong
Detective Chief Inspector	3 November 1986	—	Present	France

CIVIL SERVICE

Radcliffe Rules

Sir Marcus Fox asked the Minister for the Civil Service if he will review the Radcliffe rules with a view to updating the list of those subversive organisations, membership of which precludes employment in the Civil Service.

Mr. Luce: It has remained the policy of successive Governments, as recommended in the Radcliffe report (Cmnd. 1681), that no one should be employed in connection with work the nature of which is vital to the security of the state who:

(a) is, or has recently been, a member of a Communist or Fascist organisation, or of a subversive group, acknowledged as such by the Minister, whose aims are to undermine or overthrow parliamentary democracy in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland by political, industrial or violent means;

(b) is, or has recently been, sympathetic to or associated with members or sympathisers of such organisations or groups, in such a way as to raise reasonable doubts about his reliability;

(c) is susceptible to pressure from such organisations or groups.

It is for consideration in each case whether a particular organisation or group is covered by this definition. I see no reason to change this practice.

No one is precluded from employment in the Civil Service solely because of membership of a particular organisation.

DEFENCE

DROPS

Sir Ian Gilmour asked the Secretary of State for Defence which of the firms he has listed as having been involved in his Department's demountable rack off-loading pick-up system programme contributed original ideas which are now untilised in the demountable rack off-loading pick-up system equipment owned by his Department; if he will say what such ideas are; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Of the firms listed in my reply of 16 December 1986 (*Official Report*, c. 302), Foden, Multilift, and Powell Duffryn have all since supplied equipment for the DROPS procurement programme and which is now owned by the Department. I have no indications that these equipments were other than original to the firms or used information to which they had no entitlement.

Sir Ian Gilmour asked the Secretary of State for Defence what comparative assessment he can make of *(a)* the extent of the involvement, *(b)* the duration of the involvement, *(c)* the closeness of the involvement, *(d)* the cost to the company and *(e)* the value to his Department of the contribution made, as between the companies involved in his Department's DROPS consideration between 1975 and 1982; and what assessment he can make of the comparative importance of the role played by each company in the process of considering the DROPS project.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not possible to make the comparative assessment requested since the information on which it would need to be based is not available. The value of the part played by Boughton has, however, been acknowledged in correspondence between my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Defence and my right hon. Friend in February 1984.

Procurement Policy

Sir Ian Gilmour asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's policy towards the encouragement of competition in equipment procurement; what steps are taken to ensure that no attempt is made to restrict competition; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is our policy to seek competition wherever reasonable and practicable in order to achieve the best value for money in defence procurement. It is not in our interest to restrict competition, though we have a clear responsibility not to waste industry's or the Ministry's resources by inviting more bids than can adequately be assessed or by encouraging bids which have no reasonable prospect of success.

National Employer Liaison Committee

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Defence, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn of 29 January, if he will make the report of the national employer liaison committee available in the Library.

Mr. Freeman: As stated in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) on 5 February 1987, *Official Report*, c. 797-8, the report of the national employer liaison committee is an interim report, setting out a number of recommendations, along with proposals for further areas of study. These recommendations and proposals are being considered, and until this action is completed it would be premature to make a copy of the report available in the Library.

Rapier

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Defence, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn of 29 January when he expects to make an announcement as to a firm commitment and the date of entry into service of a Rapier battery for the United Kingdom/Netherlands landing force.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not our practice to comment on such matters.

Cairo (Ministerial Visit)

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the recent visit of the Minister of State for Defence Procurement to Cairo.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My noble Friend visited Egypt between 2 and 5 February at the invitation of the Egyptian Minister of State for Military Production. He had discussions with the Egyptian Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and other members of the Egyptian Government and visited Egyptian factories. Lord Trefgarne was warmly received by his hosts who welcomed the close and friendly relationship our two countries now enjoy and the extensive contacts existing between British firms and Egyptian organisations, which the visit helped to reinforce at a political level.

Tornado

Mr. Warren asked the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he received from the United States of America concerning the possible purchase of Tornado aircraft before his announcement of the intended purchase of the Boeing airborne warning and control system aircraft; what discussions have taken place about such a purchase since that date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has received no representations on such a purchase, nor has he had any discussions on the matter.

Radioactive Waste

Sir Trevor Skeet asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the nature and quantity of radioactive materials being considered for

storage at Chatham dockyard and referred to on 2 February, *Official Report*, column 782, by the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are no firm plans for the storage of radioactive materials at MOD Gillingham (formerly Chatham dockyard). What I am considering is the need for the temporary storage there of short-life intermediate level radioactive material. This will involve no extension to existing facilities at Gillingham.

Royal Yacht (Refit)

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Defence what was the original estimate for the refit of the Royal Yacht Britannia; what is the latest estimate; and what are the reasons for the increase.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The estimated costs, which are still under consideration, are commercial in confidence.

Departmental Property

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the acreage of land owned by his Department abroad; how many acres his Department has rights over in addition; and what is the market value of the Department's assets in *(a)* land and *(b)* other property including buildings.

Mr. Freeman: The Ministry of Defence owns virtually no land overseas but some 125,000 hectares (308,000 acres) are either made available to the Department by host Governments or leased; the Department additionally has rights of access over 80,000 hectares (198,000 acres). The market value of the assets could not be provided without incurring disproportionate cost.

Trackway (Patent Violation)

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will expedite the sending of the draft letter which has been waiting since before Christmas for Treasury Solicitors' approval about the unlawful marketing by the Singapore Government in Malaysia and Thailand of trackway in breach of a British patent held by Laird (Anglesey) Limited.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: This matter raises difficult questions. A letter will be sent as soon as possible.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Student Grants

10. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the value of the maximum student grant in real terms compared with 1978-79.

Mr. Walden: The main rate of grant for the majority of students is currently £1,901; from the next academic year it will be £1,972. The equivalent grant in 1978-79 was £1,100, which would be worth £2,204 today. Students may be eligible for additional allowances depending on their circumstances.

14. **Mr. James Lamond** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he now expects the Government's review of student grants to be completed.

32. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to complete his review of support for higher education students.

48. **Mr. Michie** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he now expects the Government's review of student grants to be completed.

51. **Mr. McNamara** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he now expects the Government's review of student grants to be completed.

Mr. Walden: I refer hon. Members to the answer I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester South (Mr. Spencer).

21. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he next plans to meet the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals to discuss student support.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend has no present plans to discuss student support with the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals but I will be meeting it on 9 March to hear oral evidence to the current review of student support.

34. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the level of student grants; and if he will make a statement.

41. **Sir David Price** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether, in view of the Select Committee's report on student awards dated 16 December 1986, he will make an early response to its recommendation that there is an urgent need for an increase in real terms, in student awards.

44. **Mr. Livsey** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations have been made to his Department about the mandatory student awards for 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: Since the beginning of October 1986 about 320 representations have been received relating in one way or another to the level of student grants. These included a full submission from the National Union of Students recommending levels of grant, and changes to the regulations, for 1987-88, which was discussed at a meeting with the Department's officials. In addition, the Education, Science and Arts Committee of this House published its report on student awards last month, and about 100 organisations or persons have submitted evidence in response to the invitation of the review of student support.

As my right hon. Friend announced on 30 January at column 401, the main rates of grant for the 1987-88 academic year will be increased in line with the forecast rise in the retail price index. I would expect the Government's response to the first report of the Education, Science and Arts Committee to be published before the summer recess.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what the total cost or the estimated total cost to parents of the assessed contributions to student grants has been in each year since 1978-79 to the latest date for which figures are available *(a)* in cost terms and *(b)* indexed using 1978-79 as a base.

Mr. Walden: The information below relates to all full value mandatory and discretionary awards.

England and Wales

Academic year	*Assessed parental contributions* £ *million cash*[1]	*Index of assessed parental contributions (1978-79 = 100)*
1978-79	99	100
1979-80	92	93
1980-81	107	108
1981-82	137	138
1982-83	167	169
1983-84	184	186
1984-85	251	254

[1] Including a notional assessment in respect of minimum award holders.

Birkbeck College

11. **Mr. Stanbrook** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the present and future funding of Birkbeck college, University of London.

Mr. Walden: Following the University Grants Committee's decision to increase their original grant to London University for 1986-87 by £600,000, the Court of the University allocated £7·88 million to Birkbeck for the current year. For the next three years, the Committee has decided that Birkbeck should be treated as a special factor in its calculation of the block grant to the University. The internal distribution of the block grant will be for the University to decide.

Scottish Universities

12. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the anticipated level of funding for the Scottish universities in the forthcoming financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: The Scottish Universities will receive £189 million in recurrent grant for academic year 1987-88 plus some part of the equipment grant and other monies yet to be allocated by the University Grants Committee.

Schools (Capital Works)

13. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what estimates are available to his Department of the total costs of capital works in schools necessary for local education authorities to implement the provisions of the Education Act 1981; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: No estimate is possible since capital expenditure depends on how each LEA decides to meet the requirements of the Act in practice, and on the characteristics of its existing capital stock.

16-plus Students

15. **Mr. Dixon** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of young people aged 16 years plus have remained in full-time education in each of the last five years.

Mr. Evans asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of young people aged 16-plus years have remained in full-time education in each of the last five years.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Members to my reply to the hon. Member for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Clelland) earlier today.

School Books

16. **Mr. Sean Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the level of expenditure on school books in England and Wales for each of the last three years.

Mrs. Rumbold: Local education authorities in England spent just over £64 million on school books in 1984-85, the latest year for which firm figures are available. In both 1982-83 and 1983-84 the figure was £65 million. Expenditure on schools in Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Teachers (Pay)

17. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress has been made towards a settlement of the teachers' pay and conditions dispute; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The Teachers' Pay and Conditions Bill received its Third Reading in the House of Lords yesterday. I continue to hold meetings with the local authorities and teacher unions. I regret that there has been no significant movement towards the Government's position.

University of East Anglia

18. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to visit the school of development studies at the University of East Anglia.

Mr. Walden: I am hoping to visit the University of East Anglia later this year.

Children (Special Education)

19. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many children were assessed and made the subject of a statement for special educational needs in Essex for each of the last three years.

Mrs. Rumbold: According to the Department's records, the number of children in Essex who were newly assessed and made the subject of a statement during the last three years for which figures are available were in 1983, 1,257; in 1984, 733 and in 1985, 930.

The figures for 1983 include both children ascertained under the Education Act 1944 and children with statements under the Education Act 1981. The figures for 1984 and 1985 relate solely to children with statements.

Brain Drain

20. **Mr. Norman Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to stop the brain drain from higher education institutions in the United Kingdom.

46. **Mr Wareing** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to seek to stop the brain drain from higher education institutions in the United Kingdom.

52. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to seek to stop the brain drain from higher education institutions in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Walden: I refer hon. Members to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Dundee West (Mr. Ross).

LEAs (Capital Allocations)

22. **Mr. Stan Thorne** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many local education authorities he has met since June 1983 about increasing the money allowed to them for repairs of school buildings.

29. **Mr. Haynes** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many local education authorities he has seen since June 1983 about increasing the money allowed to them for repairs of school buildings.

33. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many local education authorities he has seen since June 1983 about increasing the money allowed to them for repairs of school buildings.

Mrs. Rumbold: Ministers at the Department have held numerous meetings with local education authorities at which questions relating to the repair of school buildings have been raised; but the Department does not keep records from which the information requested could be obtained.

Adult Education

23. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what discussions his Department is conducting into promotion of adult education in basic skills of literacy and numeracy; and if he will make a statement.

43. **Mr. Beaumont-Dark** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to deal with the problem of adult illiteracy.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend gives high priority to the funding of the adult literacy and basic skills unit in order to stimulate further development of the provision of education in adult basic skills, and to reduce problems of literacy and numeracy amongst adults. Grant from the Department of Education and Science has risen from over £470,000 in 1980-81 to over £2,050,000 in 1986-87; a fourfold increase.

The Department has frequent discussions with the adult literacy and basic skills unit, other relevant government departments and the MSC about how provision for adult basic skills can be developed and extended and is represented on the unit's management committee.

Grammar Schools

24. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received in support of the expansion of grammar schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend receives such representations from time to time, usually in connection with proposals for the closure of grammar schools made under section 12 of the Education Act 1980.

Education and Industry

25. **Mr. O'Brien** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on new initiatives to develop education and British industry.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government are aware of the need for the education system to develop effective partnerships with industry and commerce. A number of measures have been introduced to support this policy. We will keep the situation under review but there are encouraging signs that the education system, thanks partly to Industry Year, is increasingly aware of industry's needs; the onus is now on industry to respond to this.

Part-time Students (Fees)

26. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will reconsider his policy on charging tuition fees to part-time students at universities and polytechnics.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend sees no reason to change present practice whereby most universities, polytechnics and colleges charge fees for part-time students roughly pro-rata to fees for full-time home students.

National Federation of Voluntary Literacy Schemes

27. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last met representatives of the National Federation of Voluntary Literacy Schemes.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend has had no meetings with representatives of the National Federation of Voluntary Literacy Schemes.

Higher Education

28. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the number of students currently in higher education; and how this figure compares with eight years before.

Mr. Walden: Provisional information for 1985 indicates there were 528,000 home full-time students and 328,000 part-time students in higher education in Great Britain. The equivalent figures for 1977 were 449,000 and 242,000 students, respectively.

Lancashire (Educationa Standards)

30. **Mr. Robert Atkins** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when Her Majesty's inspectorate last conducted an investigation into education standards in Lancashire.

Mrs. Rumbold: Since 1 January 1983 there have been 19 published reports by Her Majesty's inspectors on schools, colleges and other aspects of education in Lancashire. There will be further formal inspections as necessary as part of Her Majesty's inspectorate's national programme. Her Majesty's inspectors also carry out each year a large number of less formal visits to schools and colleges in Lancashire, either as part of broad national surveys of certain aspects of educational provision or to keep in touch with developments in the particular institution. At the end of these visits Her Majesty's inspectors report orally to the head or principal on what

they have found, but the visits do not lead to published reports. In addition, Her Majesty's inspectors had a range of meetings with officers of the Lancashire LEA to discuss aspects of education in the authority.

City Technology Colleges

31. **Mr. Kenneth Carlisle** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if there are any plans to establish a city technology college in Lincoln; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has received no proposals to establish a city technology college in Lincoln. If there is support within the local community for the establishment of a college, he would be pleased to consider any proposals which are put forward.

49. **Mr. Freud** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to how much money has been raised from private sources to date towards the construction of 20 city technology colleges.

Mrs. Rumbold: A number of prospective sponsors have offered financial and other assistance. Other individuals and organisations are known to be developing proposals but are not yet ready to put detailed proposals to the Department. The offers currently under discussion would support CTCs in a number of locations but I am not yet in a position to publish a more precise figure.

57. **Mrs. Shields** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his latest estimate of the proportion of capital costs of city technology colleges likely to be borne by his Department.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend intends that all or a substantial part of the capital costs of city technology colleges will be met from private sources such as industry and commerce or educational charities. The proportion to be borne by the Department will vary according to local circumstances. I am unable to offer an estimate at this stage in the negotiations with prospective sponsors.

National Curriculum

35. **Mr. Galley** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals he has to introduce a national curriculum for schools; and if he will make a statement.

36. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on his plans for a national curriculum.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend's proposals are set out in his speeches to the North of England Conference on 9 January and to the Society of Education Officers on 23 January; copies of both have been placed in the Library. He has invited comments on those proposals from all concerned, both inside and outside the education service.

Unemployed People

37. **Mrs. Golding** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to encourage education for the unemployed.

Mr. Walden: I refer the hon. Member to the reply of 2 December 1986 by my hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold) at column *745* and to the reply of 20 January by my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) to the hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) at column *498*.

New Technology

38. **Mr. Sheerman** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on recent progress in the education for the new technology programme.

Mrs. Rumbold: The integration of new technology in schools is promoted by the microelectronics education support unit. This was established in 1986 to follow up the work of the microelectronics education programme. It has an annual budget of some £3 million and is now fully operational.

Tertiary Education

39. **Mr. McLoughlin** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many representations he has received from local education authorities wishing to introduce a tertiary level of education.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend is currently considering five proposals under section 12 of the Education Act 1980 which involve the establishment of new tertiary colleges.

"Civil Research and Development"

40. **Mr. Wrigglesworth** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he now intends to publish a response to the report of the House of Lords Committee on Science and Technology entitled "Civil Research and Development"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: The response to this report is being coordinated by the Cabinet Office. The Government aim to issue it before the summer recess.

Dorset Institute of Higher Education

42. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received in support of polytechnic status for the Dorset institute of higher education.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend has received 10 letters in recent months from hon. and right hon. Members in support of the Dorset institute of higher education.

Bradford

45. **Mr. Madden** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give further consideration to providing additional resources to Bradford local education authority.

Mrs. Rumbold: There are no resources available from which my right hon. Friend could increase Bradford's allocation.

11-plus Selection

47. **Mr. Rogers** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to reintroduce selection at 11-plus.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Birmingham Ladywood (Ms. Short).

Schools (Competition)

50. **Mr. Lord** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what new plans he has to introduce into the nation's schools more competition in both work and play.

Mrs. Rumbold: Pupils are naturally competitive. Schools have a long tradition, which this Government believe they should sustain, of channelling this spirit and the urge to better personal performance to good effect.

Nursery Places

53. **Mr. McWilliam** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the current number of places in nursery schools or nursery classes in England; and what percentage of three and four year olds have full-time places, and part-time places, respectively.

Mrs. Rumbold: Information on the number of places in nursery schools and nursery classes is not collected centrally. The number of pupils aged 3 and 4 attending maintained nursery schools or nursery classes in January 1986 in England was 39,414 full-time and 207,479 part-time. These represented 3·4 per cent. and 17·7 per cent. of the estimated 3 and 4-year-old population respectively.

Schools (Distribution of Resources)

54. **Sir John Farr** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he takes to ensure that those schools who by their excellence have a waiting list for pupil admission receive a fair distribution of resources by their local education authority.

Mrs. Rumbold: Local education authorities determine the allocation of the resources available to them in the light of local needs and circumstances, and in accordance with priorities set locally.

Teachers' Pay

55. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a further statement on the teacher's pay dispute.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing North (Mr. Greenway).

Mentally Handicapped Children

56. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will undertake an examination of the implementation of the procedures of the Education Act 1981 with regard to maximising educational opportunities for mentally handicapped children within the community.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend intends to review all aspects of implementation of the Education Act 1981 in the light of the findings of the Select Committee's inquiry into special education.

Teachers' Superannuation Fund

58. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to review his policy and procedures with regard to independent schools' use of the teachers' superannuation fund.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has no plans to reconsider the basis on which independent schools may participate in the teachers' superannuation scheme.

He is however reviewing the Department's procedures for monitoring the salary progression of teachers approaching retirement. Pension benefits depend in part on teachers' final salaries, and some schools have recently increased the salaries of teachers approaching retirement. Where he considers salary to have been increased unreasonably my right hon. Friend has power to direct that pension benefits should be based on a lower salary.

Conductive Education

59. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what further consideration he has given to the funding of the study of the Hungarian technique of conductive education; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Following discussions between officials of my department and the DHSS and representatives of the National Foundation for Conductive Education and Birmingham university, the university has been invited to submit a formal application for assistance towards the cost of evaluating the conductive education project being established by the foundation in Birmingham. A decision on the application will be reached as soon as possible after it is received.

Sixth Form Colleges

60. **Mr. Squire** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many education authorities have submitted proposals for sixth form colleges since May 1979.

Mrs. Rumbold: Since May 1979, 27 local education authorities have published proposals under section 12 of the Education Act 1980 for the establishment of sixth form colleges.

University Grants Committee

61. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last met the chairman of the University Grants Committee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: In the course of normal business, my right hon. Friend sees the chairman of the University Grants Committee frequently, most recently on 29 January.

Village Primary Schools

62. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received about small village primary schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has received representations from the National Association for the Support of Small Schools and the National Federation of Womens Institutes. In addition he has received representations on behalf of a number of individual schools.

University College of North Wales

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the effect on the University College of North

Wales, Bangor, of the mathematical formula adopted by the University Grants Committee for the distribution of funds for each year since its inception.

Mr. Walden: The table shows the initial basic distribution of recurrent grant in respect of the University College of North Wales, Bangor for 1987-88, together with the comparable figure for 1986-87 and the provisional basic distributions for 1988-89 and 1989-90. The figures exclude elements of the recurrent grant to which the University Grants Committee's new funding method does not apply and adjustments in connection with the development of oceanography at the College.

£ million.

Year	*Number*
1986-87	11·018
1987-88	11·095
[1]1988-89	10·924
[1]1989-90	10·862

[1] Provisional.

Universities (Grants)

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what he expects to be the effect on smaller universities of the mathematical formula for the distribution of funds adopted by the University Grants Committee.

Mr. Walden: I refer my hon. Friend to UGC circular letter 6/87 of 10 February 1987, a copy of which is in the Library. Paragraph 10 of that letter reads:

A number of institutions have commented that, by basing its resource allocations on a resource per student which depends on subject but not on institution, the Committee has put small institutions at a disadvantage because they have relatively high overheads. This point has been examined by statistical analysis and the conclusions do not support the hypothesis that as a general rule small institutions have higher unit costs than large institutions. The Committee nevertheless expects to give further thought to this point. Meanwhile the grant distributions announced in this letter do not take account of any effect that size might have.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will set out the mathematical formula adopted by the University Grants Committee for the distribution of University Grants Committee funds to universities; if he proposes to take over this function himself; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: The method employed by the University Grants Committee for the distribution of recurrent grant in 1986-87 was described in detail in the Committee's circular letter 22/85 of 19 November 1985. Modifications introduced for the distribution of recurrent grant in 1987-88 are described in circular letter 6/87 of 10 February 1987. Copies of both letters are in the Library. The distribution of grant to individual universities is properly a matter for the University Grants Committee, and my right hon. Friend has no plans to take it over.

Mr. Henderson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the amount of the recurring grant provided by his Department for universities through the University Grants Committee which has been spent in meeting rates bills by universities in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* England and Wales and *(c)* total (i) in 1979 and (ii) the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Walden: The amounts of recurrent grant paid to universities by the University Grants Committee for the purpose of paying local authority rates in Scotland, England and Wales and Great Britain in the academic years 1979-80 and 1985-86 are as follows:

£'000 cash

	1979-80	*1985-86*
Scotland	9,790	24,677
England and Wales	26,982	67,154
Great Britain	36,772	91,831

University Applicants

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many university applicants there were in each year since 1978-79; and how many candidates were finally accepted in each of those years.

Mr. Walden: Applicants and acceptances through the Universities' Central Council on Admissions scheme for universities in the United Kingdom were as follows:

Academic year of entry	*Applicants*	*Acceptances*
1978	157,506	80,530
1979	166,362	82,398
1980	168,354	84,695
1981	167,096	80,341
1982	171,496	77,752
1983	172,738	74,860
1984	173,674	77,431
1985	176,553	82,889
1986	173,779	84,524

Advanced Further Education

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the age participation index for students in full-time advanced further education in each country in the European Community.

Mr. Walden: The table shows new entrants to all higher education as well as to non-university institutions, expressed as a percentage of a single year age cohort (the average population in the most relevant age range).

Figures for non-university institutions only can be misleading for international comparisons, as countries designate institutions as universities or otherwise according to their own conventions and practice. Figures for full-time study only are not readily available.

The United Kingdom figures and to the best of our knowledge those for other countries include entrants of all ages; the Open University and other part-time study; nurses and other paramedical students at National Health Service training establishments.

New entrants to higher education as a percentage of the relevant population[1]

	Age range[2]	All higher education		Non-university	
		Year	Entry index	Year	Entry index
Belgium	18 to 20	. .	[3] . .	. .	[4] . .
Denmark	. .	1983	36	1982	14
France	18 to 20	1982	34	1982	11
Federal Republic of Germany	19 to 21	1984	27	1982	10
Greece	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .
Ireland	. .	1982	25	1982	10
Italy	19 to 21	1984	28	1983	1
Luxembourg[5]	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .
Netherlands	18 to 20	1984	[6]38	1984	[7]26
Portugal	. .	. .	. .	. .	. .
Spain	. .	1980	28	1980	11
United Kingdom[8]	18 to 21	1984	31	1984	21

. . Not available.

[1] Those entering higher education for the first time, full-time and part-time, of all ages, as a percentage of the population in the specified age range, divided by the number of single years involved.

[2] Age group encompassing at least 70 per cent. of new entrants.

[3] 18 for degree-level only in 1984; 51 per cent. of all enrolments are below degree level.

[4] Not available; 58 per cent. of all higher education enrolments are in non-university institutions.

[5] Most students participate in higher education outside Luxembourg.

[6] Includes certain part-time students previously excluded.

[7] Partly estimated.

[8] Students from abroad are excluded, as are postgraduates and others already having a higher education qualification. Excludes students studying for higher education qualifications outside of the public education system other than nursing and paramedical students at DHSS establishments. If all private sector and correspondence courses were included the United Kingdom figures might be around 40 per 100.

Open University

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* the total cost to Open University students of summer school fees together with the number of students embarking on a summer school course, by subject, for each of the last five years for which information is available.

Mr. Walden: The information requested is:

	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Fee levels[1]	£77	£82	£84	£94	£99
Number of students by faculty					
Arts	7,770	8,355	6,767	6,355	6,030
Social sciences	6,669	6,347	6,230	5,562	5,707
Mathematics	5,622	6,324	6,162	5,472	5,261
Education	106	96	73	94	63
Science	6,641	7,799	7,720	6,951	7,258
Technology	6,472	7,094	7,509	7,745	7,510
'U' courses[2]	860	1,408	1,367	1,295	1,491
Total undergraduate summer school numbers	34,140	37,423	35,828	33,474	33,320

[1] In addition to fees students also have to meet the cost of travel to summer schools. It is not possible to estimate these.
[2] 'U' courses are interdisciplinary courses.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of students who have enrolled with the Open University in each year since it was established in 1969, the global student population of the Open University in each year, and the number of students graduating in each year.

Mr. Walden: The information requested is as follows:

Year	*1971*[1]	*1972*	*1973*	*1974*	*1975*	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
1. *Undergraduate:*																
New students	19,581	15,716	12,680	11,336	14,830	12,231	15,146	15,622	14,854	14,022	14,410	17,772	17,627	15,446	13,870	14,482
Total students	19,581	31,902	38,424	42,636	49,358	50,994	55,397	58,778	60,579	61,007	59,968	63,119	66,403	66,763	67,433	66,191
2. *Degrees awarded:*																
BA ordinary	—	895	3,635	5,177	5,468	6,025	5,971	5,591	5,842	6,281	6,524	6,447	5,567	5,934	6,678	[5]n.a.
BA honours	—	—	14	223	423	803	949	1,033	1,064	1,235	1,244	1,243	1,143	1,274	1,407	[5]n.a.
3. *Postgraduates (part time and full time)*[2]																
New students	13	68	92	80	102	107	116	124	160	139	133	174	190	138	131	[5]n.a.
Total students	34	108	195	258	338	414	507	582	664	733	711	749	786	857	943	[5]n.a.
4. Associate students[3]	—	—	1,885	1,350	4,188	4,578	5,576	6,923	8,778	7,889	7,078	7,150	7,367	8,675	8,999	11,504
5. Specialised short courses and packs[4]	—	—	—	1,584	1,768	118	6,096	13,713	10,311	25,317	18,507	30,178	40,795	44,216	56,766	[6]67,300

[1] Although the University received its Royal Charter in 1969 it did not admit its first undergraduate students until 1971.
[2] The University has awarded some 380 higher degrees since 1971.
[3] Associate students take single undergraduate level courses but do not follow a degree course.
[4] These short courses and packs, introduced in 1974 under the University's Continuing Education programme, are mainly in vocationally relevant subjects.
[5] No final figure available.
[6] Estimate.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has on the geographical distribution of student enrolments in the Open University in the last year for which information is available.

Mr. Walden: In 1985 the distribution of student enrolments was as follows:

Region	*New undergraduate students*	*Associate students*[1]
London	1,668	1,496
South	1,196	828
South West	944	544
West Midlands	1,195	820
East Midlands	904	487
East Anglia	1 315	955
Yorkshire	1,071	452
North West	1,455	956
North	707	488
Wales	550	310
Scotland	1,438	725
Northern Ireland	401	228
South East	1,026	710
Total	13,870	8,999

[1] Associate students take single undergraduate level courses but do not follow a degree course.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of Open University students have applied to pay their fees in instalments in each year from 1983.

Mr. Walden: The Open University no longer collects this information. All its students are offered the facility of paying their tution fees by instalments; they do not have to apply to do so.

University Teachers

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many university teachers were

employed in universities in the United Kingdom for each year since 1978-79; how many held temporary posts; how many held permanent posts; and what are the equivalent figures for research staff.

Mr. Walden: Information on permanent and temporary posts in universities is not available centrally. The numbers of academic staff employed in universities in the United Kingdom are as follows. Information for 1985-86 is not yet available.

	Full-time			
	Teaching and research	*Research only*	*Part-time*[1]	*All academic staff*
1978-79	34,378	7,489	1,521	43,388
1979-80	35,021	8,337	1,587	44,945
1980-81	35,107	8,985	1,678	45,770
1981-82	34,661	9,263	1,738	45,662
1982-83	32,806	10,277	2,371	45,454
1983-84	32,429	10,720	2,865	46,014
1984-85	32,654	11,538	3,495	47,687

[1] The breakdown of part-time staff between teaching and research is not readily available.

University Staff

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of university staff for each year since 1978-79, broken down into categories of academic, academic related and non-academic staff.

Mr. Walden: Information for 1985-86 and for non-academic staff is not readily available. The remaining information is as follows:

University staff: Great Britain

	Full-time		*Part-time*	
	Academic	*Academic related*	*Academic*	*Academic related*
1978-79	40,814	n/a	1,422	n/a
1979-80	42,300	n/a	1,489	n/a
1980-81	43,017	9,389	1,577	343
1981-82	42,840	9,439	1,644	341
1982-83	41,994	9,087	2,266	464
1983-84	42,058	9,150	2,739	562
1984-85	42,500	9,326	3,236	590

Universities (Expenditure)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* the equivalent of table 3.12.9 in the public expenditure White Paper (Cmnd. 56), "Age Participation Index and Qualified Participation Index", for universities only.

Mr. Walden: The information is shown in the table:

API and QPI for universities in Great Britain

Academic year beginning	*Age participation index*[1] *(API)*	*Qualified participation index*[2] *(QPI)*
Actual		
1981	7·2	47·7
1982	6·8	44·4
1983	6·6	40·7
1984	6·8	41·3
1985[3]	7·0	41·8
Projection P		
1986	7·0	41·8
1987	7·1	41·7
1988	7·1	41·7
1989	7·4	41·7
Projection Q		
1986	7·1	42·1
1987	7·3	42·4
1988	7·4	42·9
1989	7·7	43·3

[1] The API is defined as the number of initial home entrants aged under 21 expressed as a percentage of the average of the number of 18 and 19-year-olds in the population.

[2] The QPI is defined as the number of initial home entrants aged under 21 expressed as a percentage of the number of qualified school and FE leavers in the previous academic year.

[3] Provisional.

Mature Students

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many applications were made by mature students for entry to courses in higher education for each of the last 10 years; and how many were accepted.

Mr. Walden: The numbers of home applicants and acceptances, for students aged 21 and over through the Universities' Central Council on Admissions scheme have been as follows:

	Applicants	*Acceptances*
1976	15,176	6,303
1977	16,247	6,583
1978	16,699	6,998
1979	17,893	6,956
1980	17,776	7,122
1981	16,061	6,575
1982	15,254	5,742
1983	15,513	5,590
1984	16,534	6,249
1985	17,669	7,072

Similar figures for public sector higher education are not yet available. However, the total numbers of mature home students actually entering full-time higher education are as follows:

Estimated initial home entrants aged 21 and over to full-time higher education in Great Britain

	Thousands
1976	33·0
1977	30·5
1978	32·3
1979	34·0
1980	33·2
1981	34·0
1982	35·9
1983	36·8
1984	37·1
[1]1985	39·1

[1] Provisional.

Special Schools (Closures)

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* the criteria he adopts in deciding whether to permit the closure of special schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: In deciding whether to approve proposals to close maintained special schools under section 14(5) of the Education Act 1981, my right hon. Friend has regard to the local circumstances in each case and, in particular, to whether the alternative provision proposed by the local education authority is appropriate to meet the special educational needs of all the pupils on the roll of the school at the proposed date of closure.

A copy of the Department's circular 3/82 "Section 14 of the Education Act 1981: Discontinuance of Maintained Special Schools" is being placed in the Library.

Committee of Public Accounts (Recommendations)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will list those recommendations of the Committee of Public Accounts since 1983 affecting his Department which have been implemented.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to the Treasury Minutes published in response to the relevant PAC reports on matters addressed to my Department. These related to:

(i) Control of Manpower in Non-Departmental Public Bodies sponsored by the Department of Education and Science: PAC 31st Report, 1983-84 Session. Treasury Minute: Cmnd. 9368, published on 24 October 1984.

(ii) Redundancy Compensation Payments to University Staff: PAC 41st Report, 1985-86 Session. Treasury Minute: Cmnd. 9917, published on 22 October 1986.

The Committee, on which the hon. Member serves, monitors Departmental progress with accepted recommendations.

Careers Teachers

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many specialist careers teachers are employed in England and Wales compared with 1977.

Mrs. Rumbold: The latest available information is derived from a sample survey carried out by this Department in 1984. This indicated that in maintained secondary schools in England there were some 800 full-time teachers for whom careers lessons formed the largest teaching subject. There were nearly 1,000 full-time teachers who had a higher education qualification in which careers education had been a main or subsidiary subject, compared with about 500 (in England and Wales) recorded by a similar sample survey in 1977.

Learning Difficulties

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what evidence he has in the light of the operation of the Education Act 1981 on the extent to which children with moderate learning difficulties can integrate into the mainstream educational system.

Mrs. Rumbold: The 1981 Act requires that children with statements of special educational needs should be educated in ordinary schools subject to certain conditions, including that educating the child in the ordinary schools is compatible with his receiving the special educational provision he requires. The implementation of integration policies depends on careful planning and preparation, and intensive in-service training for the staff involved, as well as appropriate resourcing of the mainstream schools.

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his policy towards the degree of choice to be offered to parents with children with moderate learning difficulties of sending them to special schools catering specifically for their needs.

Mrs. Rumbold: Section 2 of the Education Act 1981 requires local education authorities to secure that a child with a statement of special educational needs is educated in an ordinary school, subject to account being taken of the views of the child's parents, and to certain conditions, including that educating the child in the ordinary school is compatible with his receiving the special educational provision that he requires. The 1981 Act provides for a partnership between parents and local education authorities. Local education authorities are required to ensure that parents of children with special educational needs are involved in the assessment procedure and that they are consulted about the special provision to be made to meet their children's needs.

Languages

Mr. Forth asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the numbers of people in the United Kingdom who speak languages other than English as *(a)* their first and *(b)* their second language, and the public expenditure associated with the promotion of each such language.

Mrs. Rumbold: This information is not available.

Higher Education

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to publish his White Paper on higher education.

Mr. Walden: Our Green Paper "The Development of Higher Education into the 1990s" (Cmnd. 9524) said we would make a further statement in the light of responses and of a further review of policies. One follow-up was the review of the University Grants Committee, chaired by Lord Croham GCB, the report of which was published last week (Cm. 81). My right hon. Friend will make a statement as soon as he is ready to do so.

Literacy and Numeracy

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Yeovil on 11 February concerning statistical information on literacy and numeracy problems, what is his estimate of the total number of adults with inadequate basic skills of literacy or numeracy; when a major survey of the extent of such problems in literacy and numeracy was last funded by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 11 February at columns 222-23.

The Department of Education and Science contributed 17 per cent. of the cost of the National Child Development Survey Study of 1981. No major surveys have been funded since that time.

Responsibility for the provision of adult basic skills tuition within the education service rests with local education authorities. My right hon. Friend looks to the adult literacy and basic skills unit to act as a central focus

to assist LEAs and voluntary organisations in establishing new basic skills provision and developing existing provision in order to meet the needs of their local communities.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Registration Service

Mr. Hind asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will make a statement as to the present position or recommendations made in the scrutiny report on the registration service in England and Wales.

Mr. Newton: Following the announcement in the other place by my noble Friend of publication of the report on 24 October 1985 (House of Lords *Official Report*, column 1374) we received over 350 responses to the invitation to comment on the recommendations. The views expressed were most valuable and we are grateful to those who commented.

In the light of those consultations we have rejected the proposals to close the central searching and certificate issuing facility, to introduce loose-leaf registers, and to record the National Health Service number on the medical certificate of cause of death.

Many of the recommendations require primary legislation, including those on responsibility for the service, the creation of a single job of registrar dealing with marriages, birth and death registrations, and the great majority of those on procedures. Those recommendations affecting marriage law would, moreover, require amendment to the Marriage Acts. We have concluded that it will not be possible to legislate on these matters in this Parliament.

There is, however, no such obstacle to implementing the rest of the recommendations, covering local organisation of the service, staffing and pay, new technology, certain general procedures and finance. We have asked the Registrar General to pursue these recommendations, in consultation with other interested parties, including the staff interests where appropriate.

Close consultation and liaison with local authority interests will be essential. Some recommendations will be suitable for early implementation; others will require further study and piloting.

The number of local registration offices is primarily a matter for local authorities, and it will be for them to decide what action to take on those recommendations. Any reorganisation of the local registration arrangements must take account both of costs and of local demand for the service, and must ensure adequate facilities are available and accessible for the public to carry out their registration obligations.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Sir Fergus Montgomery asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what further action he proposes to reduce waiting lists and times.

Mr. Fowler: The Health Service is now treating record numbers of patients and waiting lists are far shorter than when this Government came to office. We want now to make further improvements.

In July 1986 I launched a three-year drive to reduce waiting lists and times in the National Health Service. The chairman of regional health authorities reported to me on the nature, extent and cause of waiting list and time problems in every district. These reports set out the action already under way and that proposed for 1987-88 to make significant improvements. To allow health authorities to build further upon those plans and make more rapid progress, I announced in November a £50 million waiting list fund over the next two years. Regional health authorities have submitted bids for the first allocation of £25 million for 1987-88 and I am today announcing the allocations from the fund for each region.

The result is that over the coming year health authorities intend to treat over 100,000 additional patients from the in-patient waiting list. All told, this extra £25 million will finance over 350 different projects throughout the country. I expect this to lead to significant improvements in waiting list totals. Many of the projects will additionally result in improving waiting time for first out-patient appointments.

The plans submitted by health authorities have been carefully considered under the supervision of Sir Roy Griffiths, the deputy chairman of the National Health Services Management Board. The aim has been to target resources at districts with the worst problems and where central funding can have the most impact.

The regional chairmen's reports confirm our view that the cause of excessive waiting lists varies from district to district and specialty to specialty. Many can be improved within existing resources and districts are acting upon those now. Other problems require special, additional funding, for equipment, supplies, staff, or additional operating sessions at evenings and weekends.

The projects funded are of many different types:

> We are funding a mobile operating theatre in Mersey region which would allow an additional 1,680 in-patient cases (including 120 hip replacements) in a full year;
>
> We are funding an additional out-patient clinic in Trent region allowing 1,200 children to be seen in the ear, nose and throat specialty;
>
> We are building day theatres and day wards and so allowing many more cases to be treated without the need for in-patient admission; and enabling the purchase of ophthalmic and gynaecological lasers allowing patients to be treated as out patients or day cases.

Among the new operations to be performed there will be at least 5,000 extra hip replacements and 8,000 extra cataract operations as well as a range of other surgery where patients have often had to wait in pain and discomfort.

In some cases, regions have found that patients can have earlier treatment if they are willing to travel, perhaps between neighbouring districts, or in exceptional cases through the cost effective use of the private sector. A major feature of the waiting list drive, and of the bids put forward, has been to assist the matching of spare capacity in the Health Service with excessive waiting lists elsewhere. Regions have been asked to make sure, also, that general practitioners receive all the information they need about waiting lists and waiting times in their own and neighbouring districts.

The projects funded and the action programmes already under way will lead to significant improvements in waiting times for patients. With the continued active involvement of clinicians and general practitioners, health authorities and health service management, I am sure that

further substantial progress is possible. The allocations from the fund I have announced today are another major step towards that.

The regional allocations from the waiting list fund are set out in the following table:

Allocations of waiting list fund 1987-88

Region	Allocation £ million
Northern	1·700
Yorkshire	1·757
Trent	2·400
East Anglia	1·018
North West Thames	1·590
North East Thames	2·070
South East Thames	2·040
South West Thames	1·330
Wessex	1·400
Oxford	1·010
South Western	1·650
West Midlands	2·880
Mersey	1·350
North Western	2·295
Moorfields SHA	0·500
TOTAL	25·000

Asbestos

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of deaths resulting from asbestosis in the Crewe and Nantwich constituency for the periods 1981-82, 1982-83, 1983-84, 1984-85, 1985-86 and 1986-87.

Mrs. Currie There have been no deaths registered to usual residents of the Crewe and Nantwich parliamentary constituency (1983 boundaries) with an underlying cause of death of asbestosis from mid-1981 to mid-1986. Statistics for underlying cause of death are not yet available for the period mid-1986 to mid-1987. There have been a number of deaths registered where asbestosis was mentioned on the death certificate, but was not the underlying cause of death, and details of these are given in the table.

Number of deaths to usual residents of Crewe and Nantwich parliamentary constituency (1983 boundaries) with any mention of asbestosis on the death certificate mid-1981 to mid-1986

Period	Number of deaths
mid-1981 to mid-1982	2
mid-1982 to mid-1983	3
mid-1983 to mid-1984	2
mid-1984 to mid-1985	1
mid-1985 to mid-1986	3

Food Poisoning

Mr. O'Brien asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the number of food poisoning cases reported in the United Kingdom by people who have been visiting EEC countries, particularly Spain; and what action he intends to take to reduce such numbers.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is not available. The total figures of food poisoning cases presumed contracted abroad for England, Wales and Scotland from 1982-85 are, however, set out in the table together with the total number of cases for those years. No "contracted abroad" figures are kept for Northern Ireland.

	Contracted Abroad	Total Cases
1982	1,627	16,839
1983	1,956	19,915
1984	2,089	22,390
1985	†1,935	†21,019

†Provisional

If serious outbreaks involving large numbers of United Kingdom citizens are brought to our attention, the Department would contact the national authorities concerned and ask them to investigate. Should the risks be considerable, a statement might be issued to warn those about to visit the affected area.

Maternity Payments

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Strathclyde region, *(c)* Glasgow district and *(d)* Shettleston constituency, claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many are expected to qualify each year for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: In the 12 months ending 31 December 1986 the following number of claims to maternity grant were made at the Department's offices which cover the areas in question.

	Number
(a) Scotland	59,419
(b) Strathclyde region	30,593
(c) Glasgow district	10,880
(d) Shettleston constituency	1,013

It is not possible to predict how many women in the areas of the question will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Crewe and Nantwich claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Crewe and Nantwich are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested. The Crewe and Nantwich constituency is covered by the Department's office at Crewe although its boundaries are not coterminous with the constituency. The number of claims received for maternity grant in the Crewe local office during the calendar year 1986 was 2,134. It is not possible to predict how many women in Crewe and Nantwich will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Sheffield, Central claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Sheffield, Central are expected to qualify annually for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form

requested. The Sheffield, Central constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Sheffield, north-east, Sheffield, north-west, Sheffield, south-east and Sheffield, south-west although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the four local offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Sheffield, North-East	1,579
Sheffield, North-West	1,933
Sheffield, South-East	1,243
Sheffield, South-West	1,793

It is not possible to predict how many women in Sheffield Central will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Mikardo asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the city of Westminster claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in the city of Westminster are expected to qualify annually for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested. In the 12 months ending 31 December 1986 the following numbers of claims to maternity grant were made at the Department's offices which cover the City of Westminster, although their boundaries are not conterminous:

	Number
Euston	856
Paddington	1,138
Cricklewood	633
Chelsea[1]	
Westminster[1]	

[1]Claims for these offices are dealt with at Aldershot Out-station. A total of 3,085 claims were dealt with at that office but this total includes claims proper to other offices.

It is not possible to predict how many women in the City of Westminster will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Randall asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Luton, South claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Luton, South are expected to qualify annually for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested. The Luton, South constituency is covered by the Department's office at Luton, although its boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The number of claims received for maternity grant in the Luton local office during the calendar year of 1986 was 3,029. It is not possible to predict how many women in Luton, South will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Walthamstow claimed maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Walthamstow are expected to qualify for a payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested. The Walthamstow constituency is covered by the Department's office at Walthamstow although its boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The number of claims received for maternity grant at Walthamstow local office during the calendar year 1986 was 1,901. It is not possible to predict how many women in Walthamstow will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Newport, East claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many such women are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested. The Newport, East constituency is covered by the Department's office at Newport although its boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The number of claims received for maternity grant in the Newport local office during the calendar year 1986 was 2,711. It is not possible to predict how many women in Newport, East will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Cynon Valley claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many such women are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested. The Cynon Valley constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Aberdare and Pontypridd although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the two local offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Aberdare	788
Pontypridd	1,182

It is not possible to predict how many women in Cynon Valley will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many single payments for maternity items were paid to supplementary benefit claimants in 1984 and 1985; and what was the average amount paid for each claim in each of these years.

Mr. Lyell: The latest available information comes from the November 1984 "Annual Statistical Enquiry", and records 189,000 (to nearest '000) payments for maternity needs, at an average amount of £68·18.

(*Note:* ASE data record the number of single payments made during the 12 months preceding the date of the inquiry to persons in receipt of supplementary benefit at the time of the inquiry. As a result they do not record all the single payments made during the year).

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many single payments for maternity items were made to women in Bradford in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Lyell: I regret that the information requested is not collected by individual local offices and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Eccles constituency claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in the Eccles constituency are expected to qualify in a year for a maternity payment from the social fund after April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested. The Eccles constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Salford North and Salford South although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the two local offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Salford North	1,508
Salford South	1,066

It is not possible to predict how many women in the Eccles constituency will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Devon and Cornwall, respectively, received the maternity grant in the last 12 months for which figures are available; and how many women there are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested. In the 12 months ending 31 December 1986 the following numbers of claims to maternity grant were made at the Department's offices which cover Devon and Cornwall although the boundaries are not conterminous.

	Number
Devon:	
Barnstaple	1,418
Devonport	1,815
Exeter	2,496
Plymouth	2,742
St. Austell	1,383
Torbay	2,142
Cornwall:	
Launceston	361
Penzance	1,030
Truro	1,513

It is not possible to predict how many women in Devon and Cornwall will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Eccles constituency received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available, and how many women in the Eccles constituency are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested. But in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 944 claims to maternity allowance were made at Salford, north and 676 at Salford, south, the Department's offices which cover the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Eccles will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Devon and Cornwall, respectively, received maternity allowance in 1985; and how many women there are expected to receive maternity pay or maternity allowance after April.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested. But in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, the following numbers of claims to maternity allowance were made at the Department's offices which cover Devon and Cornwall, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

	Number
Devon	
Barnstaple	1,086
Devonport	1,410
Exeter	2,177
Plymouth	1,863
St. Austell	1,039
Torbay	1,659
Cornwall	
Launceston	566
Penzance	683
Truro	987

It is not possible to predict how many women in Devon and Cornwall will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Dunfermline, East claimed maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested. The Dunfermline, East constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Cowdenbeath and Dunfermline although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the two local offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Cowdenbeath	536
Dunfermline	1,226

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Dunfermline, East received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested. But in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 949 claims to maternity allowance were made at Dunfermline and 366 claims at Cowdenbeath, the Department's offices which cover the constituency, although the boundaries are not coterminous.

Retirement Age

Mr. Andrew MacKay asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many men and how many women have deferred their state pension on reaching retirement age; and for how many years.

Mr. Major: An estimated 100,000 men and women over minimum pension age are at present deferring retirement. More precise information concerning those currently deferring is not available.

Information about deferment by existing pensioners is held in the form requested only for new awards of retirement pension. The table shows total pension awards with increases for deferment in the six months to 31 March 1986[1,2].

Period of deferment	*Men*	*Category A women*[3]	*Category ABL women with increases to category A pension*[4]
Less than 1 year	4,760	3,390	160
1-2 years	2,080	2,870	—
2-3 years	1,250	2,160	—
3-4 years	1,010	1,750	10
4-5 years	4,160	5,040	870
With increases for deferment Total	13,260	15,210	1,040
Total pension awards	147,290	80,630	13,310

[1] Excludes women whose pensions derive from their husband's contributions. Increments to their pensions stem from their husband's decision to defer retirement.

[2] No increases for deferement are paid in respect of periods where a person over pensionable age is in receipt of another national insurance benefit, such as invalidity benefit.

[3] Women awarded pensions derived solely from their own contributions.

[4] Women awarded pensions derived partly from their own and partly from their husband's contributions whose increments arise from deferment of pension on their own contributions.

Source: Retirement Pensions and Widows' Benefit Statistics: biannual enquiry. Movement Tables.

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people there are of retirement age in each district authority area in Lancashire; and how many and what proportion are *(a)* married, *(b)* single men and *(c)* single women.

Mr. Lyell: Only the number of people of retirement age (taken as 65 for men and 60 for women) broken down into male and female is available annually; the remaining information is taken from the 1981 census of population — the latest available information — and shown in the following table.

District	*Persons of retirement age, mid-1985*			*Persons of retirement age, 1981 census*					
				Married persons		*Single males*		*Single females*	
	Males thousands	*Females thousands*	*Persons thousands*	*thousands*	*per cent.*	*thousands*	*per cent.*	*thousands*	*per cent.*
Blackburn	7·6	16·6	24·2	12·5	50·9	0·6	7·6	2·0	11·9
Blackpool	11·8	25·6	37·4	19·4	51·7	0·9	7·1	2·8	10·9
Burnley	5·3	11·0	16·3	8·9	52·1	0·4	6·8	1·1	10·0
Chorley	4·5	9·6	14·1	7·5	54·4	0·3	7·5	1·0	10·4
Fylde	5·6	11·8	17·4	9·0	53·3	0·3	5·5	1·5	13·3
Hyndburn	4·8	10·1	14·9	7·8	53·0	0·3	6·8	1·0	10·4
Lancaster	9·4	19·8	29·2	15·0	52·6	0·7	7·8	2·5	13·0
Pendle	5·6	11·6	17·2	9·0	53·2	0·4	6·2	1·1	9·9
Preston	7·7	16·1	23·8	11·4	49·0	0·8	11·3	2·1	13·1
Ribble Valley	3·3	6·6	9·9	4·9	51·5	0·4	13·4	1·1	16·9
Rossendale	3·4	7·8	11·2	5·7	51·2	0·3	7·3	0·9	11·9
South Ribble	4·9	10·1	15·0	8·1	57·5	0·2	5·3	0·8	8·6
West Lancashire	5·2	10·4	15·6	8·1	54·7	0·3	7·0	1·1	10·7
Wyre	8·3	16·4	24·7	13·5	57·8	0·4	5·2	1·5	9·7

Welfare Milk and Vitamins

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women and children in Bradford are in receipt of free welfare milk and vitamins in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Lyell: I regret that the information requested is not collected by individual local offices and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Lone Pensioners

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many and what proportion of people of pensionable age live alone in each district authority in Lancashire.

Mr. Lyell: The most recent information about the number and proportion of people of retirement age living alone is available from the 1987 census of population. The figures for each district authority in Lancashire are shown in the table.

District	Persons of retirement age living alone	
	Thousands	Per cent.
Blackburn	8·3	33·6
Blackpool	11·0	29·3
Burnley	5·8	34·3
Chorley	4·1	29·6
Fylde	4·8	28·2
Hyndburn	4·8	32·6
Lancaster	8·2	28·8
Pendle	6·0	35·2
Preston	7·4	31·9
Ribble Valley	2·7	27·9
Rossendale	4·0	35·3
South Ribble	3·9	27·7
West Lancashire	4·0	27·1
Wyre	6·3	27·1

Income Replacement

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list for each country in the European community in the last year for which figures are available the proportion of his previous earnings an insured person with average earnings would receive from statutory income replacement schemes, whether administered by Government or another body *(a)* during the first six months of incapacity for work, *(b)* during incapacity for work which has lasted between six and 12 months, *(c)* during incapacity for work which has lasted more than 12 months, *(d)* during the first six months of unemployment and *(e)* on retirement at the normal retirement age in each country.

Mr. Major: Most income replacement schemes on the continent of Europe are on an earnings-related basis and the figures requested by the right hon. Member are contained in the DHSS publication, "Tables of Social Benefit Systems in the European Communities (Position at 1 January 1986)", a copy of which is in the Library.

The United Kingdom, Ireland and the Netherlands operate mainly flat rate income replacement schemes, so that the replacement rate will vary between high and low earners. The figures for the United Kingdom for a person on average earnings are given in section 5 of "Abstract of Statistics for Index of Retail Prices, Average Earnings, Social Security Benefits and Contributions" — August 1986, a copy of which is also in the Library. Comparable weekly earnings figures for Ireland and the Netherlands are not readily available.

Hospital Closures

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list all current proposed hospital closures or partial closures to which community health councils are objecting.

Mrs. Currie: Most proposed closures or changes of use of hospitals are agreed locally with the support of the community health council. The table gives the latest available information on where this is not the case. It lists these proposals for closure of whole or part hospitals which in August 1986 had gone to public consultation and where the local community health council's objections, together with other factors, are still under consideration either locally or by my right hon. Friend.

Region and Hospital	Number of beds
Northern	
Silverton House (mental handicap)	20
North East Thames	
Herts and Essex (alcoholism unit)	10
Trent	
County Hospital, Louth	6 maternity
North West Thames	
Charing Cross Hospital	8 geriatric
South East Thames	
Orpington Hospital	Accident and Emergency
Maidstone Hospital	12 maternity
Lihton Hospital	14 elderly
West Midlands	
Oswestry and District	Accident and Emergency
South Western	
Keynsham Hospital	12 maternity
Yorkshire	
Wharfedale General	16 maternity

Heating Allowance

Mr. Bill Walker asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give details of the total number of supplementary benefit recipients who were in receipt of heating allowance in 1984; and how many of them were paid the maximum allowance.

Mr. Major: A total of 2,829,000 supplementary benefit claimants were in receipt of a heating addition in 1984. The maximum standard heating addition payable is the estate rate heating addition for a dwelling with five or more rooms. In 1984, 10,000 such additions were in payment.
Source: "Annual Statistical Enquiry 1984."

Invalid Care Allowance

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Social Services by what date he expects the processing of claims for invalid care allowance by married women to be completed; and what proportion of such claims have now been dealt with.

Mr. Major: As at 13 February, some 103,000 claims to invalid care allowance had been received from married women of which about 47,000 had been decided. The remainder, which are at various stages of processing and include cases where further information is awaited from claimants, will be cleared as soon as possible. The question implies a final date for clearance of all claims to invalid care allowance from married women, but because claims are still coming in and will continue to do so for the indefinite future, no such date can be set.

Benefits (Disregards)

Mr. Rowe asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any intention of raising the amount of savings which may be disregarded for the purposes of *(a)* additional heating allowance and *(b)* other benefits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: The main rules limiting entitlement to those with savings above a certain level apply in the

supplementary benefit scheme. At present those with savings above £3,000 are normally excluded from weekly entitlement. From 1988, as part of the social security reforms, we plan to increase this limit to £6,000 with a tariff income applying to savings between £3,000 and £6,000. We have no plans to increase the £500 capital rule which applies to single payments including those in periods of exceptionally cold weather. The limit was increased from £300 in 1983.

Bradford Health Authority

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make more resources available to Bradford health authority to avoid ward or hospital closures as a result of rate and precept increases; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Regional health authorities are responsible for determining the cash limits for their respective district health authorities. In so doing, they take into account competing claims on the available resources in the light of national and local priorities.

London (Patient Admissions)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list, for each district general hospital in London, the number of days in 1986 when requests for patient admissions had to be refused because no beds were available.

Mrs. Currie: We do not keep a comprehensive central record of the occasions when admissions to hospital are restricted for any of a variety of reasons. It is for local health authorities to manage the availability of services from day to day.

AIDS

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will indicate the breakdown of expenditure in the fight against AIDS for each year since 1984, and including for 1987, the breakdown both before and after the extra £4 million recently allocated.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given him by my right hon. Friend on 1 December 1986 at columns *525-26*. The estimated expenditure for 1987-88, which is not in the previous reply is:

1987-88

	£ million
1. Health authorities	
a. Cost of heat-treating Factor 8	2
b. Testing blood donations	2
c. Treatment (£10–20,000 per case)	12–24
d. Counselling, including GUM[1] prevention, haemophiliac reference centres, training	4
Total	[2]20–32
2. Public Health Laboratory Service	1·25
3. Publicity	14·0
4. Research	0·3
Total	35·55–47·55

[1] GUM = Genito-urinary medicine.
[2] Of which £7 million to be met centrally.

The Medical Research Council has allocated £2·4 million to 21 special projects. This figure includes £250,000 a year, included in the figures paid by the Department to the MRC for the United Kingdom centre for co-ordinating epidemiological research on AIDS. The £4·4 million allocated to three health regions is included in the £7 million met centrally.

Benefits

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will indicate for all welfare and national insurance benefits and allowances, the percentage change in value each year since 1979, and the comparable change in national average earnings for each of those years.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Secure Units

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any plans to increase the capacity of his Department's secure units for youths detained under section 53(2) of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933.

Mrs. Currie: The placement of young people sentenced under section 53(2) of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. Where placement in the child care system is appropriate, such young people may be accommodated in youth treatment centres directly administered by the Department or in secure accommodation within local authority community homes. There are no plans to build further youth treatment centres. It is open to local authorities to apply for grants to provide additional secure accommodation places if they believe a need exists.

Heating Additions

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people in 1984 were in receipt of a heating addition in *(a)* England, *(b)* Scotland and *(c)* Wales; and what was the total expenditure in each country on heating additions.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 January 1987, c. *539*]: The information requested about the number of people receiving heating additions in 1984 is as follows:

Country	*[1]Number in receipt*
England	2,376
Scotland	281
Wales	170

Source: "1984 Annual Statistical Enquiry".
[1] To the nearest 1,000.

Reyes Syndrome

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what consideration has been given by the Committee on Safety of Medicines to the United States Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report dated January 1985, which was sent to the then Minister of Health by Mr. C. S. Harrington, the chairman of the National Reyes Syndrome Foundation.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 5 February 1987, c. *809*]: At its meetings in March 1985 and April 1985, the Committee on Safety of Medicines considered all the

available evidence, including the letter from Mr. Harrington and the United States Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, volumn 34, No. 1 1985, before concluding in April 1985 that the evidence available at that time had not established a causal link between aspirin and Reye's syndrome.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many young persons have been reported as suffering from Reyes syndrome since 1981; and what change there has been in the incidence of the syndrome following the official advice in June 1986 that aspirin should not be given to children.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 5 February 1987, c. *809*]:

The number of cases of Reyes syndrome in the British Isles reported to the British Reyes syndrome surveillance scheme in children aged under 16 years[1] for each calendar year since reports began in August 1981 is as follows:—

[4]*Year*	*Gross*	[3]*Net*
1981	15	13
1982	36	29
1983	54	49
1984	106	92
1985	55	50
1986	63	[3]51

[1] Data are not collected for persons aged 16 years or over.
[2] Gross totals adjusted to take account of cases where follow-up information shows the original diagnosis to be incorrect.
[3] The net total for 1986 may have to be adjusted as follow-up information becomes available.
[4] The year of report may not equate to the date of onset of the illness because many months may elapse before a report is made on a suspected case.

The gross number of reports received during the second half of 1986(39) exceeds the gross total for the corresponding period in 1985(16) but is less than that in the same period in 1984(42). When considering trends, it should be noted that an improved methodology for collecting data was introduced by the newly formed British paediatric surveillance unit in July 1986, when active canvassing of paediatricians was intensified.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the cost of the British Reye's syndrome surveillance scheme for each year that it has existed; what has been the additional cost of the risk factor study; who has paid for the surveillance scheme and the study; what contribution to their costs have come from public funds; how the surveillance scheme currently is being funded, and what steps are being taken to ensure that future funding is adequate.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 5 February 1987, c. *809*]: I am informed by the Public Health Laboratory Service that the estimated annual cost of the British Reye's syndrome surveillance scheme was as follows:

Year	*Estimate Cost* £
1981-82	5,000
1982-83	8,000
1983-84	8,500
1984-85	9,000
1985-86	10,000

The costs for each year up to and including 1984-85 were met entirely from the budget of the Public Health Laboratory Service. The pharmaceutical company Schering Plough Corporation contributed £630 towards the costs in 1985-86, via the National Reye's Syndrome Foundation with PHLS meeting the balance. The total contribution to the PHLS promised by Schering Plough is £30,218 which it is providing by three equal annual payments, via the National Reye's Syndrome Foundation, starting in January 1986; the proportion of this allotted to the Reye's syndrome surveillance scheme is £7,554 at the rate of £2,418 a calendar year. In addition to this annual payment, the costs in the current financial year are being met by the PHLS (approximately £10,000) and the British paediatric surveillance unit which, from 1 July 1986, has been meeting the costs of postage and stationery for canvassing paediatricians for cases of Reye's syndrome. The Public Health Laboratory Service board has agreed to continue funding the surveillance scheme until at least September 1988.

The estimated cost of the Reye's syndrome risk factor study, from January 1984 until it finished in December 1985, was around £60,000 of which the pharmaceutical industry contributed £39,766 made up as follows:

	£
Sterling Winthrop	27,766
Boots	6,000
Aspirin Foundation	6,000

The balance of around £20,000 came from public funds and was borne on the PHLS budget.

Aspirin

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what discussions there have been with overseas drug regulatory agencies following his decision to recommend that aspirin should not be given to children;

(2) if the decision of the Committee on the Safety of Medicines that aspirin should not normally be given to children has been communicated to other drug regulatory agencies together with the evidence that led the committee to reach this conclusion.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 5 February 1987, c. *809-10*]: The recommendation by the Committee on Safety of Medicines on the use of aspirin by children, together with a summary of the data considered plus details of subsequent United Kingdom action, were communicated to the World Health Organisation, the United States Food and Drug Administration, the Australian Regulatory Authority, all member states of the European Community and the Community's committee for proprietary medicinal products. There were full discussions with the World Health Organisation and other bodies concerned. A synopsis of the information and advice was also published as a CSM update, in the *British Medical Journal*, Vol. 292, June 1986, which has a world-wide distribution.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has requested aspirin manufacturers to warn on their labels that aspirin should not normally be given to children; and whether any such request applies to aspirin intended for overseas sale.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 5 February 1987, c. *809-10*]: Following the recommendation by the Committee on Safety of Medicines in May 1986 about aspirin use by children, the pharmaceutical industry voluntarily agreed to place a label warning on all adult

aspirin products leaving its factories for use in the United Kingdom, that they should not be taken by children under 12 except on medical advice. We have no jurisdiction over products for overseas sale; the control of labelling is a matter for the regulatory authority concerned.

Meningitis

Mr. Aspinwall asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress have been made in the use of the anti-meningitis vaccine at present being manufactured.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 16 February 1987]: Vaccines manufactured elsewhere for A and C strains of meningococcal meningitis are not currently licensed for general supply in the United Kingdom but may be made available to doctors for individual patients. Work currently being undertaken at the Centre for Applied Microbiological Research towards development of a vaccine for the B15 strain will inevitably take some years to complete.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Agricultural Land

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate he has made of the increase in public expenditure in 1987-88 and 1988-89 in consequence of his proposals on agricultural land announced on 9 February.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Our proposals may cost about £4 million in 1987-88 and approach £20 million in 1988-89. However, the removal of land from agricultural production and a lower level of support will reduce expenditure under the common agricultural policy. Our proposals do not imply any change in the overall public expenditure totals.

EC Pre-pension Scheme

Mr. Colvin asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish details of the European Commission's five-year pre-pension scheme designed to encourage farmers to leave the land.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The European Commission's socio-structural proposals, which include a pre-pension scheme for farmers linked to the non-cultivation of their holdings, is included in its document COM(86) 199, a copy of which is in the Library. The proposals are still under active discussion in the Council of Ministers.

Freezer Vessels (Licences)

Mr. Evans asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what criteria the Minister will be using for allocating the additional freezer vessel licences.

Mr. Gummer: Fisheries Ministers will take all relevant factors into account in considering applications for the additional licences for freezer trawlers for the pelagic fisheries.

Food Aid

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the areas of the United Kingdom where European Economic Community butter has been distributed and the number of people who have received 1 lb weight or more of this butter.

Mr. Gummer: Butter has been distributed throughout the United Kingdom. The charities concerned seek to ensure an equitable distribution of 250g packs. They do not keep records of each recipient.

Radioactive Waste

Dr. David Clark asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, further to his reply to the hon. Member for South Shields on 2 February, *Official Report*, column *512*, concerning the Fisheries Radiological Inspectorate and the atomic energy unit of his Department, if he will estimate *(a)* the number of man-years effort required of each body to undertake the three-year programme of reviewing authorisations of radioactive discharges and *(b)* the number of man-years effort required of each body to complete such a review for a typical nuclear site; whether the staffing complement of each of these bodies was increased by reasons of that review programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: It is estimated that a total of eight man years will be required on the part of both the Atomic Energy Unit and the Fisheries Radiological Inspectorate to undertake the review programme (ie four man years per unit). It is estimated that an average of 0·2 man years will be required per unit in respect of individual sites. The review of authorisations was one of the factors taken into account in setting the complement for both bodies.

Dr. David Clark asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, further to his reply to the hon. Member for South Shields on 2 February, *Official Report*, column *512*, concerning the Fisheries Radiological Inspectorate and the atomic energy unit of his Department, what is the number of professional staff in post in each such body; what is the authorised complement in each case; when the staffing levels were last reviewed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: There are seven professional staff in post in the Atomic Energy Unit. The authorised complement is 12 but will be increased to 15 from 1 April 1987. There are four professional staff in post in the Fisheries Radiological Inspectorate, not including scientific support staff from within the Directorate of Fisheries Research. The authorised complement is five. Staffing levels in respect of both bodies were last reviewed in 1986.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Weetch asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will designate at the earliest opportunity Breckland, the Suffolk river valleys, Dedham Vale and the Suffolk coast and heaths areas of outstanding natural beauty, as environmentally sensitive areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will designate west Berkshire as an environmentally sensitive area.

Mr. Donald Thompson [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 February 1987, c. *336*]: In accordance with section 18 of the Agriculture Act 1986 the new areas which we shall

designate next year will be based on the recommendations of the Countryside Commission and the Nature Conservancy Council. In England the areas which they have recommended to us and which have not yet been designated are Breckland, Clun, the North Peak, the Suffolk river valleys including Dedham Vale, the Test valley and the western part of the South Downs.

Committee of Public Accounts (Recommendations)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will list those recommendations of the Committee of Public Accounts since 1983 affecting his Department which have been implemented.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Member to the Treasury minutes published in response to the relevant PAC reports (Cmnd. 9743 and 9808). The Committee, on which the hon. Member sits, monitors Departmental progress with accepted recommendations.

Radiation

Mr. Speller asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many sheep are still affected by radioactivity as a result of the Chernobyl accident; what information he has as to the fate of those sheep kept on Exmoor and now sold; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Some 340,000 sheep either within or moved from the outstanding restricted areas of the United Kingdom under Government consents are still subject to the movement and slaughter controls introduced following the accident at Chernobyl.

There are controls on sheep originating on Exmoor since monitoring surveys demonstrated that there was not a contamination problem in that area. However blue, red or apricot marked sheep which moved there from the restricted areas of Cumbria, Wales or Scotland are still subject to certain controls. In summary, these are that the slaughter of blue-marked sheep has been permitted provided they first pass a live monitoring test and receive a distinctive Government ear tag. From 16 February similar arrangements have been applied to red-marked sheep.

Mr. Speller asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food by what means he monitors the movement and ownership of sheep affected by the Chernobyl accident; and what steps he is taking to ensure that such sheep are not sold and slaughtered for human consumption.

Mr. Donald Thompson: No sheep may leave the outstanding restricted areas of the United Kingdom without a Ministry, Welsh Office or Scottish Office consent. This consent is conditional upon the sheep concerned being live monitored for radioactivity. Any which fail the live monitoring test are identified by a special paint mark and it is an offence to slaughter sheep so marked. Ministry, local authority and Meat and Livestock Commission staff all help to ensure that sheep carrying such marks are not admitted for slaughter.

Individual categories of sheep are released from the above slaughter controls only when retesting shows that radioactivity has fallen to acceptable levels.

Advisory Committee on Pesticides

Sir Richard Body asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will set out in the *Official Report* the remuneration and expenses of members of the Advisory Committee on Pesticides.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Members of the Advisory Committee on Pesticides are paid a fee of £57 and a reading time payment of £14 per session; the chairman receives a fee of £71 and a reading time payment of £17. Remuneration for travel and subsistence is paid at official rates.

Headage Payments

Mr. McLoughlin asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has as to other European Economic Community countries in which headage payments are made on dairy cows on farms that fall within less favoured areas.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 February 1987, c. *338*]: In the United Kingdom we make payments of hill livestock compensatory allowances in excess of £110 million a year to producers in less favoured areas under the EC structures regulation. Apart from the United Kingdom, member states with designated less favoured areas have opted to pay compensatory allowances on dairy cows, subject to restrictions as to numbers and areas and variations in the levels of payment. We have confined payments to breeding cows and sheep. This, in our view, directs the available funds to the best advantage in the light of the United Kingdom's particular circumstances.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Parliamentary Papers

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Lord Privy Seal what is the reason for the recent lack of parliamentary papers in the Norman Shaw North issue office; if he will seek to ensure that Her Majesty's Stationery Office makes regular deliveries of parliamentary papers direct to that office; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: Her Majesty's Stationery Office does not make direct deliveries of parliamentary documents to the Norman Shaw North issue office because of the administrative requirement of centralised financial control and distribution. For this reason all documents are received initially at the main Vote Office stores.

Every effort will continue to be made to ensure that there is no lack of parliamentary papers at that office.

Equality Exchange

Ms. Richardson asked the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, if the House of Commons has registered as a member of the Equality Exchange, which was established by the Equal Opportunities Commission on 1 [illegible]

Mr. Beith: The House of Commons has not hitherto received any information from the Equal Opportunities Commission about the establishment of the Equality Exchange, and the possibility of registering as a member has accordingly not been considered.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 18 February 1987

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Divorce

Mr. Warren asked the Attorney-General when the report by the Law Commission on the subject of the law relating to divorce will be published; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General: There has been no report from the Law Commission on this subject.

Lord Rothschild

Mr. Dalyell asked the Attorney-General whether, pursuant to the statement by his right hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General on Friday 6 February, *Official Report*, column 1294, he will make a statement to the House once he has received the police report on Lord Rothschild.

The Solicitor-General: It would be inappropriate for my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General to make any comment on this matter before the police report has been received and a decision has been taken.

Departmental Contracts

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Attorney-General if he will list the contracts, with the subject of the assignment, awarded to management consultancy or accounting firms by the Lord Chancellor's Department in 1986, with the name of the consultants concerned.

The Solicitor-General: The following contracts were awarded to management consultancy or accounting firms by the Lord Chancellor's Department in 1986:

Firm and Subject of Assignment

Atkins Planning
Computer project support (three contracts)

CAP UK
Advice on communications procurement for Court Funds Accounting System

Coopers and Lybrand Associates
Civil Justice Review: study of commercial court

Hay MSL
Lawyers' legal aid remuneration in the higher criminal courts

Hoare Govett Ltd.
Advice on contracting-out of common investment funds in Public Trust Office

PE Information Systems Ltd.
Communications specification for Court Funds Accounting System

Peat Marwick, Mitchell and Co.
Computer project support

Plus Business Systems
Technical support with small computer systems

Touche Ross Management Consultants
Civil Justice Review: study of debt cases

"Warfare as a Whole"

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Attorney-General whether he intends to seek an injunction to prevent the distribution of the book "Warfare as a Whole" by Sir Frank Kitson.

The Solicitor-General: The manuscript is under examination by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Attorney-General whether he intends to prosecute Sir Frank Kitson under section 2 of the Official Secrets Act for including in his book "Warfare as a Whole" material in breach of national security.

The Solicitor-General: Until the examination of the manuscript is complete, my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General will not be in a position to consider this question.

BBC Scotland (Police Raid)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Attorney-General when he became aware of the warrant on 30 January of the assistant procurator fiscal of Glasgow and Strathkelvin for police action against the BBC.

The Solicitor-General: On Sunday 1 February.

EMPLOYMENT

Vredeling Directive

Sir Russell Johnston asked the Paymaster General what consideration has been given to the Vredeling directive, as amended on 13 July 1983, in the light of recent events at the Caterpillar plant, Uddingston; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The Goverment have already made it clear that they are greatly concerned about the events at the Caterpillar plant, Uddingston. They are firmly committed to the principle of employees being informed and consulted about matters which affect them and have consistently encouraged employers to develop procedures appropriate to their particular circumstances. But they remain opposed to the directive because they believe that the imposition of a rigid legal framework would disrupt existing arrangements and damage industrial relations.

Long-term Unemployed People

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General if he will provide figures for the most recently available date, and in the table form used at column 157, *Official Report*, on 29 October 1986, of the number of people who *(a)* have been interviewed under the restart programme and *(b)* have been placed into a destination by the Manpower Services Commission for the four London area manpower board areas and for the area manpower board area covering the former Merseyside county council.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The figures given in the form used by my hon. Friend in his reply of 29 October 1986 have to be used with care as they are only a measure of the

extent to which we know of direct placements made as the immediate result of an interview. This is not a measure of the total number of people who find work or training directly or indirectly as a result of the restart programme.

Seventy Five per cent. of participants agree to pursue the offer made to them at their interview and we do not know the results of all of them. The immediate placings do not include the many people who subsequently find jobs, or other openings, such as training, as a result of counselling, restart courses, or the outcome of other elements of the restart menu.

Numbers interviewed and placed for the period 12 May to 8 January.

London	*Number*
Interviewed	95,883
Placed in Jobs as a direct result of restart interviews	568
Placed on community programme	1,689
Placed in job clubs	970
Placed on enterprise allowance scheme	332
Placed on training schemes	1,350
Placed on restart courses	6,282
Placed on the voluntary projects programme or in other voluntary work	166

I am not able to apportion the totals for London to specific area manpower board areas.

Merseyside	
Interviewed	52,203
Placed in jobs as a direct result of restart interviews	374
Placed on community programme	857
Placed in job clubs	670
Placed on enterprise allowance scheme	107
Placed on training schemes	1,468
Placed on restart courses	4,344
Placed on the voluntary projects programme or in other voluntary work	255

Management Consultancy

Mr. Mates asked the Paymaster General if he will list the contracts, with the subject of the assignment, awarded to management consultancy or accountancy firms by his Department in 1985, with the name of the consultants concerned.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The following firms were awarded contracts by my Department in 1985:

FIRM AND SUBJECT OF ASSIGNMENT

Tom Critchley Associates
Study on the implications for DE of implementation of recommendations contained in the Multi-departmental review of government purchasing.

CURDS Ltd.
Review of Travel-to-work Areas.

ICL
Advice on the expansion of the DE data communications network.

ICL
To provide a Technical Enquiry Service.

LOGICA Ltd.
Advice on the use of database package for personnel data system.

PROLOG Ltd.
Advice on the expansion of the DE data communications network.

SIR Inc.
Advice on use of database package for Family Expenditure Surveys input system.

YALE DATA Ltd.
For mainframe strategy study.

Job Creation

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General what was the gross and net cost and the numbers participating in 1985-86 and 1986-87 of the *(a)* community programme, *(b)* enterprise allowance scheme, *(c)* YTS, *(d)* new workers scheme, *(e)* community industry, *(f)* job release scheme and *(g)* job-splitting scheme.

Mr. Lee: The figures are:

	Gross cost[1] *(£ million)*		*First year direct net Exchequer cost per person no longer unemployed*		*Participants*	
	1985-86	*1986-87 estimate*	*1985-86*	*1986-87 estimate*	*1985-86*	*1986-87 estimate*
Community programme	667	1,038	1,950	2,000	241,000	300,000
Enterprise allowance scheme	104	147	1,800	1,800	60,000	86,000
New workers scheme	—	9	—	1,300	—	50,000
Community industry	24	26	1,500	1,550	9,600	9,000
Job release scheme	187	112	1,850	1,850	10,000	12,000
Job-splitting scheme	0·2	1	−150	−150	268	250

[1] Excluding administrative costs.

YTS is a training measure. The concept of net Exchequer cost per person unemployed is not therefore appropriate. Relevant figures for YTS, including gross cost per annum per filled place, are as follows:

	Gross cost (£ million)		*Gross cost per annum per filled place (£)*		*Participants*	
	1985-86	*1986-87 estimate*	*1985-86*	*1986-87 estimate*	*1985-86*	*1986-87 estimate*
YTS	818	891	2,800	2,600	364,000	362,000

Restart Scheme

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General what guidance has been given to jobcentre managers and restart counsellors on the practice of restart interviewees being accompanied by a friend, adviser or other similar third party; and what is his policy on this practice.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Jobcentre staff have been told that a third party may accompany a person to a restart interview if the interviewee so wishes, so long as the friend is present to assist the restart participant with the interview.

Mr. Haynes asked the Paymaster General how many miners in Ashfield who have accepted redundancy have been ordered to report to the local Department of Employment for participation in the restart scheme.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Everyone who has been claiming unemployment related benefits for more than 12 months will be invited to a restart counselling interview by the Manpower Services Commission. We have no means of knowing how many of these are miners who have accepted redundancy. Everyone interviewed will be offered help and advice about possible steps back into employment.

Overtime

Mr. Fallon asked the Paymaster General (1) whether he will publish on a regular basis, separately, figures for overtime worked in both the public and private sectors;

(2) whether the overtime figures published in the *Employment Gazette* are compiled from separate figures for employment in the public and private sectors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The overtime figures in the *Employment Gazette* are compiled from surveys of establishments which employ operatives in manufacturing activities.

Respondents to the surveys are not asked to distinguish between public and private sector employment, and there are no plans to provide separate overtime figures for the public and private sectors.

Departmental Contracts

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Paymaster General if he will list the contracts, with the subject of the assignment, awarded to management consultancy or accounting firms by his Department in 1986, with the name of the consultants concerned.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The following firms were awarded contracts by my Department in 1986:

AMP Ltd
Software maintenance on computer system for Small Firms and Tourism Division.

Arthur Anderson
Planning support in development of user requirement for replacement computer system for Unemployment Benefit Service.

CMG Ltd
Study on use of customer help desk in Computer Operations Section.

Cooper and Lybrand Associates
Assessing the extent to which businesses incur additional costs or gain benefits from complying with changes in Government regulations.

Deloitte, Haskins and Sells
Advice to Small Firms and Tourism Division on Financial Management Review of British Tourist Authority/English Tourist Board.

Husat Research Centre
(1) Assess the impact of job designs on efficiency, effectiveness, and job satisfaction of staff in Unemployment Benefit Offices.

(2) Support in systems development for replacement computer system for the Unemployment Benefit Service.

ICL Ltd.
Consultation on computer mainframe installation.

Jenrick Ltd.
Mainframe Strategy Study.

Logica Ltd.
Assistance with implementation of personnel data system.

Mouncey and Partner
Study into National Reference Book and Electronic Publishing Service for Small Firms Centres.

NCC Ltd.
Assistance with study on mechanism for charging internally for computer services.

PA/Cambridge Economic Consultants
Consultancy Services to the Inner Cities Initiative both in respect of evaluating the progress of the initiative and helping the Inner City task forces develop projects in their areas.

Peat Marwick Mitchell and Co.
Review of the organisation of Finance and Resource Management Division.

Segal Quince Wicksteed
Study of local support Networks for small businesses.

Thompson McLintock
Consultancy services and project analysis for North Kensington Inner Cities Task Force.

Yale Data Ltd.
For Mainframe Strategy Study.

YTS

Mr. Favell asked the Paymaster General if he will state the number of YTS trainees in *(a)* the public and *(b)* the private sector.

Mr. Trippier: At 31 January 1987 there were 92,930 young people in training on YTS in the public sector and 204,662 in the private sector, as defined by the Manpower Services Commission's management information system.

Community Programme

Mr. Fatchett asked the Paymaster General what has been the impact on targeted community programme schemes in the eight task force areas of the embargo on recruitment of under 25-year-olds to community programme places in connection with the job training scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 February 1987, c. *427*]: There is no embargo on the recruitment of under-25-year-olds to the community programme. However, in the nine original job training scheme pilot areas, eligibility for under-25-year-olds is the same as for other long-term unemployed people, namely that they

should have been unemployed for at least 12 out of the last 15 months. We believe that, where good quality job training is available, it is a more positive and preferable option for most young unemployed people under the age of 25.

The effect of having community programme and job training scheme places available has been to increase the help open to people unemployed for 12 months or more.

The eight task force areas of the inner cities initiative continue to enjoy priority in the targeting of MSC programmes and the allocation of community programme places.

SCOTLAND

Glasgow Royal Infirmary (Nurses)

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many nursing staff have been employed in Glasgow royal infirmary during each of the last six years.

Mr. John MacKay: The number of whole-time equivalent nursing staff employed in Glasgow Royal infirmary at 30 September in each of the years 1980 to 1985 and at 31 March 1986 was as follows. The numbers exclude some nurses in training who are based at the Glasgow eastern college of nursing and midwifery, but who spend a proportion of their time working in the infirmary.

Year	*Number (WTE)*
1980	679·7
1981	763·1
1982	842·1
1983	875·6
1984	973·2
1985	978·9
1986	984·1

Urban Aid

Mr. Bruce asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations from voluntary organisations his Department has received regarding dual local authority sponsorship of urban aid applications.

Mr. Ancram: The only recent instance of such representations is that Aberdeen Cyrenians wrote to me in November 1986 about an application for funding under the urban progamme to provide emergency accommodation for young homeless people in Aberdeen submitted by Grampian regional council and which also involved the question of support from Aberdeen district council for the project.

Mr. Bruce asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether his Department requires dual local authority sponsorship of urban aid applications before grants will be awarded; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: Joint sponsorship of projects by regional and district councils is not a general requirement under the urban programme, but may be appropriate in some cases.

Single Homeless

Mr. Bruce asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to reply to the request for funding for a young persons' hostel in Aberdeen, from the joint working party on provision for single homeless; and is he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: No such request for funding has been received from the joint working party; consideration is, however, being given to a project submitted by Grampian regional council for urban programme funding for a project being promoted by the Aberdeen Cyrenians for emergency accommodation for young homeless people in Aberdeen. I expect to be able to give a decision about this application soon.

Roads

Mr. Henderson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the trunk road improvements funded by his Department in north-east Fife since 1979 and their costs together with those in hand or planned for early implementation.

Mr. Ancram: The information is as follows:

		Estimated Cost £
Schemes Completed Since 1979		
A91	Junction with A92 at Dairsie	482,000
A91	East of Melville Lodge	210,000
A914	Junction with B9129 at Ladybank	90,000
Planned Schemes		
A91	Auchtermuchty Bypass	3,700,000
A91	Junction with Strathkinness Road at Edenside	160,000
A91	Junction with A919 at Guardbridge	155,000
A914	Junction with C20 at Freuchie	170,000

Dornoch Firth and Ayr Road

Mr. Allan Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current estimate of the number of vehicles which will use the Dornoch road bridge annually.

Mr. Ancram: It is estimated that upwards of 800,000 vehicles will use the Dornoch road bridge in the first year following its expected opening to traffic in 1991.

Mr. Allan Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his current estimate of the number of vehicles which will use the Ayr road route annually.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. and learned Friend is responsible only for that section of the Ayr road route which is a trunk road, between Malletsheugh and the former Glasgow city boundary. It is estimated that upwards of 6 million vehicles will use this section of the new road in the first year following its expected opening to traffic in 1991.

Mr. Allan Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his current estimate of the total cost of *(a)* the Dornoch road bridge and *(b)* the Ayr road route.

Mr. Ancram: Estimated costs at current prices are as follows:

	£ million	
(a) Dornoch road bridge (including approach roads)		21
(b) Ayr road route		
Trunk road section	13	
Local authority section	40	53

Departmental Contracts

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the contracts, with the subject of the assignment, awarded to management consultancy or accounting firms by his Department in 1986, with the name of the consultants concerned.

Mr. Rifkind: The following contracts were awarded to management consultancy and accounting firms in 1986.

Firm and Subject of Assignment

BP International Ltd.
Production of a Scottish Office Procurement Manual.

Coopers and Lybrand Associates Ltd.
Provision of Training Sessions on Marketing Awareness for the Custodial Staff in the Historic Buildings and Monuments Directorate.

Coopers and Lybrand Associates Ltd.
Study of Investment Function, Scottish Development Agency.

Ernst and Whinney
Study into Management Organisation and Procedures appropriate to the Scottish Legal Aid Board.

Hay—MSL Management Consultants Ltd.
Review of the System of Grading certain senior Administrative, Finance and Nursing posts employed by Health Boards.

Inbucon Management Consultants Ltd.
Study of Financial Management, Scottish Development Agency.

Inbucon Management Consultants Ltd.
Review of NHS Linen Services in Scotland.

Inbucon Management Consultants Ltd.
Financial Management Survey of the Highlands and Islands Development Board.

SCICON Ltd.
To assist in the preparation of a common operational requirement for a computerised Patient Administration System and the evaluation of tenders.

Schools (Iodine Tablets)

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to the schools in each region in Scotland which keep supplies of potassium iodate or other iodine tablets for use by pupils in case of emergency.

Mr. Rifkind: This information is not available centrally.

River Elbe, Lingerabay, Harris

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the latest position with regard to the proposal to deposit silt dredged from the River Elbe at Lingerabay on Harris, and the means by which environmental objections are to be overcome.

Mr. John MacKay: There have been no further developments since an application for planning permission to deposit silt dredgings from the River Elbe in Harris was withdrawn in March 1986.

Community Charge

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those organisations that made a submission on the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government," Cmnd. 9714, and indicate which of those organisations were unreservedly in favour of a community charge.

Mr. Ancram: I refer the hon. Member to the replies I gave on 1 December 1986 to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen), at column 447-50, and on 12 January 1987 to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), at column 81.

Coastal Pollution

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when, over the last 10 years, surveys have been conducted of the concentrations of copper, chromium, cadmium, zinc, lead, nickel, mercury, arsenic, boron, organo-chlorine compounds and PCBs in sediments and sea water around the coast of Harris or other parts of the Outer Hebrides; by whom the surveys were conducted; and what were the results.

Mr. John MacKay: There have been no specific surveys of sea water around the Outer Hebrides in the last 10 years. However, a survey in western Scottish coastal waters undertaken by Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland scientists in 1984 showed typical concentrations as follows:

Copper	0·1-0·2/ugl $^{-1}$
Cadmium	10-15 ngl $^{-1}$
Lead	10-15 ngl $^{-1}$

The cadmium and copper values agree with samples taken in a recent survey off the Scottish west coast by a German vessel, which produced nickel concentrations of some 0·18-0·22/ugl $^{-1}$.

There are no recent reliable data for chromium, zinc, mercury or arsenic, but older data suggest concentrations of zinc of 1-3/ugl $^{-1}$ and mercury of less than 1 ngl $^{-1}$.

No information is available about concentrations of organo-chlorines or PCBs in that area.

Boron is not generally considered to be a contaminent as it is relatively abundant in sea water.

Prisoners (Alcoholism and Suicide Rates)

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will list the levels of alcoholism and suicide rates for each of the prisons in Scotland for each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Lang: Information is published in the annual report "Prisons in Scotland", copies of which are available in the Library.

The numbers of inmates in penal establishments in Scotland who *(a)* received treatment for symptoms associated with alcohol abuse, and *(b)* died as a result of self-inflicted injuries in the years 1979-86 are as follows:

	(a)	*(b)*
1986	n.a.	[1]7
1985	1,165	7
1984	1,699	5
1983	1,880	6
1982	1,888	3
1981	1,085	3
1980	921	1
1979	800	3
1978	724	4
1977	649	3

[1] Figure for 1986 not yet published.

Training Schemes

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will publish figures showing for each of

Edinburgh's 62 district wards the number of people taken off the unemployment register as a result of the restart programme, the proportion of these people who have found full-time jobs, the number of people in each of the schemes operating under restart, and the number of people currently on Government training schemes.

Mr. Lang: The information is not available in the precise form requested.

A total of approximately 1,400 people in Edinburgh have ceased to claim benefit since being identified under the restart programme. It is impossible, however, to determine how many of these left the unemployment register as a direct result of either the invitation to attend an interview or the counselling itself. Between 1 July 1986, the date on which restart commenced, and 12 February 1987, the numbers of people in Edinburgh who were placed in employment or in one of the Government's employment, enterprise or training schemes as a consequence of restart interviews were as shown in the table. In addition to these figures, a number of people were referred to other specialist services for example, Professional and Executive Recruitment, Disablement Resettlement Officer, Careers Service, and so on. No statistics are available to indicate how many of those placed on restart courses have subsequently obtained employment or other forms of training.

	Number
Commenced employment	25
Placed on Community Programme	6
Placed in Jobclub	74
Started own business under Enterprise Allowance Scheme	2
MSC training course	18
Employment Rehabilitation Centre	25
Restart courses	845

Peterhead Prison (Inquiry)

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will state the terms of reference of the inquiry into Peterhead by Mr. Tom Buyers, Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons.

Mr. Lang: I refer to my previous reply to the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) of 18 November 1986, at column 53.

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide a table showing expenditure within his responsibility for the years 1978-79 to 1987-88, inclusive; and if he will express this in estimated 1987-88 outturn prices.

Mr. Rifkind: The information requested is set out in the table.

Total public expenditure within the Secretary of State for Scotland's responsibility

£ million

	Cash	*Real terms*
1978-79	3,712	7,498
1979-80	4,552	7,868
1980-81	5,383	7,844
1981-82	5,839	7,747
1982-83	6,233	7,711
1983-84	6,701	7,936
1984-85	7,050	8,003
1985-86	7,227	7,723
1986-87	7,806	8,098
1987-88	7,960	7,960

Notes:

1. The cash figures are taken from successive editions of "Public Expenditure: A Commentary on the Scotland Programme".
2. The figures for 1978-79 to 1985-86 are outturn; the figure for 1986-87 is estimated outturn; and the figure for 1987-88 is planned provision.
3. The real terms figures are the cash figures adjusted by the GDP deflator (1987-88 = 100).
4. Figures have been rounded to the nearest £1 million.

Scottish Development Agency

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the level of funding of the Scottish Development Agency by his Department in each year since 1979-80 expressed in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* real terms based on constant 1980-81 prices and *(c)* real terms based on constant 1986-87 prices.

Mr. Rifkind [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 February 1987, c. 458]: The information is as follows:

SDA Expenditure 1979-1987

(£ million)

	Gross Expenditure (outturn)	*1980-81 Prices*	*1986-87 Prices*
1979-80	89·6	95·6	134·0
1980-81	97·6	97·6	136·7
1981-82	97·8	89·0	124·7
1982-83	123·2	104·5	146·5
1983-84	117·0	95·0	133·2
1984-85	117·7	91·6	128·5
1985-86	131·4	96·5	135·3
1986-87 (Estimate)	133·2	95·0	133·2
1987-88 (Estimate)	136·0	93·5	131·0

Notes

(1) The figures provided represent gross grant-in-aid (inclusive of receipts), new issues of public dividend capital and borrowing from the National Loans Fund and European Coal and Steel Community.

(2) The estimate for 1986-87 is £3·2 million (in cash terms) lower than the original provision of £136·4 million: this reflects a reduced expenditure requirement owing to changes in the phasing of projects.

(3) The figures for 1987-88 represent the Government's public expenditure plans and are subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Estimates.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Departmental Contracts

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he will list the contracts, with the subject of the assignment, awarded to management consultancy or accounting firms by the Lord Advocate's Department in 1986, with the name of the consultants concerned.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: One such contract was awarded during 1986:

Firm	*Subject of Assignment*
PA Computers and Telecommunications	To assess the financial and product viability of Imlaw Inc. of America

Official Secrets Act 1911 (Warrants)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he has any plans to seek to amend section 9 of the Official Secrets Act 1911 to provide for warrants under that section to be issued by a sheriff.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Amendment of the Official Secrets Acts would not fall within my ministerial responsibility.

BBC Scotland (Police Raid)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland, pursuant to the answer of 13 February, *Official Report*, column *371*, what steps the procurator fiscal of Glasgow took to ensure that he was legally justified in applying to the sheriff for a search warrant for the BBC.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I refer the hon. Member to the answers by my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate in another place on 4 February 1987, at columns 199-205, and to my answer, at columns 259-60 on 13 February 1987.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland why officials of the Scottish Office were informed on Friday 30 January of the granting of a search warrant against the BBC in Glasgow.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: No officials of the Scottish Office were informed by officials of my Department on Friday 30 January of the granting of a search warrant against the BBC in Glasgow.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland at what time on Friday 30 January the first warrant was granted for a police raid on BBC, Glasgow; and at what time the Lord Advocate informed the Secretary of State for Scotland of the grant of a warrant.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The first warrant was granted at approximately 2.15 pm on Friday 30 January. The Lord Advocate did not inform the Secretary of State for Scotland of the grant of a warrant at any time.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland who altered the typed date on the original communication relating to entry to the BBC, signed by an assistant procurator fiscal, from 30 January to 31 January; and why.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The typed date on the petition for a search warrant for the BBC Scotland premises was altered by the assistant procurator fiscal before he presented the petition to Sheriff Lockhart on 31 January 1987.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland whether a justice of the peace signed the warrant for the police search of the BBC premises in Glasgow.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: No.

Sheriffs (Warrants)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland under what authority sheriffs for any particular district in Scotland are empowered to issue warrants without reference to a justice of the peace.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Sheriffs have authority to issue search warrants at common law, under the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975 and under other statutes, and no reference to a justice of the peace is necessary in such cases.

PRIME MINISTER

Police (Ministerial Responsibility)

Mr. Ashby asked the Prime Minister if she will list each police force in the United Kingdom showing the Minister ultimately responsible, the number employed in each force and the cost in 1985-86 of running each force.

The Prime Minister: The table gives the information for each police force in England and Wales and in Scotland and for the Royal Ulster Constabulary for which my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Home Department, for Scotland and for Northern Ireland respectively have some statutory responsibility. Information is also given for the British Transport police, the Ministry of Defence police, the Royal Parks police and the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority constabulary; statutory responsibility for these forces rest with my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Transport, for Defence, for the Environment and for Energy respectively. There are also some other small bodies of constables operating on private property which are established under private legislation, which are not directly answerable to a Minister, and on which information is not held centrally.

Police Area	*Actual strength on 31 December 1986*				
England and Wales	*Police Officers*	*Civilians*		*Traffic Wardens*	*Police Cadets*
		Full-time	*Part-time*		
Avon and Somerset	2,982	695	49	127	—
Bedfordshire	995	268	69	33	—
Cambridgeshire	1,148	346	77	43	—
Cheshire	1,823	442	125	43	—
Cleveland	1,467	309	93	26	—
Cumbria	1,121	274	74	24	14
Derbyshire	1,761	641	179	77	—
Devon and Cornwall	2,753	821	98	115	—
Dorset	1,193	414	42	67	12
Durham	1,300	455	129	21	—
Dyfed Powys	929	170	55	22	—
Essex	2,716	718	183	111	12
Gloucestershire	1,152	206	91	33	—
Greater Manchester	6,725	1,608	342	194	—

England and Wales	Police Officers	Civilians		Traffic Wardens	Police Cadets
		Full-time	Part-time		
Gwent	973	264	63	22	10
Hampshire	3,079	723	160	92	—
Hertfordshire	1,579	355	118	84	—
Humberside	1,962	508	133	67	—
Kent	2,877	815	191	118	—
Lancashire	3,091	762	372	94	—
Leicestershire	1,716	417	87	93	—
Lincolnshire	1,157	264	108	22	—
Merseyside	4,540	1,164	174	151	—
Norfolk	1,292	296	60	39	—
Northamptonshire	1,041	296	54	35	—
Northumbria	3,361	1,024	154	148	—
North Wales	1,268	331	101	33	—
North Yorkshire	1,348	289	83	23	—
Nottinghamshire	2,207	495	131	70	—
South Wales	3,099	874	164	91	—
South Yorkshire	2,846	746	128	65	—
Staffordshire	2,106	629	73	39	60
Suffolk	1,136	365	78	36	—
Surrey	1,606	365	115	42	—
Sussex	2,781	706	179	119	—
Thames Valley	3,393	1,068	159	115	—
Warwickshire	961	277	42	25	6
West Mercia	1,926	686	134	49	—
West Midlands	6,570	1,478	321	228	19
West Yorkshire	5,116	1,182	278	159	62
Wiltshire	1,037	317	68	44	—
City of London	770	322	21	65	—
Metropolitan	26,930	12,827	876	1,689	233
TOTALS: England and Wales	119,825	37,152	6,231	4,793	428

Police area
Actual strength on 31 December 1986

	Police officers	Civilians		Traffic wardens	Police cadets
		Full-time	Part-time		
Scotland					
Central Scotland	523	90	31	21	9
Dumfries and Galloway	322	65	24	12	7
Fife	716	127	25	36	14
Grampian	958	219	38	54	18
Lothian and Borders	2,364	604	115	170	—
Northern	604	140	129	23	1
Strathclyde	6,710	1,317	191	191	—
Tayside	982	206	55	39	—
TOTAL SCOTLAND	13,179	2,768	608	546	49
Northern Ireland					
Royal Ulster Constabulary	8,234	1,998	200	135	—
TOTAL UNITED KINGDOM	141,238	41,918	7,039	5,474	477

England and Wales Provisional Net Expenditure 1985/86 (£000)

Police Area	Net Expenditure Police Relevant for Grant	Other Expenditure	Net Total Revenue Expenditure
Avon and Somerset	65,919	1,052	66,971
Bedfordshire	22,278	300	22,578
Cambridgeshire	27,051	342	27,393
Cheshire	37,755	852	38,607
Cleveland	31,029	488	31,517
Cumbria	25,769	354	26,123
Derbyshire	40,391	546	40,937
Devon and Cornwall	64,910	820	65,730
Dorset	29,418	370	29,788
Durham	28,150	391	28,541
Dyfed Powys	18,813	304	19,117
Essex	57,904	799	58,703
Gloucestershire	23,320	363	23,683
Greater Manchester	147,697	2,091	149,788

Police Area	Net Expenditure Police Relevant for Grant	Other Expenditure	Net Total Revenue Expenditure
Gwent	20,619	298	20,917
Hampshire	68,241	925	69,166
Hertfordshire	34,572	480	35,052
Humberside	43,976	606	44,582
Kent	66,276	719	66,995
Lancashire	66,740	717	67,457
Leicestershire	37,801	706	38,507
Lincolnshire	25,594	368	25,962
Merseyside	103,448	1,463	104,911
Norfolk	27,628	393	28,021
Northamptonshire	23,450	320	23,770
Northumbria	78,164	1,007	79,171
North Wales	27,637	247	27,884
North Yorkshire	29,410	425	29,835
Nottinghamshire	47,427	712	48,139
South Wales	68,001	933	68,934
South Yorkshire	63,901	887	64,788
Staffordshire	44,521	640	45,161
Suffolk	26,836	372	27,208
Surrey	34,673	504	35,177
Sussex	57,617	849	58,446
Thames Valley	75,787	1,140	76,927
Warwickshire	21,927	278	22,205
West Mercia	43,852	518	44,370
West Midlands	141,015	2,354	143,369
West Yorkshire	106,412	1,587	107,999
Wiltshire	23,270	319	23,589
City of London	24,396	226	24,622
Metropolitan	748,660	22,189	770,849
TOTALS: England and Wales	2,802,255	51,254	2,853,509

Police area	Provisional net expenditure 1985-86 (£ thousands)		
	Net expenditure relevant for police grant	Other expenditure[1]	Net total revenue expenditure
Scotland			
Central Scotland	10,686	183	10,869
Dumfries and Galloway	6,796	120	6,916
Fife	13,467	372	13,839
Grampian	21,602	354	21,955
Lothian and Borders	50,207	903	51,110
Northern	13,851	177	14,028
Strathclyde	140,294	2,491	142,785
Tayside	21,995	548	22,543
Totals Scotland	278,898	5,147	284,045
Northern Ireland			
Royal Ulster Constabulary	n/a	n/a	278,100
Total United Kingdom	[2]3,081,153	[2]56,401	3,415,654

Notes

[1] Whilst "other expenditure" represents expenditure that does not rank for police grant it is expenditure that falls to the individual police authority to meet; and counts as part of the net revenue expenditure of the force. Most of this "other expenditure" represents authorities' contributions to the cost of common police services and thus is not a direct reflection of the cost of running the individual force as implied by the force strength.

[2] These expenditure sub-totals are only in respect of England, Wales and Scotland.

Police force	Strength at 31 December 1986		Expenditure in 1985-86 £ thousands
	Police officers	Civilians	
British Transport police	1,834	225	39,972
Ministry of Defence police	4,711	92	85,000
Royal parks police	151	5	2,184
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority constabulary	666	n/a	10,800

Bain and Company

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister why she visited Bain and Company in New York while on an official visit to the United States of America.

The Prime Minister: I have been to New York on only four occasions since 4 May 1979, all in connection with visits to the United Nations. No trace of any visit to Bain and Company has been found in our records and I have no recollection of any such visit.

Guinness plc

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Prime Minister if she is satisfied with co-ordination between the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, the Director of Public Prosecutions and the police in relation to Guinness plc inquiries; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The prosecution of offenders is not a matter for me. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to him by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard), the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, who has responsibility for corporate and consumers affairs, on 17 February, and to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Sir A. Fletcher) by my right hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General on 17 February.

TRANSPORT

Air Fares

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Transport what action he is taking to reduce fares for air travel and to ensure that these are based upon arrangements which are more comprehensible to the traveller.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Government have already secured a number of major liberal bilateral air service agreements with other European countries. We are now concentrating our efforts on obtaining a worthwhile agreement on air transport liberalisation in the European Community. The proposals now under discussion were tabled by the United Kingdom presidency as a first step towards the 1992 internal market target date. They include measures which, if adopted, would allow cheaper, less confusing fares to be introduced in off-peak periods; and would make it easier for airlines to introduce business fares on the basis of their own commercial judgment of the needs of the market.

Committee of Public Accounts (Recommendations)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will list those recommendations of the Committee of Public Accounts since 1983 affecting his Department which have been implemented.

Mr. Moore: I refer the hon. Member to the Treasury minutes published in response to the 7th, 11th, 13th and 17th reports, 1983-84, 9th report 1984-85, and the 2nd, 5th, 19th, 36th and 49th reports 1985-86 (Cmnd. 9178, 9226, 9325, 9546, 9755, 9776, 9808 and 9917). The Committee, on which the hon. Member serves, monitors departmental progress with accepted recommendations.

M63 (Widening)

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement regarding the progress of the road-widening work on the M63.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Two of the three main contracts for widening of the M63 between junctions 1 and 7 west of Manchester started about 12 months ago. Work is progressing well. One contract (junctions 5 to 7) is programmed to finish in summer 1988, and the other (junctions 1 to 3 including Barton bridge) early in 1989.

Construction of the final section (junctions 3 to 5) should start in about six months time and be finished by autumn 1989.

Railways

Mr. Snape asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has about total state assistance to railways in each of the European Community member states, in the most recent year for which information is available *(a)* in pound sterling as a total sum and per head of population and *(b)* as a percentage of gross domestic product.

Mr. David Mitchell: The latest available data are for 1984:

State assistance to railway undertakings

	£ million	*Per head (£s)*	*Percentage of GDP*
Luxembourg	57	154	2·25
Belgium	761	77	1·34
Italy	4,054	71	1·55
West Germany	2,454	40	0·53
France	1,773	32	0·48
Denmark	194	38	0·47
Netherlands	407	28	0·44
Great Britain	936	17	0·29
Ireland	65	18	0·49
Greece	93	9	0·37

Notes:
1. There are substantial variations between countries in accounting systems and in the arrangements for financial support. The figures only provide a broad comparison.
2. State assistance is defined to include revenue and capital account but to exclude pension obligations.
3. Sterling equivalents have been calculated at average 1984 exchange rates.
4. Northern Ireland railways are not included.

Bus Companies

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many bus companies he expects to be in operation at the end of 1987 compared to the number in operation at the beginning of the current year.

Mr. David Mitchell: I expect the overall number to stay broadly the same, though deregulation of local bus services means that there are now new opportunities for companies to come into the industry. There are also better prospects for existing companies, if they operate efficiently and provide the public with the services they want.

Departmental Contracts

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the contracts, with the subject of

the assignment, awarded to management consultancy or accounting firms by his Department in 1986, with the name of the consultants concerned.

Mr. Moore: Comprehensive records of all contracts with consultancy firms are not held centrally, and it would be disproportionately expensive to collect all the information required. The following list identifies those management and accountancy consultancies which began in 1986 and are valued at £10,000 or more:

Firm and Subject of Assignment

Arthur Young
Audit of the accounts of the Civil Aviation Authority.
Review of General Lighthouse authorities' tender vessel service requirement.
Preparation of accounts for the General Lighthouse Fund.

Christine Howarth Ltd.
Advice on management and organisation.

Cooper and Lybrand Associates
Advice on the implementation of a major computer strategy.

J. Henry Schroder Wagg and Co.
Financial advice to assist the assessment of proposals for a third Thames crossing at Dartford.

K. M. G. Thomson McLintock
Audit of London Regional Transport's DTp grant.

Peat, Marwick, F. Mitchell and Co.
Joint management review of the Woolwich Ferry and associated tunnels (with Greenwich LB).

Price Waterhouse
Audit of the accounts of the British Railways Board.
Accounting advice in respect of the setting up of Public Airport Companies under the Airports Act 1986.
Commercial costing at Transport and Road Research Laboratory.

Q International Ltd.
Feasibility study on the further exploitation of facilities at the Transport and Road Research Laboratory.

Touche Ross and Co.
Advice on the proposed disposal of British Transport Advertising.

Airport Charges

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to seek to increase airport charges for certain aircraft where he has information that those aircraft were manufactured, in whole or in part, outside the United Kingdom and the manufacturers have received subsidies from their own Governments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend has no such plans. Airport charges have to be set in the light of international obligations as to non-discrimination.

Search and Rescue Helicopter Service

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is his latest estimated date for the provision of a search and rescue service helicopter in north-west Scotland, based on the Outer Hebrides; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Tendering action is now in hand. The precise date for the provision of a search and rescue helicopter for north-west Scotland will depend on consideration of the responses to invitations. This will be completed as soon as possible.

British Airways

Mr. Brandon-Bravo asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total cost of the flotation of British Airways.

Mr. Moore: The cost (excluding VAT) to the Government in 1986-87 of the sale is provisionally estimated as follows:

United Kingdom sale	*£ million*
Advisers' fees	2·0
Marketing	6·5
Receiving banks	6·0
Underwriting and selling commissions	8·5
Overseas sales	5·5
	28·5

This represents less than 3·5 per cent. of the gross proceeds.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

South Africa

68. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if Her Majesty's Government will take steps to stop any importation of arms, ammunition and military equipment from South Africa into the United Kingdom, or via the United Kingdom to other countries.

Mr. Alan Clark: I am satisfied that the measures already taken are adequate.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what estimate he has made of the likely change in the level of exports and imports of manufactures as a result of the facility provided by the opening of a Channel tunnel on the forecast date.

Mr. Butcher: The opening of a Channel tunnel should help to provide both cheaper imports and more competitive exports, directly and by providing competition for other modes of transport. Such data as are available at present are too imprecise for useful forecasts to be made with any competence.

Industrial Aid

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what level of industrial aid has been given to the north-west of England in the last 12 months.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Under the major schemes of financial assistance available from this Department, the total amount paid to companies and businesses in the north-west from 1 February 1986 to 31 January 1987 was £136·4 million.

Interest Rates

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will seek to amend the Consumer

Credit Act so as to require banks to notify customers of any change in the rate of interest on an overdraft not previously agreed.

Mr. Howard: I have no plans to make such an amendment to the Consumer Credit Act in respect of overdrafts not previously agreed. Such overdrafts are an informal and flexible facility which offer considerable benefits to customers and to require written information to be provided would impose an undesirable burden on lenders and might operate to the detriment of customers. In the case of agreed overdrafts, however, an amendment will be made in due course to the Consumer Credit Act to implement the provisions of the Consumer Credit Directive which was adopted in December 1986. Where an overdraft is agreed in advance the directive requires certain information, including the interest rate, to be notified to the consumer at the time that the agreement is made and subsequently where there is a change in the terms of the agreement.

Guinness plc

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he now expects to receive the report of his inspectorate's investigations into the Guinness company.

Mr. Howard: The investigation is progressing with all possible expedition, but I cannot say when a report will be received.

Regional Aid

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the total annual amount of regional aid paid to firms in *(a)* the north-west, *(b)* Lancashire, *(c)* Merseyside and *(d)* Greater Manchester in each year from 1976 to 1986; and if he will also express these figures at 1986 comparable prices.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I regret that the information requested is not available in the form required and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, I can provide the following total of regional assistance paid to firms in the north-west.

Financial Year	*Total Payments of Assistance £000's (actual figures at date)*	*Total Payments of Assistance £000's (1985-86 value)*
1976-77	60,162	143,495
1977-78	62,535	130,814
1978-79	104,664	197,839
1979-80	81,061	131,109
1980-81	124,580	169,958
1981-82	158,982	197,434
1982-83	115,830	134,169
1983-84	96,959	107,546
1984-85	93,205	99,026
1985-86	75,108	75,108

Notes:

(1) The payments of assistance comprises amount of grant paid under old and more recently new regional development grant schemes, and payments under regional selective assistance.

(2) The source of these figures is the annual reports under the Industry Act 1972 and the Industrial Development Act 1982, and data available from DTI NWRO.

(3) The regional development grant component of the total excludes Cumbria in most years, while the regional selective assistance component includes Cumbria.

Departmental Contracts

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the contracts, with the subject of the assignment, awarded to management consultancy or accounting firms by his Department in 1986, with the names of the consultants concerned.

Mr. Butcher: The following is the list for the 1986 calendar year:

Firm and Subject of Assignment

Graham Bannock and Partners Ltd.
Export Study

Batalas Ltd.
Appraisal of Gas Standards

British Electricity International Ltd.
Power Station Study

British Institute of Management
Management Education Study

British Market Research Bureau Ltd.
Study of Home Accidents

Brown and Root (UK) Ltd.
Advice on Purchaser/Supplier Relationships

Coopers and Lybrand Associates Ltd.
Financial Appraisal

Coopers and Lybrand Associates Ltd.
Area Technology Study

Coopers and Lybrand Associates Ltd.
United Kingdom Space Programmes Study

Coopers and Lybrand Associates Ltd.
Advice on Programme Funding

Coopers and Lybrand Associates Ltd.
Advice on BOTB Charges

Deloitte Haskins and Sells Ltd.
Railway Survey

Economists Advisory Group Ltd./ Michael Shortland Associates
Evaluation of Computer Aided Design and Test Equipment Support Scheme

ECOTEC Research and Consultancy Ltd.
Pollution Abatement Study

Epigram Associates Ltd.
Safety Awareness Campaign

Ewbank Preece Power and Water Ltd.
Advice on Electrification Project

Ewbank Preece Power and Water Ltd.
Project Monitoring Advice

General Technology Systems Ltd.
Advice on Exploitation of Research

Gilbert Associates (Europe) Ltd.
National Quality Campaign Review

IBIS Information Services Ltd.
National Quality Campaign

Inbucon Management Consultants Ltd.
NPL Transport Review

Inbucon Management Consultants Ltd.
Study of Audit Practice

Inbucon Management Consultants Ltd.
Export Intelligence Service Study

Landell Mills Commodities Studies Ltd.
Natural Rubber Muliticlient Study

MIL Research Ltd.
Regional Office Study.

MVA Consultancy Ltd.
Advice on Publicity for Home Safety.

P-E Consulting Services Ltd.
Advice on Patent Office Organisation.

Research Associates (Stone) Ltd.
Evaluation of Small Engineering Firms Investment Schemes.

Research Surveys of Great Britain Ltd.
Electric Blanket Safety Campaign.

Robson Rhodes
Financial Appraisal.

The Technical Change Centre
Future Health Care Study.

KMG Thomson McLintock
Advice on Office Automation.

Touche Ross Management Consultants
Railway Staff Training Assessment.

Touche Ross Management Consultants
Study of Overseas Hydro-Electric Scheme.

Transmark
Advice on Competitors Practices.

The Wyatt Company (UK) Ltd.
Quantitative Staff Grading System.

Defence Exports

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what percentage of total visible exports are accounted for by defence exports.

Mr. Alan Clark: The latest figures available are for 1985. Exports of identified defence equipment, as defined in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1986" (table 2.8), accounted for 1 per cent. of the United Kingdom's total visible exports for that year.

Telecommunications (Orbital Slots)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many orbital slots were filed with the International Telecommunications Union by his Department in 1984, 1985 and 1986.

Mr. Pattie: Three in 1984, none in 1985 and five in 1986.

Securities and Investments Board

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry which members of the Securities and Investments Board meet the requirements of paragraph 1(3) of schedule 7 to the Financial Services Act 1986 in respect of persons carrying on investment business who are sole traders with a commission income not greater than £25,000 per annum.

Mr. Howard: The Securities and Investments Board has recently requested the transfer to it of powers under the Financial Services Act. Its governing body includes both persons with experience of investment business and other persons. I cannot anticipate the decision whether the board satisfies the requirements laid down in the Act. I am not aware that any present members of the board are engaged in business of a kind described by my hon. Friend. However, members of the board have been appointed on a personal not a representative basis.

United States (Distribution Licences)

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what protection he intends to provide to United Kingdom companies which are asked or required to open their books to United States Government officials under threat of supply denial; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: I have not yet announced a decision about the United States request for audit visits under the distribution licence system.

GATT (EC-United States Agreement)

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make available the text of the recent decision by the Council of Ministers of the European Community concerning the agreement between the Community and the United States of America for the conclusion of negotiations under GATT article XXIV.6.

Mr. Alan Clark: Copies are available in the Library of the House and in the Vote Office.

Jaguar Rover Australia

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when Rover Group expects to complete the sale of its Australian operating subsidiary, Jaguar Rover Australia.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand that Rover Group has announced that it has sold its Australian operating subsidiary, JRA Limited, to a new consortium company, JRA Holdings Ltd. The consortium comprises JRA management, Rover Group and Jaguar and a group of institutional investors led by Citicorp Capital Investors Australian Ltd. and the Byvest Management Buy-out Group.

As part of the agreement Rover Group and Jaguar will each subscribe 20 per cent. of the equity of the new holding company. The management unconditionally holds 15 per cent. of the equity, which could be increased to 25 per cent. if certain performance targets are met over the next five years.

The business of JRA will be unchanged following the sale.

Following the completion of the sale of JRA, and notwithstanding Rover Group's minority shareholding in the new holding company, the Government will accept no further responsibility for ensuring the obligations of the company are met.

Oil (Exports and Imports)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will publish in the *Official Report*, a table showing imports and exports of *(a)* crude oil and *(b)* petroleum products in terms of weight and

value for the United Kingdom and such information as is available to him about the United States of America, Japan, Germany, France, Italy, Holland and Belgium for 1972, 1979, 1985 and to the latest available date in 1986.

Mr. Alan Clark [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 February 1987]: The available information is in the following tables.

Trade in Crude Oil[1]

	1972		1979		1985		[2]1986	
	Exports	*Imports*	*Exports*	*Imports*	*Exports*	*Imports*	*Exports*	*Imports*
United Kingdom								
$ Billion	n/a	2·3	5.8	7·8	16·7	5·5	9·2	3·6
Million tonnes	n/a	104·5	38·8	57·9	79·0	26·1	82·1	32·6
United States of America								
$ Billion	n/a	2·4	0·4	49·0	0·2	34·1	n/a	15·6
Million tonnes	n/a	123·0	3·7	323·8	1·1	155·0	n/a	[3]135
Japan								
$ Billion	n/a	3·6	n/a	32·5	n/a	34·2	n/a	18·1
Million tonnes	n/a	195·9	n/a	232·5	n/a	164·5	n/a	[3]144
Federal Republic of Germany								
$ Billion	n/a	2·3	n/a	16·4	n/a	13·5	n/a	6·8
Million tonnes	n/a	102·6	n/a	107·4	n/a	65·2	n/a	56·1
France								
$ Billion	n/a	2·7	n/a	16·9	n/a	14·1	n/a	6·9
Million tonnes	n/a	121·1	n/a	125·8	n/a	68·5	n/a	56·0
Italy								
$ Billion	n/a	2·4	n/a	14·7	0·1	13·3	n/a	7·1
Million tonnes	n/a	91·1	n/a	109·3	0·3	64·9	0·1	60·1
Netherlands								
$ Billion	n/a	1·9	n/a	8·9	0·2	8·4	0·7	5·0
Million tonnes	n/a	90·5	n/a	61·2	1·3	40·3	5·7	44·3
Belgium/Luxembourg								
$ Billion	n/a	0·9	n/a	4·3	n/a	3·2	n/a	2·1
Million tonnes	n/a	44·0	n/a	31·6	n/a	15·5	n/a	17·2

[1] 1972-SITC (Rev. 1) 331.01. Other years, SITC (Rev.2) 333.
[2] United Kingdom—January to December.
United States of America—January to August.
Japan—January to November (including partly refined oil).
Other countries—January to October.
[3] Estimate.
n/a Not available.
Sources: OECD (1986—Eurostat and National Sources).

Trade in Petroleum Products[1]

	1972		1979		1985		[2]1986	
	Exports	*Imports*	*Exports*	*Imports*	*Exports*	*Imports*	*Exports*	*Imports*
United Kingdom								
$ Billion	0·5	0·6	3·1	3·3	4·0	5·1	2·8	2·8
Million tonnes	19·4	23·3	13·8	16·7	16·3	24·5	17·1	22·5
United States of America								
$ Billion	0·4	1·9	1·6	10·5	4·5	17·4	2·5	n/a
Million tonnes	n/a	n/a	n/a	68·4	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Japan								
$ Billion	0·1	0·8	0·2	5·5	0·4	n/a	n/a	4·1
Million tonnes	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	6·5	n/a	n/a
Federal Republic of Germany								
$ Billion	n/a	1·0	2·1	10·2	2·3	10·6	1·5	7·0
Million tonnes	n/a	36·2	9·1	40·6	8·8	46·4	6·2	43·8
France								
$ Billion	0·4	0·3	3·2	2·6	2·8	4·8	1·7	3·3
Million tonnes	n/a	8·9	17·1	13·5	12·0	22·1	10·0	22·0
Italy								
$ Billion	0·8	0·2	4·6	2·0	3·5	6·1	2·3	2·9
Million tonnes	n/a	5·7	24·5	12·5	14·8	32·4	15·6	24·6
Netherlands								
$ Billion	1·6	0·2	8·1	3·7	10·1	4·6	7·2	2·9
Million tonnes	70·4	8·1	44·3	16·8	43·1	20·0	40·7	17·7
Belgium/Luxembourg								
$ Billion	0·4	0·2	3·4	2·1	3·2	3·5	2·6	2·0
Million tonnes	13·4	7·5	14·5	10·9	14·7	16·5	14·2	15·3

[1] 1972-SITC (Rev. 1) 331 + 332 less 33101. Other years, SITC (Rev.2) 334 and 335.
[2] United Kingdom—January to December.
United States of America—January to August.
Japan—January to November.

Other countries—January to October.
n/a Not available.
Sources: OECD (1986—Eurostat and National Sources).

Vehicle Imports

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will impose an anti-dumping duty on imports of commercial vehicles from MAN of Germany; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 February 1987]: The treaty of Rome does not recognise the concept of dumping between member states. However, competition between undertakings in different parts of the Community is governed by the competition rules in articles 85 and 86 of the treaty of Rome. In relation to motor vehicles these rules are administered by the EC Commission.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps are taken to ensure that complete cars imported by General Motors from their plants in Germany are not being sold at less than the fair market value in their country of origin.

Mr. Alan Clark [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 February 1987]: There are no grounds for the Government to interfere in General Motors' pricing policy for cars which it imports from Germany. The treaty of Rome does not recognise the concept of dumping between member states and it is not uncommon for the price of motor vehicles to vary according to the member state in which they are sold. General Motors and other motor vehicle manufacturers must, however, determine their pricing strategy with regard to United Kingdom and EC competition laws. Responsibility for investigating complaints of anti-competitive behaviour under these laws rests with, respectively, the Director General of Fair Trading and the European Commission.

ENERGY

Plutonium

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the countries to which plutonium has been exported in each year since 1979; for what purposes; and in what amounts.

Mr. Goodlad: In the period May 1979 to December 1986, a total of 2,140 kg of plutonium in both separated form and when present in irradiated fuel has been exported for civil purposes. The countries to which plutonium has been exported in consignments larger than gram quantities are as follows:

Austria
Belgium
Canada
France
Federal Republic of Germany
Italy
Japan
Netherlands
Sweden
Switzerland
United States of America

Each country listed has a safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency. Information relating to individual country figures is commercially sensitive.

Committee of Public Accounts (Recommendations)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will list those recommendations of the Committee of Public Accounts since 1983 affecting his Department which have been implemented.

Mr. Peter Walker: I refer the hon. Member to the Treasury minutes published in response to the relevant PAC reports (Cmnd. 9178, 9325, 9368, 9546, 9755, 9776 and 9917). The Committee, on which the hon. Member serves, monitors departmental progress with accepted recommendations.

Nuclear Power Stations

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Energy what lessons he has drawn from the blockages in emergency access to Bradwell nuclear power station on 14 January allowing for *(a)* the effect of heavy snow falls and icy conditions on the mobility of vehicles required for evacuation purposes, *(b)* the ability in adverse conditions of emergency personnel to move away before a fatal radiation dose is experienced, *(c)* the effect of severe weather conditions on the mobility of fire engines and *(d)* difficulties in evacuating nearby centres of population in drawing up emergency plans at nuclear sites; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) on 29 January 1987 at column 328.

Departmental Contracts

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the contracts, with the subject of the assignment, awarded to management consultancy or accounting firms by his Department in 1986, with the name of the consultants concerned.

Mr. Peter Walker: My Department placed the following contracts with management consultancy and accountancy firms in 1986:

Firm and Subject of Assignment

Energy Systems Trade Association Ltd.
Provision of professional services for the organisation of an international seminar.

IUTEP Ltd.
Development of contract energy management guidelines for local authority single buildings.

LAMSAC
Demonstration of monitoring and targeting systems in local authorities.

PA Consultants
Advice on local government energy management in Scotland.

Peat, Marwick, Mitchell and Co.
Study of the methodology used by the UKAEA in recording pre-Trading Fund decomissioning and radioactive waste management liabilities.

Price Waterhouse
Development of reservoir engineering database.

Price Waterhouse (New York) (Toronto) (Tokyo)
Advice on US, Canadian and Japanese accounting conventions for British Gas offer for sale.

Touche Ross
Scrutiny of British Gas share offer for multiply applications.

Tyzack and Partners Ltd.
Advice on the selection of the Director General of Ofgas.

In addition to the above, my Department appoints the auditors to British Coal, the electricity supply industry and the Oil and Pipelines Agency.

Electricity (Transmission Systems)

Mr. Barron asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list information available to him on the capacity and routes of new transmission systems for the national electricity grid planned for the period up to 1995.

Mr. Goodlad: The Central Electricity Generating Board provides annually a general description of its proposals for investment in the transmission system. However, my Department normally receives detailed information on the capacity and routes of individual proposals for new transmission lines only where the Secretary of State's consent to place a line above ground is necessary under section 10*(b)* of the schedule to the Electric Lighting (Clauses) Act 1899, as amended by the Electricity Act 1947. My Department has no applications for such consent at present.

Matters relating to the electricity transmission system in Scotland are for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Power Stations

Mr. Barron asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list each power station site for which planning approval has been granted since 1965, stating in each case *(a)* the time lapse between when the application for planning approval was first filed and when it was granted and *(b)* whether or not the local authorities for the area in which the site was located were amongst the objectors.

Mr. Goodlad: I will write to the hon. Member with the information requested as soon as possible.

Mr. Barron asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list information available to him on the site, capacity and type of power stations due to be decommissioned by the South of Scotland Electricity Board and the Central Electricity Generating Board up to 1995 indicating the expected date of decommissioning of such capacity.

Mr. Goodlad: I am advised by the Central Electricity Generating Board that power station decommissioning plans are only confirmed for 12 months ahead. In the period to 26 October 1987, the following stations are to be decommissioned:

Site	*Capacity*	*Type*
Northfleet	342 MW	Oil
Richborough	228 MW	Oil
Roosecote	60 MW	Coal

In addition, 427 MW of gas turbine capacity (mostly auxiliary plant) is to be decommissioned.

The CEGB has no other firm plans for decommissioning up to 1995. During this period, several stations will reach the end of their currently assumed nominal lives, but this does not mean that they will necessarily be decommissioned at that time.

Matters concerning the South of Scotland Electricity Board are for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Nuclear Emergencies

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy why, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) on 10 December, *Official Report*, column *196*, studies commissioned or undertaken by his Department on emergency plans for nuclear installations over the past five years are confidential.

Mr. Goodlad: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) on 12 February 1987 at column *317*.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make it his policy to publish detailed scenarios of nuclear emergency exercises.

Mr. Goodlad: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) on 4 February 1987 at columns *687-88*.

WALES

Playgroups

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales how much financial support Her Majesty's Government have given to Mudiad Ysgolian Meitherium, the Welsh Language playgroup movement; and what progress Mudiad Ysgolian Meitherium has made while support was being given in terms of the formulation of new groups.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is as follows:

	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
Grants under S26 of the Development of Rural Wales Act—for the development of groups	25,000	30,000	165,000	180,000	190,000	200,000	210,000	245,000
Grants under S64 of the Health Services and Public Health Act for HQ expenditure	70,000	87,000	94,000	98,000	102,000	110,350	119,400	115,800
Number of groups	303	326	363	381	403	425	452	480
Mother and Child groups	—	40	89	100	159	180	203	230

Departmental Contracts

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the contracts, with the subject of the assignment, awarded to management consultancy or accounting firms by his Department in 1986, with the name of the consultants concerned.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The following centrally managed contracts were awarded in 1986 to management consultants or accounting firms:

Name and assignment	£
Ernst & Whinney To advise and assist in the development of computer auditing	79,920
Mr. D. Towell In-service training and staff development	3,320
Coopers and Lybrand Feasibility study of the housing of the visual arts in Wales	49,330

It is not possible to identify, without disproportionate costs, a list of contracts awarded to management consultants or accounting firms in respect of projects not centrally managed.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales, at the latest date for which figures are available, how many people in *(a)* Wales, *(b)* Mid Glamorgan and *(c)* Clwyd have been unemployed for five years or more in numerical terms and as a percentage of the total unemployment figure; and if he will give the same sum for comparative months from 1980 to 1986 inclusive.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 February 1987, c. *226*]: The information requested is given in the following table:

Number of persons unemployed for over five years

Year (at October)	*Number*	*Percentage*[1]
(a) Wales		
1983[2]	4,945	2·9
1984	6,809	3·8
1985	11,405	6·2
1986	14,897	8·6
(b) Mid Glamorgan		
1983[2]	1,152	3·4
1984	1,604	4·6
1985	2,750	7·7
1986	3,530	10·5
(c) Clwyd		
1983[2]	727	3·0
1984	964	4·0
1985	1,606	6·4
1986	2,103	8·9

[1] Percentage of the total unemployment figure.
[2] This information is not available in the form requested prior to 1983.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prison Officers (Pay)

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average salary earned by prison officers in 1986; and what percentage of this salary was made up by the working of overtime.

Mr. Mellor: In the financial year 1986-87 a basic grade prison officer with five years' service will have earned an average of £14,220. Overtime, at an average of just under 16 hours per week, will account for 37 per cent. of this amount. In addition, officers not occupying a rent-free quarter will have received a housing allowance of £1,330.

Fresh Start

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department which branches of the Prison Officers Association have indicated to his Department their support for the of introduction of fresh start.

Mr. Mellor: None, nor would I expect any to have done while negotiations with the national executive committee of the Prison Officers Association are in progress.

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions have taken place with prison governors as to their views on fresh start.

Mr. Mellor: Various meetings have been held with the Governors' Branch of the Society of Civil and Public Servants to discuss different aspects of fresh start. The subject has also been discussed at national and regional conferences of governors. At its recent annual general meeting, the governors' branch voted unanimously to give the fresh start plans its full support.

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations his Department has so far received on the introduction of fresh start; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Many views have been expressed and questions been posed about the introduction of fresh start by prison service staff, trade unions and others inside and outside the service. Most recognise the need to tackle the longstanding problems which the proposals seek to address: the debate is rather about precisely how this should be done. The negotiations with the prison service trade unions now in progress will reveal whether, as we hope, an agreed basis can be found for the necessary changes.

Town Clauses Act (Prosecutions)

Mr. Arnold asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions have been brought in magistrates' courts *(a)* in Stockport, *(b)* in the Duchy of Lancaster and *(c)* in England and Wales under the Town Clauses Act 1847 during the past 12 months.

Mr. Mellor: The latest information available to me is for 1985 and relating to prosecutions under the Town Police Clauses Act 1847, is as follows:

Defendants proceeded against at magistrates' courts in 1985 under provisions of the Town Police Clauses Act 1847

Area	*Number of defendants*
Stockport	3
Duchy of Lancaster[1]	497
England and Wales	3,471

[1] Take as the three counties of Lancashire, Merseyside and Greater Manchester for which the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has responsibility for the appointment of magistrates.

Victim Support Schemes

Mr. Arnold asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the £2 million he is making available in 1987-88 in further support for victim support schemes will be paid direct to local schemes; if he will list the purposes of his funding; and what method he will adopt in deciding which schemes to support.

Mr. Mellor: Awards will be made to local schemes, subject to general conditions set by the Home Office, by an independent panel assisted by officers of the National Association of Victims Support Schemes. The funds will be to meet the salary costs of co-ordinators or to assist with running costs, and for ancillary purposes. Schemes applying for these awards must be affiliated to the NAVSS, and must demonstrate that they are capable of making effective use of the money and of obtaining from other sources the balance of funds they require.

Sickle Cell Disease

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what training and instructions are given to prison medical staff on the diagnosis and treatment of sickle cell disease; whether, in the light of the inquest verdict of natural causes aggravated by lack of care on the death from sickle cell disease of Stephen Bogle, a prisoner at Brixton prison, he has undertaken or intends to undertake a review of such training and instructions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: It is not the practice of the director of prison medical services to provide training or instruction for medical officers in the diagnosis or treatment of particular medical conditions. They are, however, encouraged to further their knowledge in appropriate ways and to take advantage of opportunities for external training in specific aspects of general medicine and certain specialisms. The circumstances of all deaths which occur during or shortly following prison custody are examined for any lessons which may be learned. This will be done in the case of Stephen Bogle.

Fraud Offences

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received seeking legislation to extend to fraud offences the provisions in the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986 in so far as they relate to the confiscation of illicit proceeds; what was his response; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: A general welcome was received for the proposal in our White Paper "Criminal Justice—Plans for Legislation" (Cmnd. 9658) for extending to other serious and profitable offences, including fraud, the power to make restraint and confiscation orders. This proposal would be given effect by part IV of the Criminal Justice Bill.

Immigration Appeals

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the current average times between an immigration appeal being lodged and the case being heard before an adjudicator at each of the appellate centres.

Mr. Waddington: I understand from the appellate authorities that the current average waiting times between receipt of an appeal by them and the appeal being listed for hearing are as follows:

Hearing Centre	*United Kingdom Appeals (months)*	[1]*Overseas Appeals (months)*
Central London	5·0	3·0
Birmingham	1·5	1·5
Harmondsworth	1·0	4·0
Leeds	1·0	3·5
Manchester	3·0	5·0
Southampton	1·0	2·0

[1] In overseas cases the appellate authorities do not list the appeal for hearing until the appellant's representative has indicated he is ready to proceed, and the times given run from that date.

Departmental Contracts

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the contracts, with the subject of the assignment, awarded to management consultancy or accounting firms by his Department in 1986, with the name of the consultants concerned.

Mr. Hurd: In my reply to the hon. Member on 3 February 1987, at column *566*, I explained that records do not distinguish between management and computer consultancies. Details of all consultancy assignments are as follows:

Name of Firm and Assignment

Communications Studies and Planning International
Study on subscription television

Concurrent Computer Corporation
Survey of Home Office Accounts Branch

Coopers and Lybrand Associates
Evaluation of the use of computers in Magistrates Courts: Funding and procurement of systems

Coopers and Lybrand Associates
Study into future provision of training for Magistrates Courts staff

Data Logic
Review study on police national computer project

Deloitte, Haskins and Sells
Development of a financial management information system for the Probation Service.

Professor Samual Eilon
The development of an evaluation methodology for the police national computer project.

Ernst and Whinney
Support for automatic fingerprinting recognition planning.

Express Computer Consultants
Performance study of Home Office Finance Division 1.

Gilpin Black Associates
Management training for the Probation Service.

The Grubb Institute
Management training for the Probation Service.

Hay-MSL
Monitoring the performance bonus scheme.

Dr. A. Hyatt-Williams
Post-shooting trauma study.

KMG Thomson McLintock
Office automation study for Home Office.

PA Computers and Telecommunications
Study of network migration to police national computer project.

PA Computers and Telecommunications
Future developments of computer system in Magistrates Courts.

Pearn Kandola Associates
Formal qualifications and ethnic minority recruitment to white collar jobs.

Price Waterhouse
Implementaton of computer systems in Home Office Prison Department.

Purchasing Index (UK)
Purchasing management information system.

RIPA Services
Evaluation of the use of computers in Magistrates Courts training needs.

Smith Associates
An analysis of the likely costs and benefits of introducing a mobile data terminal system in police vehicles.

Sound Techniques
Evaluation of the use of computers in Magistrates Courts: Use of computers in courtrooms.

Systems Designers
Interim systems options study for police national computer project.

Systems Designers
Feasibility study into the use of expert systems for multiethnic names matching.

Systems Designers Scientific
A review of emergency communications services.

Touche Ross Management Consultants
Study on scientific support for the police service in England and Wales.

White Waghorn
Computerisation of Home Office Scientific Research and Development Branch accountancy system.

Prisoners (Accommodation)

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total expenditure on accommodating prisoners in police cells in the financial year 1985-86.

Mr. Mellor: The total amount paid to police forces for cell accommodation in the financial year 1985-86 was £2,245,332·82p.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the highest number of prisoners held in police and court cells on any night during 1986.

GREAT BRITAIN HOUSE OF COMMONS
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES 1986/1987

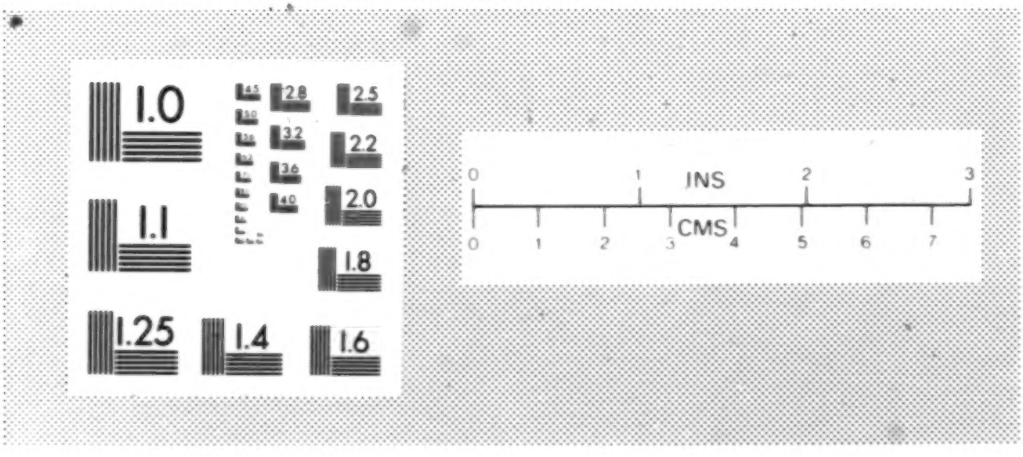
Published on microfiche by Chadwyck-Healey Ltd
Cambridge Place
Cambridge CB2 1NR
England

Distributed in the USA by Chadwyck-Healey Inc.
1101 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
USA

Date of publication: 1988

Reproduction rights: © Crown copyright 1986–87. Reproduced by permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
Microfiche edition: © 1988 Chadwyck-Healey Ltd. The arrangement of these papers on microfiche is the copyright of Chadwyck-Healey Ltd.

Technical data: Film type: positive silver halide, archivally permanent microfiche processed to BSI and NMA standards.
Producing laboratory: Chadwyck-Healey Microform Publishing Services



Mr. Mellor: The highest number of prisoners recorded as having been held in police and court cells in England and Wales on any night during 1986 was 293 on 7-8 December.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average number of prisoners held in police and court cells in England and Wales in the weeks ended 20 December 1986 and 27 December 1986.

Mr. Mellor: The average number of prisoners held in police and court cells in England and Wales during the weeks ending 20 December and 27 December was 178 and 91 respectively.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the longest period of time for which a prisoner was detained in police cells during 1986.

Mr. Mellor: Comprehensive information is not available centrally about the length of time during which each prisoner was held in police cells in England and Wales during 1986. However, I am advised by the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the longest period during which a prisoner was held in Metropolitan police cells was 47 nights.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the highest number of female prisoners held in police and court cells on any night during 1986.

Mr. Mellor: The highest number of female prisoners recorded as having been held in police and court cells in England and Wales during 1986 was 134 on 9-10 December.

Prison Officers' Housing (Culcheth)

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what works are required to secure the adoption of roads, footpaths, street lighting and the sewage pumping station in relation to the 39 empty prison officers' houses at Culcheth; what adoption specifications are being sought from the local authority; and when he expects the negotiations on this with the local authority will be complete.

Mr. Mellor: The works required to secure the adoption of roads, footpaths, streetlighting and the sewage pumping station in relation to the 39 empty prison officers' houses at Culcheth will be determined by the adoption specifications, the details of which are being finalised with the local authority. The specifications will state the minimum standards of construction required by the local authority for the above-named services. Negotiations with the local authority will take at least five weeks to complete.

Transit Visas

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether he will rescind the requirement of a transit visa for those airline passengers continuing a journey from Heathrow, having arrived at Gatwick, or vice versa, and who have no intention of remaining in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what criteria were used in deciding to require transit passengers from Gatwick to Heathrow and vice versa to hold a transit visa when travelling by road but not to impose the same requirement for helicopter travellers.

Mr. Waddington: Transit passengers arriving by air who have a confirmed reservation on an onward flight leaving within 24 hours do not normally need a visa, although this concession has been withdrawn in respect of some nationalities. Transit passengers who can transfer to their onward flights under secure arrangements within the same airport are not required to pass through controls. Others who wish or need to gain access to areas outside an airport's security limits, for example to travel from one airport to another, have to pass through controls. This requirement is an integral part of immigration control. The requirement to pass through controls was waived for helicopter travellers between Gatwick and Heathrow because, when not in the air, they could be kept within secure areas at both airports.

Immigration

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) in how many cases, in each of the years from 1983 to 1986, his Department has confirmed that there are no conditions attached to a person's stay in the United Kingdom by virtue of the provisions of paragraph 6(1) of schedule 2 to the Immigration Act 1971, following administrative errors by immigration officers at ports in failing to endorse conditions of entry in passports;

(2) how many persons in each of the years from 1983 to 1986 are known to have qualified for indefinite leave to enter the United Kingdom under paragraph 6(1) of schedule 2 to the Immigration Act 1971 because of administrative errors by immigration officers at ports in failing to endorse conditions of entry in passports.

Mr. Waddington: The information requested is not centrally recorded.

Data Network

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the design of the Government data network will take account of the possibility of data transfers between Departments connected to the network that at the moment do not take place; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I have been asked to reply.

The proposed Government data network will allow for new transfers of data, but its use will not alter the requirement that the originating Department authorise such a transfer.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Class Size

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a table showing the number of classes in each local education authority with 30 and under, 31 to 35, 36 to 40 and over 40 pupils per class for primary and secondary schools in 1979, 1983 and for the most recent year for which figures are available, respectively.

Mrs. Rumbold: The number of classes in the four size bands requested in maintained primary and secondary schools for each local education authority in England for 1979, 1983 and 1986 are as follows. The analyses are in respect of classes taught by one teacher on a specified

school period within the day of the census count in January of each year. The figures may not, therefore, be representative of the pattern of classes over the academic year as a whole.

Classes in primary and secondary schools
January 1979

		Primary				Secondary			
		30 and under	*31 to 35*	*36 to 40*	*41 and over*	*30 and under*	*31 to 35*	*36 to 40*	*41 and over*
301	Barking	461	102	9	2	573	15	—	—
302	Barnet	676	208	16	2	876	98	2	—
303	Bexley	441	237	26	1	762	54	1	—
304	Brent	786	97	23	—	797	58	—	—
305	Bromley	675	197	23	—	887	89	3	1
306	Croydon	794	224	45	1	1,058	124	7	2
307	Ealing	898	159	31	—	744	52	1	1
308	Enfield	496	311	43	1	701	193	15	—
309	Haringey	652	105	2	1	661	55	—	—
310	Harrow	531	149	33	1	527	47	4	—
311	Havering	605	230	18	2	861	110	5	—
312	Hillingdon	541	160	33	—	772	69	1	—
313	Hounslow	510	127	29	1	661	92	—	—
314	Kingston upon Thames	286	89	16	—	369	63	—	—
315	Merton	267	78	11	1	595	101	2	—
316	Newham	746	91	4	—	689	34	1	—
317	Redbridge	439	174	41	—	646	70	4	1
318	Richmond upon Thames	268	87	12	1	305	33	—	—
319	Sutton	315	128	31	—	454	131	1	1
320	Waltham Forest	628	172	12	—	821	21	—	—
427	Inner London	6,725	775	60	5	7,544	501	10	7
330	Birmingham	2,375	1,425	71	—	3,636	460	16	—
331	Coventry	961	286	19	3	1,162	109	1	—
332	Dudley	571	426	65	6	832	127	12	1
333	Sandwell	817	400	54	3	1,165	89	3	—
334	Solihull	605	240	21	3	794	41	—	—
335	Walsall	922	192	24	1	1,158	97	4	—
336	Wolverhampton	818	182	34	1	1,028	65	2	—
340	Knowsley	535	199	24	1	812	55	1	—
341	Liverpool	1,807	272	59	4	1,966	168	1	1
342	St. Helens	535	191	65	3	635	88	—	—
343	Sefton	753	338	60	1	971	178	13	—
344	Wirral	901	318	64	—	1,055	155	10	—
350	Bolton	534	328	122	6	827	103	3	—
351	Bury	463	168	44	—	548	68	1	1
352	Manchester	1,589	252	28	3	1,746	170	7	1
353	Oldham	495	259	79	2	594	112	7	—
354	Rochdale	567	144	51	1	853	58	8	1
355	Salford	696	209	66	4	1,005	45	6	—
356	Stockport	490	418	77	3	972	128	3	—
357	Tameside	530	248	71	3	748	61	4	—
358	Trafford	602	161	31	1	832	30	1	—
359	Wigan	943	274	110	1	1,184	132	5	—
370	Barnsley	684	222	8	—	857	26	—	—
371	Doncaster	1,025	152	16	3	1,064	76	8	1
372	Rotherham	702	292	29	3	815	154	5	1
373	Sheffield	1,804	323	42	5	1,653	225	8	1
380	Bradford	1,246	196	13	—	1,818	233	25	—
381	Calderdale	553	202	37	1	581	93	1	—
382	Kirklees	880	421	80	8	1,223	178	13	1
383	Leeds	1,292	679	105	3	2,470	524	37	3
384	Wakefield	767	273	43	1	1,048	149	9	—
390	Gateshead	775	94	8	1	695	76	2	2
391	Newcastle upon Tyne	917	61	—	1	1,103	66	—	1
392	North Tyneside	602	63	6	—	885	58	6	—
393	South Tyneside	616	58	3	1	620	47	—	2
394	Sunderland	911	296	25	—	1,112	67	8	1
420	Isles of Scilly	9	1	—	—	10	—	—	—
901	Avon	1,782	958	100	1	2,724	342	12	1
902	Bedfordshire	1,318	297	19	—	2,054	157	2	2

		Primary				Secondary			
		30 and under	31 to 35	36 to 40	41 and over	30 and under	31 to 35	36 to 40	41 and over
903	Berkshire	1,611	597	71	3	2,209	255	11	1
904	Buckinghamshire	1,661	576	63	8	1,521	118	4	1
905	Cambridgeshire	1,586	506	34	2	1,782	114	6	1
906	Cheshire	2,508	864	155	8	3,064	344	11	1
907	Cleveland	1,737	491	58	1	2,070	185	5	1
908	Cornwall	1,006	365	108	4	1,357	132	5	—
909	Cumbria	1,412	369	21	1	1,712	108	—	—
910	Derbyshire	2,285	844	174	2	2,687	455	18	2
911	Devon	2,006	724	192	7	2,316	393	26	1
912	Dorset	1,060	420	112	4	1,509	207	12	3
913	Durham	2,009	413	37	4	1,908	273	15	1
914	East Sussex	1,355	446	70	4	1,513	188	14	3
915	Essex	3,258	1,670	77	6	4,627	516	12	6
916	Gloucestershire	1,150	521	82	1	1,607	238	3	1
917	Hampshire	3,450	1,617	168	10	4,606	415	18	3
918	Hereford and Worcester	1,270	541	67	3	1,954	377	18	3
919	Hertfordshire	2,515	751	70	3	3,687	276	7	2
920	Humberside	2,547	492	50	2	3,427	384	27	2
921	Isle of Wight	172	71	11	—	395	81	7	1
922	Kent	3,177	1,492	167	9	4,854	377	17	5
923	Lancashire	3,031	1,374	447	23	4,292	515	20	1
924	Leicestershire	2,504	623	53	8	2,977	184	6	—
925	Lincolnshire	1,479	478	94	2	1,718	181	13	1
926	Norfolk	2,095	504	35	6	1,814	167	15	2
927	North Yorkshire	1,789	486	65	3	2,131	244	17	1
928	Northampton	1,317	507	52	2	1,970	207	22	2
929	Northumberland	559	232	25	—	1,097	155	11	—
930	Nottinghamshire	2,157	1,097	190	4	3,354	334	12	5
931	Oxfordshire	1,108	363	28	3	1,726	188	8	5
932	Shropshire	969	351	69	2	1,296	127	2	—
933	Somerset	815	427	34	2	1,123	174	8	—
934	Staffordshire	2,821	856	154	7	3,277	405	41	3
935	Suffolk	1,368	375	27	2	1,935	264	14	3
936	Surrey	2,690	692	81	4	2,568	194	7	1
937	Warwickshire	1,482	477	50	—	1,312	164	6	2
938	West Sussex	1,260	560	99	1	1,675	293	11	—
939	Wiltshire	1,360	443	36	3	1,636	200	12	1
England		118,711	39,033	5,617	249	151,264	16,452	762	99

Classes in primary and secondary schools
January 1983

		Primary				Secondary			
		30 and under	31 to 35	36 to 40	41 and over	30 and under	31 to 35	36 to 40	41 and over
301	Barking	504	31	5	—	546	9	—	—
302	Barnet	796	72	6	—	903	47	1	—
303	Bexley	410	177	11	—	792	39	1	1
304	Brent	739	55	3	—	811	25	—	—
305	Bromley	610	147	4	—	894	82	1	—
306	Croydon	754	163	6	2	1,025	83	—	—
307	Ealing	870	78	5	—	717	29	—	—
308	Enfield	622	157	7	1	815	106	1	1
309	Haringey	649	6	—	—	647	17	1	—
310	Harrow	554	88	9	—	487	32	—	—
311	Havering	662	96	1	1	915	49	3	1
312	Hillingdon	527	130	15	1	786	30	1	2
313	Hounslow	549	91	2	4	695	43	1	—
314	Kingston upon Thames	268	81	7	—	362	43	1	1
315	Merton	258	53	4	—	546	98	1	—
316	Newham	739	36	—	1	768	23	—	—
317	Redbridge	413	159	10	—	683	49	3	1
318	Richmond upon Thames	310	39	3	—	283	21	—	—
319	Sutton	261	114	18	—	474	93	4	2
320	Waltham Forest	556	97	5	1	805	12	3	1
427	Inner London	6,506	191	8	—	6,874	217	2	1
330	Birmingham	2,024	1,184	57	1	3,259	448	6	3
331	Coventry	765	222	20	1	1,065	100	—	1

		Primary				Secondary			
		30 and under	31 to 35	36 to 40	41 and over	30 and under	31 to 35	36 to 40	41 and over
332	Dudley	779	197	19	3	1,034	97	2	2
333	Sandwell	876	227	14	1	1,187	79	2	—
334	Solihull	529	134	12	2	779	81	5	—
335	Walsall	951	70	3	—	1,216	84	1	1
336	Wolverhampton	907	51	5	1	999	44	—	—
340	Knowsley	491	110	11	2	676	42	2	—
341	Liverpool	1,560	202	27	1	1,590	221	7	3
342	St. Helens	527	125	29	2	698	75	3	—
343	Sefton	809	166	9	—	1,014	96	3	—
344	Wirral	897	238	30	—	1,090	74	2	—
350	Bolton	568	224	51	5	868	101	2	—
351	Bury	435	122	19	—	597	45	—	—
352	Manchester	1,189	247	23	4	1,519	118	5	—
353	Oldham	550	180	43	4	689	85	1	1
354	Rochdale	563	118	9	—	910	33	1	—
355	Salford	757	81	11	5	922	45	1	—
356	Stockport	682	184	10	—	1,069	76	3	1
357	Tameside	589	156	22	—	799	60	2	—
358	Trafford	452	121	33	1	725	33	—	1
359	Wigan	864	171	54	1	1,316	65	1	2
370	Barnsley	730	60	6	—	856	37	—	—
371	Doncaster	983	75	6	1	1,117	72	1	—
372	Rotherham	756	135	9	3	944	84	3	—
373	Sheffield	1,643	110	20	1	1,765	86	7	—
380	Bradford	1,107	113	6	2	1,880	194	24	—
381	Calderdale	640	93	6	—	693	60	—	—
382	Kirklees	956	264	35	1	1,381	142	4	1
383	Leeds	1,352	389	39	4	2,752	300	18	1
384	Wakefield	722	156	14	—	1,125	129	7	—
390	Gateshead	759	33	3	—	699	39	—	—
391	Newcastle upon Tyne	819	30	—	2	1,091	19	—	—
392	North Tyneside	558	37	2	—	867	35	—	—
393	South Tyneside	531	23	—	1	594	27	1	1
394	Sunderland	929	150	4	2	1,138	63	1	—
420	Isles of Scilly	7	—	—	—	11	—	—	—
901	Avon	1,731	807	90	1	2,890	200	10	—
902	Bedfordshire	1,071	222	41	3	2,098	153	2	—
903	Berkshire	1,599	422	54	3	2,362	211	7	3
904	Buckinghamshire	1,553	524	67	7	1,663	72	2	—
905	Cambridgeshire	1,455	426	41	1	1,805	147	3	2
906	Cheshire	2,405	623	97	2	3,177	346	12	—
907	Cleveland	1,867	190	38	2	2,214	99	7	1
908	Cornwall	980	320	59	2	1,392	143	5	1
909	Cumbria	1,464	170	4	—	1,781	92	3	—
910	Derbyshire	2,303	565	72	5	2,954	336	10	—
911	Devon	2,049	543	89	5	2,596	284	6	2
912	Dorset	992	324	61	3	1,765	173	12	1
913	Durham	1,683	346	14	1	1,992	182	2	—
914	East Sussex	1,419	256	32	3	1,592	157	—	1
915	Essex	3,444	1,073	38	3	4,937	384	11	2
916	Gloucestershire	1,125	371	45	—	1,617	168	7	1
917	Hampshire	3,200	1,226	136	5	4,401	367	12	2
918	Hereford and Worcester	1,092	512	43	—	2,164	317	19	6
919	Hertfordshire	2,345	591	54	1	3,708	208	2	—
920	Humberside	2,472	248	22	2	3,537	291	12	2
921	Isle of Wight	182	42	2	—	441	61	1	1
922	Kent	2,789	1,264	109	1	5,122	296	6	—
923	Lancashire	3,047	1,021	228	11	4,340	458	25	2
924	Leicestershire	2,364	450	30	9	3,088	138	3	1
925	Lincolnshire	1,203	432	87	2	1,741	130	10	1
926	Norfolk	2,050	362	31	1	2,013	109	2	—
927	North Yorkshire	1,622	379	47	3	2,230	216	11	—
928	Northampton	1,444	273	25	—	2,147	177	5	1
929	Northumberland	517	185	8	—	1,206	155	11	1
930	Nottinghamshire	2,820	353	47	3	3,720	223	4	2
931	Oxfordshire	954	317	21	1	1,757	134	6	1
932	Shropshire	1,110	176	27	—	1,427	88	6	—
933	Somerset	743	359	35	1	1,181	201	5	1

		Primary				Secondary			
		30 and under	31 to 35	36 to 40	41 and over	30 and under	31 to 35	36 to 40	41 and over
934	Staffordshire	2,900	396	39	4	3,648	357	11	1
935	Suffolk	1,427	198	6	1	2,229	150	8	—
936	Surrey	2,449	492	28	2	2,467	173	4	3
937	Warwickshire	1,337	370	41	1	1,376	146	3	—
938	West Sussex	1,341	400	60	2	1,841	236	12	2
939	Wiltshire	1,219	367	26	1	1,727	138	9	—
England		115,570	25,854	2,784	154	156,108	12,422	425	70

Classes in primary and secondary schools
January 1986

		Primary				Secondary			
		30 and under	31 to 35	36 to 40	41 and over	30 and under	31 to 35	36 to 40	41 and over
301	Barking	519	22	4	—	430	2	—	—
302	Barnet	753	59	9	—	849	69	2	—
303	Bexley	464	126	—	2	627	35	1	—
304	Brent	698	31	1	—	691	12	1	—
305	Bromley	561	142	3	—	773	51	—	—
306	Croydon	702	143	7	—	854	45	1	2
307	Ealing	748	100	7	—	629	20	2	—
308	Enfield	531	184	4	—	766	59	5	3
309	Haringey	638	2	—	1	518	2	—	—
310	Harrow	467	109	8	—	460	17	1	2
311	Havering	600	81	2	2	843	36	1	1
312	Hillingdon	516	107	9	1	647	39	—	1
313	Hounslow	480	96	11	—	601	40	—	—
314	Kingston upon Thames	244	85	—	—	358	24	3	2
315	Merton	250	48	7	1	504	51	1	—
316	Newham	722	21	2	2	687	11	—	—
317	Redbridge	355	190	6	—	580	44	2	3
318	Richmond upon Thames	290	39	1	—	276	12	—	—
319	Sutton	229	100	31	—	421	53	—	1
320	Waltham Forest	516	67	8	—	659	8	—	1
427	Inner London	5,589	111	1	2	5,352	104	3	—
330	Birmingham	2,299	854	23	—	2,936	322	1	3
331	Coventry	716	174	21	—	934	65	2	—
332	Dudley	742	195	15	1	938	45	1	—
333	Sandwell	826	166	9	2	1,089	33	—	2
334	Solihull	468	132	8	—	710	49	3	—
335	Walsall	838	67	2	1	1,156	37	2	—
336	Wolverhampton	802	62	6	2	933	23	—	1
340	Knowsley	523	69	5	1	543	16	3	—
341	Liverpool	1,515	181	11	2	1,410	103	2	2
342	St. Helens	481	94	16	2	693	40	—	—
343	Sefton	685	177	13	—	905	80	1	—
344	Wirral	713	248	31	3	990	79	1	2
350	Bolton	538	213	25	6	894	55	1	1
351	Bury	386	116	9	1	499	41	—	—
352	Manchester	1,150	187	17	6	1,378	59	4	1
353	Oldham	496	157	37	1	724	47	4	—
354	Rochdale	435	120	12	—	769	27	—	3
355	Salford	717	69	8	2	772	30	—	1
356	Stockport	686	147	12	1	909	83	3	1
357	Tameside	512	157	13	—	637	39	—	1
358	Trafford	380	155	31	2	618	29	—	—
359	Wigan	727	167	32	3	1,187	47	3	—
370	Barnsley	673	46	4	2	798	9	—	—
371	Doncaster	865	87	5	1	979	54	—	—
372	Rotherham	789	68	3	—	858	71	4	—
373	Sheffield	1,453	84	9	6	1,474	49	1	4
380	Bradford	1,000	121	11	—	1,793	102	2	—
381	Calderdale	547	89	9	—	630	48	—	—
382	Kirklees	918	233	22	1	1,335	84	3	—
383	Leeds	1,242	312	33	4	2,478	199	7	2
384	Wakefield	743	110	15	1	1,080	64	1	2

		Primary				Secondary			
		30 and under	31 to 35	36 to 40	41 and over	30 and under	31 to 35	36 to 40	41 and over
390	Gateshead	688	22	3	2	599	36	2	—
391	Newcastle upon Tyne	636	81	1	2	923	17	—	3
392	North Tyneside	655	12	1	—	754	21	—	—
393	South Tyneside	506	34	3	—	468	12	—	—
394	Sunderland	989	90	—	1	1,057	39	—	2
420	Isles of Scilly	12	—	—	—	10	—	—	—
901	Avon	1,500	835	94	2	2,520	175	3	3
902	Bedfordshire	1,030	250	29	3	1,829	151	1	1
903	Berkshire	1,404	474	36	—	2,196	198	4	1
904	Buckinghamshire	1,290	592	95	3	1,603	88	1	1
905	Cambridgeshire	1,428	399	31	5	1,695	158	5	3
906	Cheshire	2,014	678	76	6	2,928	348	14	2
907	Cleveland	1,625	201	42	2	1,994	65	—	4
908	Cornwall	975	304	39	4	1,347	124	9	1
909	Cumbria	1,325	149	6	1	1,658	61	2	—
910	Derbyshire	2,186	578	53	1	2,719	229	6	—
911	Devon	1,819	568	90	1	2,443	252	9	3
912	Dorset	895	329	65	3	1,688	106	10	5
913	Durham	1,532	349	15	1	1,723	157	—	1
914	East Sussex	1,113	435	22	3	1,495	156	5	4
915	Essex	3,075	1,143	21	2	4,438	304	5	4
916	Gloucestershire	1,028	392	22	2	1,492	128	5	4
917	Hampshire	2,904	1,238	106	1	4,076	255	8	1
918	Hereford and Worcester	1,230	371	36	—	2,170	213	6	2
919	Hertfordshire	2,232	518	34	2	3,120	237	1	3
920	Humberside	2,249	258	15	7	3,270	166	4	2
921	Isle of Wight	160	45	2	—	388	53	2	1
922	Kent	2,788	1,096	80	7	4,538	258	4	4
923	Lancashire	2,790	1,055	183	10	3,989	296	11	4
924	Leicestershire	2,235	410	18	6	2,791	85	2	4
925	Lincolnshire	1,028	456	68	2	1,639	130	1	4
926	Norfolk	1,858	322	26	—	2,015	78	2	2
927	North Yorkshire	1,536	329	54	1	1,933	163	10	7
928	Northampton	1,391	254	5	—	2,006	111	5	—
929	Northumberland	514	212	6	2	1,223	75	7	—
930	Nottinghamshire	2,635	202	43	5	3,182	133	5	—
931	Oxfordshire	1,048	232	10	3	1,550	134	5	2
932	Shropshire	1,000	163	16	—	1,336	90	1	1
933	Somerset	764	329	29	4	1,204	140	5	—
934	Staffordshire	2,397	463	50	4	3,295	261	13	5
935	Suffolk	1,375	195	1	1	2,026	97	3	2
936	Surrey	2,186	449	24	2	2,162	158	3	3
937	Warwickshire	1,057	403	27	2	1,219	111	—	—
938	West Sussex	1,271	445	23	2	1,818	152	12	1
939	Wiltshire	1,243	275	11	—	1,590	99	5	1
	England	106,353	24,555	2,199	167	140,693	9,083	268	134

Nursery Education

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to what percentage of three and four-year-old children in each local authority area are *(a)* in full-time nursery education and *(b)* in part-time nursery education; and how this compares with each of the last five years.

Mrs. Rumbold: The percentages of children aged under five in 1981 and 1986 participating in full-time and part-time nursery education in maintained nursery schools and in nursery and infant classes in primary schools is given in the table. Information in exactly the form requested and for all of the years would incur disproportionate cost.

Percentage of children under five participating in nursery education[1]

	1981		1986	
	Full time	Part time	Full time	Part time
Barking	39	15	33	35
Barnet	30	26	28	29
Bexley	18	11	15	11
Brent	36	28	36	28
Bromley	16	3	16	2
Croydon	30	6	31	6
Ealing	15	30	12	35
Enfield	26	22	29	22
Haringey	37	31	36	33
Harrow	16	17	16	16
Havering	18	18	16	21
Hillingdon	16	44	1	49
Hounslow	19	44	20	50
Kingston-upon-Thames	18	39	17	36

	1981		1986	
	Full time	Part time	Full time	Part time
Merton	16	49	13	45
Newham	16	49	15	60
Redbridge	14	9	15	9
Richmond-upon-Thames	4	46	2	42
Sutton	3	13	1	17
Waltham Forest	21	38	16	37
Inner London	29	23	28	25
Birmingham	42	12	43	20
Coventry	36	16	35	20
Dudley	18	17	16	28
Sandwell	39	29	37	39
Solihull	34	25	30	27
Walsall	40	51	35	57
Wolverhampton	15	51	15	57
Knowsley	22	21	30	33
Liverpool	43	34	42	43
St. Helens	35	18	32	29
Sefton	34	23	32	27
Wirral	32	17	31	18
Bolton	47	19	37	31
Bury	38	9	36	13
Manchester	55	16	50	23
Oldham	46	11	43	19
Rochdale	38	24	35	26
Salford	64	7	73	12
Stockport	33	10	32	11
Tameside	39	33	35	38
Trafford	6	10	7	12
Wigan	31	19	33	24
Barnsley	21	51	17	48
Doncaster	37	38	33	38
Rotherham	29	28	22	34
Sheffield	24	32	21	40
Bradford	25	27	23	32
Calderdale	55	3	44	18
Kirklees	18	27	20	38
Leeds	26	21	26	30
Wakefield	27	35	23	44
Gateshead	39	25	31	32
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	55	16	51	23
North Tyneside	41	42	39	48
South Tyneside	40	42	36	50
Sunderland	38	26	33	33
Avon	8	5	38	8
Bedfordshire	12	23	10	26
Berkshire	5	19	3	23
Buckinghamshire	7	14	5	13
Cambridgeshire	24	17	25	15
Cheshire	19	18	17	20
Cleveland	20	48	17	53
Cornwall[2]	16	25	18	29
Cumbria	34	16	34	19
Derbyshire	23	15	21	29
Devon	15	7	11	9
Dorset	5	8	6	8
Durham	35	28	32	34
East Sussex	16	19	13	23
Essex	13	4	12	6
Gloucestershire	29	2	30	1
Hampshire	16	6	14	6
Hereford and Worcester	13	4	9	5
Hertfordshire	17	30	17	31
Humberside	24	20	23	27
Isle of Wight	32	4	34	4
Kent	8	5	7	6
Lancashire	32	13	31	15
Leicestershire	10	16	13	18
Lincolnshire	15	6	20	7
Norfolk	18	12	18	13
North Yorkshire	20	14	25	18
Northamptonshire	22	9	34	14
Northumberland	35	13	32	21
Nottinghamshire	13	36	9	45
Oxfordshire	6	11	4	13
Shropshire	14	12	16	15
Somerset	22	2	32	1
Staffordshire	28	13	30	13
Suffolk	16	10	15	13
Surrey	9	12	8	13
Warwickshire	23	15	31	16
West Sussex	7	4	5	4
Wiltshire	17	3	13	3

[1] The number of pupils under five in January expressed as a percentage of the estimated 3 and 4-year-old population.
[2] Includes Isles of Scilly.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the age participation rate in education for the under-fives expressed as a percentage of the two, three and four-year-old age group.

Mrs. Rumbold: The participation rate of children under five in January 1986 attending maintained nursery and primary schools in England was 43 per cent. of the relevant three and four-year-old population.

Departmental Contracts

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the contracts, with the subject of the assignment, awarded to management consultancy or accounting firms by his Department in 1986, with the name of the consultants concerned.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department awarded five contracts to management and accountancy firms during the 1986 calendar year, as follows:

Name of Firm and Assignment

Arthur Young
Provision of advice as part of the Department's financial management review of the Secondary Examinations Council and School Curriculum Development Committee

Deloitte, Haskins and Sells
Consultancy support for the audit of the Department's data processing operational controls.

Deloitte, Haskins and Sells
Financial management advice and assistance to the University Grants Committee.

Butler Cox & Partners Ltd
Development of an integrated Office Systems Strategy.

Touche Ross & Co.
Production of the long form report for the sale of part of the Plant Breeding Institute and the National Seed Development Organisation.

Education Act 1981

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to receive the London university project report on the policy and implementation of the Education Act 1981; if the report will be available to the general public; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend received the report on 31 December 1986. It will be published by the university of London institute of education in due course.

The Department is studying the report, together with the findings of two complementary projects. Any further action must await the outcome of the inquiry by the Select Committee on Education, Science and the Arts into special education.

Boarding School Provision

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science to what factors he attributes the decline in the number of boarders in maintained schools in England between 1983 and 1986; and whether he will discuss with the local education authorities the possibility of reversing this trend.

Mrs. Rumbold: One reason has doubtless been the fall in the school population as a whole, though there may well be other factors in individual cases. Any significant reduction in maintained boarding school provision requires my right hon. Friend's approval under section 12 or 13 of the Education Act 1980. He decides such cases on their individual merits, including any objections received. There are no present plans to discuss boarding education generally with local education authorities.

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science why his Department does not collect centrally the information requested in two parliamentary questions on 11 February, *Official Report*, column *223*, by the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton about boarding school provisions; and whether he will take immediate steps to do so.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department has found no operational need for this information, and in any event it would have to take account of the additional cost and burden the collection of such information would impose on LEAs and schools.

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information is available to his Department about boarding school provision in the maintained sector other than that contained in the reply by the hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) to the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton on 11 February, *Official Report*, column *223*.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department occasionally receives information from the Boarding Schools Association obtained through its clearing house. Her Majesty's inspectorate advise the Secretary of State of its findings in the light of routine visits to individual boarding schools.

Training (Expenditure)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what analyses are available to his Department of expenditure on *(a)* education support grants, *(b)* technical and vocational education initiative and *(c)* in-service training, INSET; if he will publish an analysis of expenditure on each such programme in each of the last three years showing *(a)* the amount of grant given for new projects, *(b)* the proportion of total expenditure on such projects calculated to be provided by the grant, *(c)* the amount of grant given for continuation of existing projects, *(d)* the proportion of total expenditure on existing projects in that year calculated to be provided by the grant, *(e)* the total outturn expenditure on all grant-related projects, including expenditure from other sources and *(f)* the overall proportion of such outturn expenditure provided by the grant; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will estimate what amount and proportion of departmental spending in 1987-88 to support in-service training of teachers related to the general certificate of secondary education is likely to be consumed by additional spending on supply teachers; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Local education authorities plan to spend £16·7 million on training for the GCSE in 1987-88. It is not possible to estimate how much of this is attributable to the provision of supply teachers as this depends on the arrangements made by individual authorities to suit local needs and circumstances.

Science Budget

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the figures for the proportion of his Department's science budget allocated to each of the constituent colleges of the university of Wales for each year since 1979; and what is the projected figure for 1987-88.

Mr. Walden [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 January 1987, c. *651*]: The information is as follows:

Proportion (percentage) of the DES science budget

University college of Wales	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*[1]1987-88*
Aberystwyth	0·25	0·25	0·19	0·20	0·15	0·17	0·20	0·22	0·22
Bangor	0·23	0·23	0·22	0·20	0·17	0·15	0·15	0·14	0·12
Cardiff	0·29	0·29	0·29	0·26	0·28	0·27	0·29	0·28	0·27
Swansea	0·27	0·27	0·30	0·26	0·28	0·29	0·28	0·30	0·31
St. David's, Lampeter	0·01	0·01	0·01	0·004	0·01	0·01	0·002	0·002	0·002
University of Wales institute of science and technology	0·14	0·12	0·14	0·12	0·14	0·14	0·17	0·17	0·17
Welsh national school of medicine	0·13	0·14	0·13	0·13	0·14	0·15	0·16	0·16	0·15

[1] Projected figures.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the figures for the proportion of his Department's science budget allocated to institutions in Wales, other than the university of Wales, for each year since 1979; what is the projected figure for 1987-88; and if he will name these institutions.

Mr. Walden [*pursuant to the reply*, 22 January 1987, c. *651*]: The information requested is as follows:

1. Proportion of the DES science budget allocated to institutions in Wales other than the University of Wales

	Per cent.
1979-80	2·3
1980-81	2·6
1981-82	2·6
1982-83	2·6
1983-84	2·2
1984-85	2·1
1985-86	1·8
1986-87	1·8
1987-88	[1]1·7

[1] Projected figure.

2. The Institutions concerned are:
Llandough Hospital
Newport College of Technology
North East Wales Institute of Higher Education
Polytechnic of Wales
Welsh Plant Breeding Station
Research Vessel Services, Barry
Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, Bangor
British Geological Survey, Aberystwyth
Unit of Marine Biochemistry, Menai Bridge

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the figures for the amount allocated from his Department's science budget to *(a)* the constituent colleges of the university of Wales and *(b)* other institutions in Wales since 1979; and what is the projected figure for 1987-88.

Mr. Walden [*pursuant to the reply*, 22 January 1987, c. *651*]: The information requested is as follows:

Amount allocated from the Department of Education and Science budget (£'000)

	University colleges of Wales	*Other institutions in Wales*
1979-80	4,287·9	7,501·1
1980-81	5,128·1	10,115·9
1981-82	5,806·6	11,887·8
1982-83	5,673·1	12,499·5
1983-84	5,968·7	11,540·0
1984-85	6,468·1	11,251·0
1985-86	7,291·1	10,670·0
1986-87	7,761·5	11,219·9
1987-88[1]	8,208·1	11,352·0

[1] Projected figure

Nursery Places

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to how many *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time day nursery places are provided by each local authority and how this compares with each of the last five years.

Mrs. Currie: I have been asked to reply.

Information on whether the places are full-time or part-time is not collected centrally. The total numbers of day nursery places provided by each local authority in England are listed in the documents "Children's Day Care Facilities at 31 March, England" (A/F/6); copies for each of the four years from 1981 are in the Library.

Figures for 1985 are given in the table.

Day nursery places for children under five provided by local authorities at 31 March 1985, England

Local authority	*Number*
Cleveland	250
Cumbria	151
Durham	125
Northumberland	40
Gateshead	120
Newcastle upon Tyne	250
North Tyneside	90
South Tyneside	113
Sunderland	305
Humberside	50
North Yorkshire	136
Barnsley	0
Doncaster	25
Rotherham	0
Sheffield	352
Bradford	460
Calderdale	85
Kirklees	[1]186
Leeds	762
Wakefield	20
Cheshire	490
Lancashire	1,471
Bolton	188
Bury	110
Manchester	1,282
Oldham	243
Rochdale	320
Salford	451
Stockport	201
Tameside	450
Trafford	240
Wigan	246
Knowsley	350
Liverpool	908
Sefton	286
St. Helens	77
Wirral	210
Hereford and Worcester	117
Shropshire	0
Staffordshire	367
Warwickshire	0
Birmingham	1,488
Coventry	399
Dudley	0
Sandwell	170
Solihull	60
Walsall	120
Wolverhampton	225
Derbyshire	425
Leicestershire	565
Lincolnshire	80
Northamptonshire	123
Nottinghamshire	585
Bedfordshire	277
Berkshire	50
Buckinghamshire	110
Cambridgeshire	176
Essex	292
Hertfordshire	180
Norfolk	40
Oxfordshire	90
Suffolk	55
Camden	[1]645
Greenwich	355
Hackney	618
Hammersmith	528
Islington	680
Kensington	360
Lambeth	757
Lewisham	324
Southwark	578
Tower Hamlets	415
Wandsworth	623
Westminster	469
City of London	28

Local authority	Number
Barking	130
Barnet	290
Bexley	45
Brent	877
Bromley	65
Croydon	179
Ealing	342
Enfield	135
Haringey	280
Harrow	110
Havering	170
Hillingdon	250
Hounslow	206
Kingston upon Thames	[1]96
Merton	119
Newham	250
Redbridge	70
Richmond upon Thames	125
Sutton	64
Waltham Forest	280
Dorset	80
Hampshire	315
Isle of Wight	0
Kent	[1]15
Surrey	205
East Sussex	101
West Sussex	0
Wiltshire	0
Avon	568
Cornwall	0
Devon	18
Gloucestershire	32
Somerset	70
England total	28,904

[1] Estimated from information from earlier years.

ENVIRONMENT

Urban Housing Renewal Unit

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* those local authorities involved with the urban housing renewal unit.

Mr. John Patten: Local authorities which have had schemes approved by Estate Action (formerly the urban housing renewal unit) are as follows:

Barrow-in-Furness
Birmingham
Blackburn
Bolton
Bradford
Brent
Bury
Calderdale
Camden
Cannock Chase
Coventry
Derby
Dudley
Gateshead
Greenwich
Guildford
Hammersmith and Fulham
Haringey
Hartlepool
Hounslow
Hull
Hyndburn
Islington
Kensington and Chelsea
Knowsley
Langbaurgh
Leeds
Leicester
Lewisham
Manchester
Mansfield
Middlesbrough
Milton Keynes
Newcastle
Newham
North Tyneside
Norwich
Nottingham
Pendle
Rochdale
Rushmoor
Salford
Sandwell
Sheffield
Slough
Solihull
South Tyneside
Southwark
Stockton-on-Tees
Stockport
Sunderland
Tameside
Thamesdown
Tower Hamlets
Wakefield
Walsall
Waltham Forest
Wandsworth
Warrington
Wigan
Woodspring
Wyre Forest
York

Other local authorities which have received advice and visits from Estate Action are as follows.

Ashfield
Ashford
Barking and Dagenham
Barnsley
Bath
Bolsover
Bristol
Bromley
Broxbourne
Burnley
Carlisle
Chelmsford
Chester
Chester-le-Street
Cleethorpes
Copeland
Croydon
Dover
Ealing
East Hertfordshire
Eastleigh
East Staffordshire
Enfield
Exeter
Great Grimsby
Great Yarmouth
Hackney
Harlow
Harrow
High. Peak
Hillingdon
Hove
Ipswich
Kings Lynn & West Norfolk
Kirklees
Lancaster
Lincoln
Liverpool
Maidstone
Merton
Newcastle under Lyme
North West Leicester
Nuneaton
Peterborough
Plymouth
Redbridge
Redditch
Richmond upon Thames
Runcorn/Halton
Salisbury
Sedgemoor
Sefton
Sevenoaks
South Holland
South Kesteven
South Oxfordshire
South Somerset
South Staffordshire
Stafford
Tamworth
Test Valley
Tewkesbury
Thanet
Three Rivers
Vale of the White Horse
Vale Royal
Wear Valley
West Lancashire
West Lindsey
Westminster
Wirral
Woking
Wokingham
Wolverhampton
Worcester
Worthing

Local Authorities (Grants and Subsidies)

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total identifiable grants and subsidies including urban programme spending made by the Government each year since 1978 to *(a)* Edinburgh, *(b)* Bristol, *(c)* Lambeth, *(d)* Wandsworth, *(e)* Haringey, *(f)* Newcastle upon Tyne, *(g)* Cardiff, *(h)* Southampton, *(i)* Leicester, *(j)* Leeds, *(k)* Liverpool, *(l)* Manchester and *(m)* Sheffield (i) in total and (ii) in pounds per head of population.

Mr. John Patten: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Committee of Public Accounts (Recommendations)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will list those recommendations of the Committee of Public Accounts since 1983 affecting his Department which have been implemented.

Mr. Ridley: I refer the hon. Member to the Treasury minutes published in response to the relevant PAC reports. The Committee, on which the hon. Member serves, monitors departmental progress with accepted recommendations. The Treasury minutes for reports which affect my Department are:

PAC Report and Title	Treasury minute Cmnd. number
1983-84 Session	
5th	
Property Services Agency: Economy Measures	9178
23rd	
Home Improvement Grants	9368
26th	
Property Services Agency: Fraud	9368
30th	
Property Services Agency: Building Maintenance Expenditure	9368
1984-85 Session	
11th	
Property Services Agency: Defence Works in the Falklands	9546
18th	
Water Authorities	9638
19th	
Properties Services Agency: Economy Measures and Fraud	9638
1985-86	
7th	
Rate Support Grant	9776
10th	
Urban Programme	9776
16th	
Housing Association Grant	9808
24th	
Property Services Agency: Court Building Programme	9859
25th	
Property Services Agency: Prison Building Programme	9859
34th	
Enterprise Zone	9917
51st	
Control of Local Authorities Capital Expenditure	9846

House Building

Sir Peter Hordern asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will now accept the general level of houses to be built, and their distribution, between London and the shire counties, as set out in the Serplan document.

Mr. Waldegrave: In its regional statement, SERPLAN provided estimates of the levels and distribution of housing provision required in the period 1991 to 2001. In his letter of regional strategic guidance, published on 19 June 1986, my right hon. Friend agreed that overall these estimates could provide a reasonable basis on which to bring forward proposals for structure plan alterations. He emphasised, however, that the figures should be regarded as neither prescriptive nor inflexible, and that they remained to be tested and revised in the process of structure plan reviews and in the light of the circumstances obtaining at the time.

EC Aid

Mr. Garrett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number of applications since 1984 by local authorities in the northern region for European Economic Community aid for projects which have also received central Government aid.

Mr. Chope: The European Economic Community aid to local authorities for which the department is responsible is the European regional development fund. Since 1984, the European Commission has approved a total of 80 local authority projects in the Northern region. The total fund grant awarded exceeded £26 million. More than £12 million went on five large projects, of which two were in receipt of transport supplementary grant aid and one was in receipt of an Arts Council grant. For smaller projects, the number that received central Government aid is not readily available.

PSA, Glasgow

Mr. Allan Stewart asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to reach a decision on the future of the Property Services Agency office in Glasgow; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I hope to make an announcement about changes to the PSA territorial organisation, including the office in Glasgow, soon.

National Mobility Scheme

Mr. Fallon asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Darlington, 19 January, *Official Report*, column 370, he will give the number of tenants registered under the national mobility scheme in each of the last five years, and the number who successfully found accommodation under this scheme.

Mr. Tracey: Records are not kept in precisely the form requested, but reports of the national mobility steering committee for the first five years of the national mobility scheme give the following information:

	New nominations made[1]		*Number of moves*	
	All tenures	*by council tenants*[2]	*All tenures*	*by council tenants*[2]
1981-82	13,316	9,900	3,384	2,500
1982-83	19,331	14,900	6,235	4,800
1983-84	21,911	17,400	6,820	5,400
1984-85	27,839	22,550	7,593	6,150
1985-86	21,734	17,800	6,840	5,700
Totals	104,131	82,550	30,872	24,550

[1] "Nominations made" means the number of persons whose local authority nominated them for a move to a local authority in a different county. The numbers of nominations for moves within counties are not known.

[2] NMO estimates.

Housing Investment Programme

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the housing investment programme allocation in 1979 prices to *(a)* Burnley borough council and *(b)* Pendle borough council in 1979 and each subsequent year.

Mr. Tracey: The table gives the housing investment programme (HIP) allocations made to Burnley and Pendle borough councils since 1979, together with the total capital expenditure that these councils have been able to incur on housing:

£ million (1979 prices)	*HIP allocation*	*Expenditure*
	Burnley	
1979-80	5,605	4,791
1980-81	3,792	5,378

£ million (1979 prices)	HIP allocation	Expenditure
1981-82	2,933	2,712
1982-83	4,491	4,490
1983-84	4,220	5,506
1984-85	3,513	3,735
1985-86	2,656	3,223
1986-87	2,252	[1]3,250
1987-88	1,989	
	Pendle	
1979-80	3,378	3,602
1980-81	2,490	2,396
1981-82	3,130	3,417
1982-83	3,694	3,656
1983-84	3,060	3,874
1984-85	2,505	4,153
1985-86	1,956	2,765
1986-87	1,588	[1]2,239
1987-88	1,464	

[1] Estimate.

Departmental Contracts

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the contracts, with the subject of the assignment, awarded to management consultancy or accounting firms by his Department in 1986, with the name of the consultants concerned.

Mr. Ridley: Central records are collected annually after the end of the financial year. The latest readily available returns therefore cover 1985-86.

The contracts awarded to management consultancy or accounting firms by the Department of the Environment in the financial year 1985-86 were as follows:

Firm and Subject of Assignment

DOE (CENTRAL)

Price Waterhouse Management Consultants
Residuary Body Implementation Plan — Greater London.

Peat Marwick Mitchell and Co.
Residuary Bodies Implementation Plans—Metropolitan Counties.

Touche Ross and Co.
Report on National Cyrenians.

Coopers Lybrand and Associates
Preparation of Business Plan for Thamesmead Town.

Price Waterhouse Urwick
Management skills and procedure training.

Ernst and Whinney
Review of Stockbridge Village Trust Ltd.

Lawrence Gould Consultants Ltd.
Review of costs and operation of financial guidelines for management agreements under Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981.

Touche Ross and Co.
Advice on in-house transfer of MAXIS (Management of Administrative Expenditure Information Systems).

Deloitte Haskins and Sells
Advice on implementation of new financial regime for new towns following New Towns and Urban Development Corporations Act 1985.

N. M. Rothchild and Sons Ltd.
Docklands light railway/Canary Wharf development advisory contract.

Coopers Lybrand and Associates
National Heritage Memorial fund long term funding.

Touche Ross and Co.
Civic Trust review.

Peat Marwick Mitchell and Co.
Management study of the Royal Armouries.

INBUCON/LUC
Resource plan and staffing model for the Royal Parks.

PROPERTY SERVICES AGENCY
Deloitte Haskins and Sells
Special advice to the Principal Finance Officer.

Touche Ross and Co.
Price Waterhouse Management Consultants
Deloitte Haskins and Sells
PSA internal audit consultants.

MCP Management Consultants
Review of procedures for directly employed labour.

MCP Management Consultants
Review of central engineering workshops, Burtonwood.

Coopers and Lybrand Associates Ltd.
Consultancy support to PSA information technology committees.

THE CROWN SUPPLIERS
Negus and Negus
Annual Report and Accounts 1984-85

Resource Planning Consultants
Fleet Adviser.

Resource Planning Consultants
To calculate whole life vehicle costs for review.

Coopers Lybrand and Associates Ltd.
Study for information strategy.

Hazardous Pesticides (Exports)

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to stop the export of banned or hazardous pesticides to Third-world countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Pesticides may be banned or severely restricted for a number of reasons and the need to impose restrictions will vary depending on local conditions. For example, some are much more persistent in our environment than under tropical conditions; Third world countries may consider certain pesticides that are banned or severely restricted in this country to be vital to protect valuable food crops or for public health campaigns.

Rather than impose our national concerns on other countries, we believe our role should be to assist them to make their own decisions, in the light of their own circumstances. This is the philosophy underlying the agreements already reached in OECD and in FAO, and was endorsed at a UNEP meeting which we hosted in London earlier this month. The United Kingdom was one of the first countries to implement these agreements under which we notify other countries whenever we ban or severely restrict chemicals (including pesticides) so that those countries can consider what action may be

appropriate to their circumstances. Individual countries are notified again when one of these chemicals is first exported to that country.

Bed-and-Breakfast Accommodation

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the current cost to local authorities for bed-and-breakfast hotel accommodation.

Mr. Tracey: The latest available information is for 1985-86. For that year local authorities have reported to the Department net expenditure of £21·3 million on maintaining households in bed-and-breakfast accommodation under part III of the Housing Act 1985.

Crown Suppliers

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when the study on the feasibility of the privatisation of the Crown suppliers by Samuel Montagu and Coopers and Lybrand commenced; what is the cost of the study; when it is expected to be completed; and what arrangements he intends to make for its publication.

Mr. Chope: The study commenced on 1 December 1986. It will cost £97,600 plus expenses. It will be completed soon. I shall make a further announcement about the study when I have considered its results.

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total amount of purchases by the Crown suppliers in 1985-86; and what proportion was British manufactured.

Mr. Chope: £135 million, of which 96 per cent. was purchased from firms registered in the United Kingdom.

Departmental Purchases

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total amount of purchases of *(a)* textiles, *(b)* clothing, *(c)* carpets, *(d)* furniture, *(e)* pottery and ceramic goods and *(f)* cutlery in 1985-86; and what proportion of each category was British manufactured.

Mr. Chope: Following is the information:

	£ million	*United Kingdom manufacture per cent.*
Textiles	7·4	70
Clothing	0·6	100
Carpets	8·1	99
Furniture	47·1	98
Pottery/Ceramics	4·3	100
Cutlery	0·9	99·75

Property Repayment Services System

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many locations are involved in the radical option under the property repayment services system; what is the maximum that can be spent; and whether the Property Services Agency may tender for the work.

Mr. Chope: The radical option of the property repayment services system applies on an experimental basis to 92 properties on the Government's civil estates. In these properties, the experimenting Departments involved, (the Department of Health and Social Security and the Department of Employment) may carry out minor new works costing up to £150,000 and maintenance jobs costing up to £100,000. The purpose of these experiments is to test the implications of enabling client departments to commission relevant works services direct from contractors or consultants without reference to the Property Services Agency.

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many additional posts have been created in client departments arising from the property repayment services system.

Mr. Chope: Information on the creation of additional posts, if any, in client departments as a result of the property repayment services system is a matter for the individual Departments concerned.

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the accounting and tender arrangements that accommodation officers must follow under the property repayment services system; and what are the arrangements that Property Services Agency staff must follow for comparable work.

Mr. Chope: The financial control systems set up by Departments in connection with PRS delegated works on the accommodation they occupy must remain a matter for the individual Department concerned and the accounting officers. PSA has, however, issued guidance on the general principles to be followed, in, for example, letting contracts for minor works, and on the agency's own practice in these matters, in the form of the booklet "Managing Works: A Guide for Accommodation Managers". I shall arrange for copies to be placed in the Library of the House.

Instructions for PSA's own staff on accounting and tender arrangements are contained in internal circulars and codes, compliance with which is ensured through the agency's internal audit and technical audit procedures.

Museums and Galleries

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the Property Services Agency will be able to tender for *(a)* maintenance work and *(b)* new work for museums and galleries after the new arrangements for them come into force after April 1988.

Mr. Chope: I shall answer this question shortly.

North Sea (Environmental Protection)

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will provide details of the discussions which took place during the meeting of the scientific and technical working group which was held in Aberdeen in June 1986 in preparation for the international conference on the environmental protection of the North sea 1987.

Mr. Waldegrave: The meeting was one of a series attended by scientific experts from the North sea littoral states, the Commission of the European Communities and international organisations concerned with the protection of the North sea. Its main purpose was to revise the quality status report on the North sea produced for the 1984

North sea conference in Bremen. The final revision of this report will be completed in the summer, after which I would expect it to be published.

Direct Labour Organisations

Mr. William Shelton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he proposes to take any further action against loss-making local authority direct labour organisations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend has decided to ask two more councils to submit special reports on their direct labour organisations.

The first is Lambeth borough council, whose DLO lost some £1·4 million on major new building work in the three years 1982-83 to 1984-85. The council has still not produced figures for 1985-86, although these should have been submitted no later than 30 September 1986.

The second is Burnley borough council, whose DLO lost over £110,000 on maintenance work in 1984-85, and a further £35,000 in 1985-86.

Our normal practice hitherto has been to wait for three consecutive financial failures before requesting special reports. Since authorities have over five years' experience of the operation of the DLO legislation, we have now decided to request special reports after two consecutive failures — waiting for three failures allows too long before real pressure is brought to bear to contain losses. We have therefore decided to seek a special report from Burnley without waiting for the 1986-87 results.

Council House Sales

Mrs. Roe asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will update the table giving information on sales of dwellings by each local authority in England, which was referred to in the answer given to the hon. Member for Swindon (Mr. Coombs) on 5 November 1986.

Mr. John Patten: I have today placed in the Library the latest version of the regular table giving information reported by each local authority in England on the progress of council house sales up to the end of September 1986.

Photochemical Oxidants Review Group

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the findings of the photochemical oxidants review group.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 February 1987, c. *112*]: The first report of the photochemical oxidants review group will be published on 18 February 1987. I shall arrange for copies to be placed in the Library of the House.

Rates

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* *(a)* the rate support grant spending assumption per head of population for 1987-88 for Adur, Hove and Worthing district councils and *(b)* the proposed grant to be received in 1987-88 per head of population in Adur, Hove and Worthing district councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 February 1987, c. *417*]: The following table sets out, for each authority, *(a)* the settlement assumption of total expenditure, which has been set for non-rate limited authorities at 4·159 per cent. above 1986-87 budgets; *(b)* the difference between this figure and each authority's grant related expenditure assessment; *(c)* the block grant payable for spending at the settlement assumption.

	Spending assumption (1986-87 budget + 4·159 per cent.) (£ per head)	*Spending by comparison with grant related expenditure (£ per head)*	*Block grant payable at spending assumption (£ per head)*
Adur district council	61·07	+11·65 (+23·6 per cent.)	11·87
Hove district council	69·37	−14·68 (−17·5 per cent.)	67·30
Worthing district council	71·34	+1·11 (+1·6 per cent.)	36·66

The principal factor underlying the different levels of grant payable to these authorities is the differences in their expenditure compared to grant related expenditure.

Consultants

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the full cost of the use of consultants in the district works office, Westminster; how many consultants have been employed; and what is the comparable cost of using Property Services Agency staff.

Mr. Chope: I shall answer this question shortly.

THE ARTS

Wales

Mr. Wigley asked the Minister for the Arts what proportion of the central Government arts budget was spent in Wales in each financial year since 1979-80; and what is the projected figure for 1987-88.

Mr. Luce: Between 2 and 3 per cent. of my budget was spent in Wales in the years in question. However, Welsh arts bodies also receive funds from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Public Libraries (Political Material)

Mr. Cartwright asked the Minister for the Arts what consultations he is having with representatives of library interests in discharge of his functions under section 1 of the

Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 to ensure that the Government's proposed code of practice under section 4 of the Local Government Act 1986 does not inhibit the provision of a comprehensive service of political manifestos and other politically-related material by public libraries.

Mr. Luce [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 February 1987, c. *479-80*]: None. The code of practice to be issued by my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment for Scotland and for Wales, will be concerned with local authorities' decisions to incur expenditure on publicity, that is, any communication in whatever form, addressed to the public at large or to a section of the public. We do not consider that this is relevant to, or should in any way inhibit, the provision of a comprehensive library service under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.

CIVIL SERVICE

Departmental Contracts

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Minister for the Civil Service if he will list the contracts, with the subject of the assignment, awarded to management consultancy or accounting firms by his Department in 1986, with the name of the consultants concerned.

Mr. Luce: The contracts awarded to management consultancy and accounting firms during the calendar year 1986 are as follows:

Firm and Subject of assignment

BGM Consultants Limited
Identification of core skills for the young people project.

Business Research Unit
Evaluation of staff appraisal scheme.

Centre for Training and Evaluation Studies
Evaluation of staff appraisal material.

Coopers and Lybrand Associates Limited
Development of policy evaluation.[1]

Diane Bailey Associates
i. Training material on staff appraisal and training workshops.
ii. Preparation of information pack on stress management.

DWJ Consulting Services Limited
Functions review of the Crown Suppliers[1].

Ernst and Whinney
Specialised training.

Frank Griffiths Associates Limited
Review of the purchasing and supply organisation in a Government Department.[1]

IMS
i. Study of mobility.[1]
ii. Specialised training.
iii. Advice on working patterns.

Inbucon Management Consultants Limited
Preparation of a training package.

Pergamon Infotech
Specialised training.

Peat, Marwick Mitchell and Co.
Development of policy evaluation.[1]

Psychometric Research and Development Limited
Analyses contributing to the Civil Service Commission review of executive officer recruitment.

System Concepts Limited
Identification of information management needs.

[1] Costs for these studies were shared with other government departments.

YTS

Mr. Favell asked the Minister for the Civil Service if he has proposals to increase the number of YTS approved places in the Civil Service and the level of take-up.

Mr. Luce: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister gave on 29 April 1986 at column *355*. My right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General announced on 21 November 1986 at c. *367* that a two-year YTS scheme was being designed for introduction in the Department of Employment and the Manpower Services Commission. I am confident that other schemes in suitable Government Departments will follow. I am satisfied with the current level of take-up on schemes in the Civil Service (90 per cent.) and I do not foresee any difficulties in the future.

NATIONAL FINANCE

EC Budget

69. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer which member nations are now net contributors to the European Economic Community budget.

Mr. Brooke: The United Kingdom, even after abatement, and Germany are both substantial net contributors to the EC budget. After taking account of their contributions to United Kingdom refunds and abatement, the French have also been net contributors, but on a modest scale.

70. **Mr. Deakins** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the European Economic Community Council of Foreign Ministers will next discuss how to bring total European Economic Community expenditure into line with the financial resourses available within the 1·4 per cent. value added tax limit.

Mr. Brooke: The agenda for the next Foreign Affairs council has not yet been fixed. It would normally be for the Budget or Agriculture Councils to discuss first the proposals which the Commission should bring forward for ensuring that expenditure remains within the available resources.

Departmental Contracts

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the contracts, with the subject of the assignment, awarded to management consultancy or accounting firms by his Department in 1986, with the name of the consultants concerned.

Mr. Brooke: The following management consultancy and accounting firms were awarded contracts by Her Majesty's Treasury in 1986. With the exception of the first two, all were placed by the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency (CCTA).

Firm and Subject of assignment

I. E. Symonds and Partners
Study of building construction projects.

K. M. G. Thomson McLintock
Evaluation of office automation trial.

Price Waterhouse
Investigation of investment appraisal for computer projects.

Stratpac Limited
Departmental IT: support to information technology steering committee chairmen's seminar.

Christine Howarth Limited, Leela Damodaran
Development of handbook — "A Role for Users in System Design and Development".

Infotech Consultants
Attendance at quality assurance meeting of COMPACT methodology and preparation of report on the methodology.

Logica Consultancy Limited
Study on text distribution in Government.

Software Sciences Limited
Enhancements to PRESS software for departmental press offices.

R. M. O'Connor, Information Processing Consultant
Compilation of new IT standards list.

R. M. O'Connor
Study of Government computer procurement in relation to IT standards.

CAP Scientific Limited
Preparation and presentation of paper on IT standards to Metropolitan police.

Simpact Systems Limited (now Learmonth and Burchett Planning Management Systems Limited)
Study on the use of project organisation management and technique methodology in Government.

Lorien Computer Services Limited
Project support for programming and data management branch.

P. E. Consulting Services Limited
CCTA.

Data Dictionary Systems Limited
Study of the interface between structured system analysis and design methodology (SSADM) and application generators.

Babelease Limited.
Construction of an entity relationship attribute (ERA) model of two notations for entity life histories.

Learmonth and Burchett Management Systems Limited
Assistance in modification of version 3.0 SSADM.
Interface between SSADM and Government turnkey procedures.

The Systems Training Co.
Development of a transputer based graphics system for multi-user SSADM tool (MUST).

Model Systems Limited
Provision of ad hoc consultancy support to users of SSADM.

Logica Consultancy Limited
Investigation of the use of SSADM for distributed systems.

Metier Management Systems Limited
Upgrade of CCTA's "Artemis" bureau.

Towngate Computer Limited
Post accounts system reconciliation (POAC).

Systemcare
Assistance in CCTA maintenance and systems audit of tri-service engine control system for Ministry of Defence (Navy).

Computer Sciences Co.
Feasibility of installing digital systems design methodology in Government.

PA Consulting Services
Physiological access control study.

BT Tallis Consultancy
Project to model the Government telecommunications network.

Artificial Intelligence Limited
Consultancy support for Alvey Department of Health and Social Security project.

CASTELL Limited
Verification of electronically reproduced data in court.

Ovum Limited
Identification of operational expert systems in the USA.

Grafton (Database Consultants) Limited
Development of a performance analysis tool for an IBM communication and data base environment.

Logica Space and Defence Systems Limited
Application of knowledge based systems techniques to audit trail analysis and Database security.

PA Consultancy Services Limited
Study of departmental non-voice telecommunications.

ICL
Study on aspects of MUST.

Alcohol

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will state for each of the last 10 years for which figures are available the percentage change on the previous year of the rate of tax levied on beer; and if he will also state the percentage change in revenue which was generated by this change in each of those years;

(2) if he will state for each of the last 10 years for which figures are available the percentage change on the previous year of the rate of tax levied on spirits; and if he will also state the percentage change in revenue which was generated by this change in each of those years;

(3) if he will state for each of the last 10 years for which figures are available the percentage change on the previous year of the rate of tax levied on fortified wines; and if he will also state the percentage change in revenue which was generated by this change in each of those years;

(4) if he will state for each of the last 10 years for which figures are available the percentage change on the previous year of the rate of tax levied on table wines; and if he will also state the percentage change in revenue which was generated by this change in each of those years.

Mr. Brooke: The percentage increases in the rates of duty are shown below. Also shown are the percentage increases in total revenue in each of the last 10 years. However, the increases in revenue reflect factors other

than the changes in duty, such as changes in producers' prices and in consumers' preferences. Year on year comparisons are also sensitive to fluctuations in the pattern of pre-Budget stockbuilding and to distortions caused by the introduction of duty deferment for wines and spirits in 1982-83. I regret, therefore, that it is not possible to estimate the revenue effects of the duty change in isolation.

Receipts for table wines and fortified wines are not separately identifiable, so figures are given for receipts for lower strength wine of fresh grape, which is mostly table wine, and for middle and higher strength wines of fresh grape, which include most of the fortified wines.

(i) Percentage change in Spirits

	Duty	*Revenue*
1976-77	11·5	24·3
1977-78[1]	10·0	0·7
1978-79	nil	26·3
1979-80	nil	4·3
1980-81	13·7	nil
1981-82	14·6	6·0
1982-83	6·4	−21·0
1983-84	5·0	76·3
1984-85	1·9	−27·0
1985-86	1·9	21·0

(ii) Percentage change in lower strength wines of fresh grape

	Duty	*Revenue*
1976-77	12·6	[2] n/a
1977-78[1]	10·0	13·3
1978-79	nil	16·3
1979-80	nil	20·5
1980-81	13·9	13·9
1981-82	16·9	35·2
1982-83	12·2	[3] 19·9
1983-84	5·8	[3] 11·6
1984-85	−19·9	[3] 7·0
1985-86	8·3	[3] 7·8

(iii) Percentage change in middle and higher strength wines of fresh grapes[4]

	Duty		*Revenue*
	middle strength wines	*higher strength wines*	
1976-77	16·2	19·9	[2] n/a
1977-78[1]	10·0	10·0	nil
1978-79	nil	nil	19·2
1979-80	nil	nil	nil
1980-81	13·9	13·9	−2·5
1981-82	30·8	30·8	27·9
1982-83	12·2	12·2	[3] nil
1983-84	5·8	5·8	[3] 9·3
1984-85	8·0	6·8	[3] 0·6
1985-86	7·3	6·3	[3] −14·0

(iv) Percentage change in Beer

	Duty	*Revenue*
1976-77	15·8	23·9
1977-78[1]	10·0	10·4
1978-79	nil	nil
1979-80	nil	2·6
1980-81	22·5	14·4
1981-82	37·9	29·4
1982-83	13·3	12·5
1983-84	5·9	10·0
1984-85	11·1	8·7
1985-86	7·5	7·3

[1] This duty rate became effective from 1 January 1977 as a result of a 10 per cent. regulator surcharge on the 1976 Budget duty rate.
[2] Not available due to restructuring of wine duties.
[3] Based on estimated duty charged.
[4] Revenue changes are for middle and higher strength wines together; duty changes are shown separately.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will estimate the total annual revenue which would be generated by an increase in duty of 5p on a bottle of table wine;

(2) if he will estimate the total annual revenue which would be generated by an increase in duty of 10p on a bottle of spirits.

Mr. Brooke: The estimated full year net revenue yield (including consequential value-added tax) of raising duty by 10p on a 75cl bottle of spirits is about £15 million in 1987-88 prices. On the same basis, a duty increase of 5p on a 70cl bottle of table wine would yield about £25 million.

Cigarettes

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many representations he has received *(a)* for and *(b)* against increasing the duty on cigarettes.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend has received numerous representations both for and against increasing the duty on cigarettes from a wide range of bodies and individuals. These will be carefully considered.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Milk Production

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many acres of land are to be taken out of use for milk production in the United Kingdom when the EEC milk package is implemented; and what are his proposals for the use of this land.

Mr. Gummer: In view of the wide range of circumstances under which dairy farmers operate, it is not realistic to make an estimate of the amount of land likely to be released from milk production. It is for individual farmers to decide how best to run their businesses, but the measures which I announced on 9 February are designed to help farmers find new opportunities.

Production Control

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans for production control in each sector of the farming industry; and if he has discussed this with the representatives of the National Farmers Union.

Mr. Gummer: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave him on Monday 16 February at column 486. The NFU and I frequently discuss CAP reform.

Consultancy

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Minister of Agriculture, if he will list the contracts, with the subject of the assignments, awarded to management consultancy or accounting firms by his Department in 1986, with the name of the consultants concerned.

Mr. Jopling: My Department has placed the following contracts with management and accountancy consultants in 1986.

Firm and Assignment

Computer Services Co. Ltd.
Design of new data processing system for Agricultural Census:

Coopers & Lybrand associates
Regional review:

Pactel
Data flow study:

Peat Marwick Mitchell
Management Accountancy Information System:

Sequal Information Ltd.
Design of new data processing system for Agricultural Census:

SRU
Marketing of ADAS Services:

Touche Ross
Dairy Crest Foods:

Wootton Jeffrey
Workstation evaluation:

Dorset Fishermen

Mr. Adley asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will arrange to meet in Dorset the commercial fishermen of Dorset to discuss matters currently of concern to them; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I am aware that the Dorset fishermen are concerned about a number of issues, in particular the recommendations for the future management of the bass stocks made by my scientists last July.

I have advised local fishermen's organisations that they will be consulted when any firm proposals for the management of the fishery are made, and that I would be prepared to see them if they wish to make further representations at that stage.

Animal Welfare

Mr. Hancock asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much has been spent in the last three years on animal welfare by his Department.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Ministry's published MINIM returns, copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House, show that administrative expenditure on farm animal welfare in 1984-85 and 1985-86 was £2·8 million and £3·4 million respectively. Comparable figures are not available for 1983-84.

Improvement Scheme Applications

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many agriculture improvement scheme applications have been approved since the commencement of the scheme;

(2) how many agriculture improvement scheme applications have been rejected since the commencement of the scheme;

(3) how many rejected agriculture improvement scheme applications were connected with *(a)* the ADAS drainage design service and *(b)* independent applicants;

(4) how many agricultural improvement scheme applications have included land drainage operations as part or whole of the plan.

Mr. Donald Thompson [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 February 1987, c. *483*]: Separate information is not available on whether advice on the preparation of plans involving drainage work which had to be rejected had been given by the ADAS field drainage design service or others. Rejection is usually the result of an applicant's failure to comply with the eligibility conditions of the scheme.

Up to 31 December 1986 7,582 plan applications had been approved in the United Kingdom under the agriculture improvement scheme, 1,395 had been rejected and a further 3,935 were under consideration. Drainage operations accounted for around 13 per cent. of the total approved investments.

Field Drainage Design Service

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what income was generated by ADAS from the field drainage design service from October 1985 to October 1986.

Mr. Donald Thompson [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 February 1987, c. *483*]: In the first 12 months of operation of this scheme, which was introduced in November 1985, invoices for some £84,000, exclusive of VAT, were issued under the field drainage design service.

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of income generated by ADAS from the field drainage design service derives from agricultural clients.

Mr. Donald Thompson [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 February 1987, c. *483*]: Over half of income in 1986 from the field drainage design service came from persons managing or farming agricultural land, or their agents.

Low-input Farming

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish the results of the experiments on low-input farming conducted at Boxworth experimental husbandry farm; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 February 1987, c. *484*]: Information has already been given on a number of occasions to Parliament and the public about the project at Boxworth experimental husbandry farm to compare the economic and ecological effects of three different pesticide programmes in intensive wheat production over a five-year period to harvest 1988. Initial reports on the ecological effects of the study are to be published shortly and reports on economic effects will be available later this year.

Botulism

Mr. Hickmet asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if his Department's veterinary investigation service will make investigations into whether the cause of death on 1 December 1986 of the horse Gamble, stabled at Ponsworthy in Devon, was botulism.

Mr. Donald Thompson [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 February 1987, c. *484*]: Inquiries have revealed that this

horse was destroyed on 1 December after a period of illness, that no clinical diagnosis was made and that no specimens from the horse were submitted to the Ministry's laboratories for analysis.

Mr. Hickmet asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the incidence of botulism amongst livestock since the introduction of big bale silage; what is the difference between the big bale silage and Horse Hage; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 February 1987, c. *484*]: Information is not available on the incidence of botulism amongst livestock since the introduction of big bale silage. The difference between big bale silage and Horse Hage is that the latter is vacuum packed in plastic bags.

Mr. Hickmet asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, further to his reply of 12 February 1987, whether any horses have died as a result of contracting botulism which have not been recorded by his Department's laboratories.

Mr. Donald Thompson [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 February 1987, c. *484*]: Since botulism is not a notifiable disease the Ministry does not have information on any cases where no diagnosis was sought from the veterinary investigation service by a private practitioner.

Mr. Hickmet asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, in the light of information supplied to him by the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe, he has anything to add to his answer of 12 February on another horse alleged to have eaten the same fodder as the horses which died.

Mr. Donald Thompson [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 February 1987, c. *484*]: I have nothing to add to my answer of 12 February.

Mr. Hickmet asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, further to his reply of Thursday 12 February 1987, what information he has as to how much time both horses which were destroyed spent stabled at Widecombe-in-the-Moor.

Mr. Donald Thompson [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 February 1987, c. *484*]: I have no information as to how long the horses had been stabled at these premises.

Mr. Hickmet asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received concerning the supply in Devon and Cornwall of Horse Hage fodder by Westway and Sons; what information he has received that such fodder is or may be a cause of botulism in horses; what action he has taken as a result; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 February 1987, c. *484*]: No representations other than those from my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe have been received about the supply of fodder in Devon and Cornwall. The results of tests so far on samples of the fodder have proved negative.

Mr. Hickmet asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any information as to why Westway and Sons has withdrawn 4,000 bales of Horse Hage and offered to buy back Horse Hage supplied to horse owners; and if he will reconsider his decision not to advise the feed merchant and horse owners about this matter.

Mr. Donald Thompson [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 February 1987, c. *484*]: Any action taken concerning the supply of Horse Hage is a matter for the company concerned. I do not consider that it would be appropriate to advise the feed merchant and horse owners about this matter.

Mr. Hickmet asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will seek to obtain the articles about botulism in horses and other livestock by the veterinary surgeon Mr. Ricketts of Newmarket and published in recent months in the *Veterinary Record* and elsewhere; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 February 1987, c. *484*]: The Ministry's state veterinary service is aware of the articles about botulism written by Mr. Ricketts and published in the *Veterinary Record* and elsewhere.

Mr. Hickmet asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make botulism a notifiable disease when contracted *(a)* by horses or *(b)* by other livestock; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 February 1987, c. *484*]: Botulism does not exhibit the well established criteria for making a disease notifiable. In particular, it is not contagious and there is no risk of infection of other livestock by an affected animal.

DEFENCE

DROPS

Sir Ian Gilmour asked the Secretary of State for Defence what steps were taken to ensure that the 1982 demountable rack off-loading pick-up system competition was carried out with complete fairness to all parties involved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The 1982 DROPS procurement competition was conducted properly and fairly within the Department's established procurement procedures. These ensure even-handed and full consideration of the industry's proposals against their ability to provide effective value for money satisfaction of the services' requirements.

Experimental Diving Unit

Mr. Warren asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will review the work of the experimental diving unit following the abandonment of the HMS Challenger project; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I do not understand my hon. Friend's reference to abandonment of the HMS Challenger project. The ship is currently undergoing a refit and will be back at sea shortly. A review has taken place of the work of the experimental diving unit, the conclusions of which will shortly be the subject of consultation with the Department's trades unions.

AIDS

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Defence what advice is being given to members of Her Majesty's forces stationed overseas in countries with a high incidence of AIDS.

Mr. Freeman: I have nothing further to add to the replies which I gave to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on 19 November 1986, at column 222, to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on 22 January 1987, at column 730-31, and to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) on 4 February 1987, at column 716.

Bofors Gun

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence if spares and ammunition is still produced for the Bofors light gun.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The only Bofors gun now in service with United Kingdom forces is the 40mm L60; spares and ammunition remain available for this gun.

Departmental Contracts

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the contracts, with the subject of the assignment, awarded to management consultancy or accounting firms by his Department in 1986, with the name of the consultants concerned.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Details of consultancy contracts awarded to management consultancy or accounting firms in 1986 are as follows. These do not include computer consultancies and project support work.

Firm and Subject of assignment

Accountancy Personnel
Supply of Accountants to Devonport Dockyard.

Accountancy Personnel
Supply of Accountants to Rosyth Dockyard.

Arren Management Services
Consultancy assistance to Chief Executive Dockyard on Industrial Relations.

Arren Management Services
Consultancy assistance to Managing Director Rosyth Dockyard on Industrial Relations.

Arren Management Services
Employee Relations and managing change at Devonport.

Arthur Young
Study into the Army's Administrative Transport.

Arthur Young
Study into the future of the Defence School of Music.

Arthur Young
Implementation assistance following the recommendations of the 'B' vehicle study.

Arthur Young
Study into Ex-works Transport.

Arthur Young
Study to determine cost and support objectives, Director General Aircraft (Navy).

Arthur Young
Consultancy assistance with implementation of vehicle studies.

Atkins Planning
Study to review the repair strategy of the Naval Air Repair Organisation.

Coopers and Lybrand
Study in establishing the Royal Dockyards as a Government Owned PLC.

Deloitte Haskings and Sells
Assistance with the Study into Services Accommodation policy.

Deloitte Haskings and Sells
Study into Maintenance Support for the Meteorological Office.

Economists Advisory Group
Consultancy assistance with the audit of Service Messes.

Eurolog
Devonport Strategic Plan-risk analysis.

J. R. Eve
Consultancy assistance with MOD valuation of smaller sites.

Harold Whitehead
Consultancy assistance for the MOD's Management Services (Organisation) Division.

Harold Whitehead
Review of Productivity Scheme at Central Engineer Park, Long Marston.

Hay Management Consultants
Communications assistance to Director General Ship Refitting.

John Brown Tourism
Study into the earnings potential of the RAF Museums.

New Business Developments
Senior Management consultancy assistance to Chief Executive Dockyard.

New Business Developments
Senior Management consultancy assistance to Rosyth.

Organisation Devlopment Limited
Review of Productivity Scheme at Directorate Technical Services, Copenacre, Bath.

PA
Study into the reliability content of contracts.

PA
Equipment Maintenance Study for Quarter Master General.

PA
Study into the maintenance and control of major repairable units of air stores for Director General Aircraft (Navy).

PA
Location study for the Support Executive Director General Aircraft (Navy).

PA
Consultancy assistance for the project team, Director General Aircraft (Navy).

PA
Study to review capacity management, Director General Aircraft (Navy).

PA
Business Management Systems Study at Rosyth Dockyard.

PE Consulting Group
Commercial Materials System at Devonport.

PE Consulting Group
Business Management Systems Study at Devonport Dockyard.

PE Consulting Group
Implementation of Protection Control at Rosyth Dockyard.

Peat Marwick and Mitchell
Study into the provision of an Army Personal Financial Services Scheme.

Peat Marwick and Mitchell
Study into the RAF Support Structure at Harrogate and Carlisle.

Price Waterhouse
Use of Information Technology consultants in Director General Ship Refitting's area.

Samuel Montagu
Merchant Bank advice for the Royal Dockyards.

Touche Ross
Provision of commercial style prospectus for HM Dockyards and associated work—Phase III.

Touche Ross
Commercial accounting system for the Royal Dockyards.

Touche Ross
Additional Support to Dockyard Bids by Contractors.

Walker Searle
Navy Stores study into interface with Dockyard Contractors.

Warren Associates
RAF Engineering Practices Study.

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for Defence what invitations to tender he plans to issue to management consultancy or accounting firms during the next three months; and what will be the subject of the assignment in each case.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Plans for management and accounting consultancies over the next three months are not sufficiently firm to allow for the publication of a forward programme.

Housing

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Defence why the proportion of vacant houses owned by his Department has increased during the previous five years.

Mr. Freeman: As I stated in a reply to the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) on 28 January 1987, at column 127, the principal reason for this increase has been the growing tendency towards owner-occupation among the armed forces, in common with the national trend: although MOD had disposed of some 6,000 surplus married quarters during the past five years, this reduction in stock has been outpaced by the move towards home-ownership. Another factor has been a major modernisation programme which renders married quarters unavailable for occupation but which, when completed, will leave them much more attractive as family homes.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Defence which local authorities have had use of his Department's housing on a short-term let basis.

Mr. Freeman: Records of lettings to local authorities have not been maintained centrally, but it is known that the following have had use of the Department's housing:

Exeter City Council.
Plymouth City Council.
Portsmouth City Council.
Gosport Borough Council.
Weymouth and Portland Borough Council.
Christchurch Borough Council.
East Hampshire District Council.
Kennet District Council.
Rushmoor District Council.
Test Valley Borough Council.
Rushcliffe District Council.
Salisbury District Council.
North Wiltshire District Council.
West Wiltshire District Council.
Gloucester City Council.
South Oxon District Council.
Harrogate Borough Council.
Alnwick District Council.
London Borough of Greenwich.

Married quarters are currently leased to the following local authorities:

Exeter City Council.
Plymouth City Council.
Portsmouth City Council.
Gosport Borough Council.
Kennet District Council.
North Wiltshire District Council.
London Borough of Greenwich.

School Fees

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total number of children of personnel serving in Her Majesty's forces currently attending boarding schools where the fees are met wholly or partly by his Department because the parent or parents are posted abroad; how many of the pupils are in *(a)* the maintained and *(b)* the independent sector; and what is the current cost per annum to his Department.

Mr. Freeman: Boarding school allowance is available to help service parents provide continuity of education for their children during frequent posting moves, whether within United Kingdom or overseas. Records are not maintained in the form requested, but the allowance is currently being paid in respect of some 21,500 children in all. Of these, it is estimated that about 20 per cent. attend school in the maintained sector. The estimated cost of the allowance for the current financial year is £92·404 million.

Arms Exports

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many jobs in the United Kingdom are *(a)* directly and *(b)* indirectly supported by arms exports.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: More than 100,000 jobs are estimated to be supported by United Kingdom defence exports. It is not, however, possible to differentiate between those jobs which are directly and indirectly sustained.

Marconi

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement as to the nature of police and other inquiries currently taking place into the trading practices of Marconi in relation to certain defence contracts.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No. The conduct of the Ministry of Defence police inquiries is the responsibility of the chief constable, Ministry of Defence police and is not a matter

for Ministers. However, I can confirm that the Ministry of Defence police are investigating certain allegations relating to MOD contracts placed with the Marconi group of companies.

Helicopters (Search and Rescue)

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the response time and operation of the Sea King helicopter from Royal Air Force Lossiemouth which effected a civilian rescue from a fishing vessel off Wick on 15 February.

Mr. Freeman: On the night of 14-15 February 1987 a Sea King helicopter from RAF Lossiemouth rescued the crew of the fishing vessel Guide Onward, which had caught fire about 70 miles north-east of Lossiemouth. The Sea King was airborne within 16 minutes of being called out by the Rescue co-ordination centre at Edinburgh, and arrived at the scene 30 minutes later. The eight crewmen of the fishing vessel, who were in liferafts, were then winched to safety and were taken back to Lossiemouth.

AWACS

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Defence what has caused the delays in the signing of the airborne warning and control system contract; when he now anticipates that he will sign *(a)* the memorandum of understanding with the United States Government on airborne warning and control systems and *(b)* the offset contract with Boeing Corporation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There have been no delays. This is a major procurement and, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence said in the House on 18 December 1986, at column 1350, it is subject to satisfactory completion of contractual negotiations with Boeing. It has always been our intention that the purchase will also be the subject of a memorandum of understanding between the United Kingdom and United States Governments. I expect that these agreements will be signed very shortly.

Lieut.-Col. Alan Protheroe

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will state the duties of Lieutenant-Colonel Alan Protheroe of the Territorial Army.

Mr. Freeman: Colonel Protheroe, who holds the rank of full colonel in the Territorial Army, currently holds the position of adviser to the Director of Public Relations (Army) on public relations matters affecting the Territorial Army.

Air Defence

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence what lessons he drew from his recent visit to the Falklands on the adequacy of British air defences.

Mr. Stanley: As far as the air defence of the Falklands is concerned, I refer the hon. Member to the reply he received from my right hon. Friend on 27 January, at column 169. As far as British air defence generally is concerned, substantial improvements are taking place in the quantity and quality of our air defence aircraft, in their ground and air-based sensors and in their protection on the ground.

Skynet

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Defence on what dates Skynet 4B and Skynet 4C were respectively registered with the International Frequency Registration Board; and in what orbit position.

Mr. Butcher: I have been asked to reply.

The Skynet 4B and 4C satellite systems have not yet been registered; this is the last stage in the international co-ordination process. Advance publication was sent to the IFRB about Skynet 4B and 4C on 13 April 1982 and 21 July 1983 respectively, specifying orbital locations of 6 deg. E and 53 deg. E respectively.

Telecommunications (Orbital Slots)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will place in the Library the notifications of request published by the International Telecommunications Union.

Mr. Butcher: I have been asked to reply.

I assume that the hon. Gentleman is referring to information concerning satellite systems submitted to the International Telecommunication Union by Her Majesty's Government. Copies of the advance publication on such systems published by the ITU will be placed in the Library.

Ulster Defence Regiment

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many members of the Ulster Defence Regiment, and its Reserve, in 1986 have been found to be members of illegal paramilitary organisations or, separately, legal paramilitary organisations such as the Ulster Defence Association or the Third Force.

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 February 1987, c. *493*]: There is no Ulster Defence Regiment Reserve. Any soldier found by the courts to be a member of an organisation proscribed under the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978 would automatically be discharged from the regiment. According to available records, in 1986 no serving member of the Ulster Defence Regiment was so convicted. There is no central record maintained of membership of legal organisations.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Lebanon

14. **Mr. Winnick** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the advice given to British citizens still in Lebanon.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Those in west Beirut have repeatedly been urged to leave. Our advice to those British citizens resident in all areas of Lebanon is that they should observe a high level of caution and consider carefully whether they have compelling reasons to remain. We are alert to the need to keep our advice up to date.

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which British airlines use Beirut airport; what advice he is giving to British airlines

about the situation in the Lebanon; what information he has as to which European airlines use Beirut airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have been asked to reply.

No British airlines currently use Beirut international airport. My Department has not received any recent requests for advice from British airlines wishing to operate to the Lebanon. If any approach was received, any advice would have regard for the situation prevailing at the time. I understand that no other European airline currently operates scheduled international services into Beirut international airport.

South Africa

15. **Mr. Corbett** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on actions taken to implement the decision of the Commonwealth review meeting in August and the European Economic Community Foreign Ministers' meeting in September relating to South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: We have fully implemented the measures which were undertaken at the Commonwealth Heads of Government review meeting in London in August and those which were agreed by the Twelve in Brussels on 16 September.

19. **Ms. Richardson** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps have been taken by Her Majesty's Government to secure the right of the British media to report on the situation in South Africa in light of the impediments imposed by censorship.

26. **Mr. Bidwell** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Government of South Africa about the recently imposed controls over the media in that country.

Mrs. Chalker: Her Majesty's ambassador at Pretoria made representations to the South African Government on 19 December on behalf of the Twelve to express our strong concern at the draconian new restrictions on the media in South Africa.

20. **Mr. Eastham** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, in the light of the decision by Barclay's Bank to pull out of South Africa, Her Majesty's Government will now revise their policy on South Africa with a view to encouraging other banks and companies to disinvest from South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: No. We will not seek to encourage British companies to disinvest from South Africa. Such decisions must be entirely a commercial matter for the companies concerned.

25. **Dr. Bray** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in consultation with our European Economic Community partners on securing a ban on coal imports from South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: In line with the statement by Ministers in European Political Co-operation on 15 September 1986 it rests with the presidency of the day to work for consensus on this issue.

34. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made in the last six months by Her Majesty's Government to secure the release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners in South Africa and Namibia and to prevent the implementation of the death sentences imposed on Mojalefa Reginald Sefatsa, Reid Malebo Mokoena, Oupo Moses Diniso, Theresa Ramashamola, Duma Joshua Khumalo and Francis Don Mokhesi.

Mrs. Chalker: With the Commonwealth and our European partners we have long called for the unconditional release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners. We reiterated our call time and again during the period in question. The appeals of the "Sharpeville Six" have not yet been heard; it would therefore be inappropriate for us to make representations at this moment.

35. **Mr. Sedgemore** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy toward the implementation of the 16 recommendations of the United Nations Security Council regarding the United Nations mandatory arms embargo on South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: Security Council resolution 591 of 28 November 1986, which was adopted by consensus, took account of these recommendations.

37. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has yet received any official information from the Pretoria authorities concerning the appointment of a new ambassador in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Chalker: On 5 February the South African Government announced the appointment of Mr. Rae Killen as ambassador to the Court of St. James in succession to Dr. Denis Worrall.

39. **Mr. Michie** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made on the recent South African raids into Angola.

56. **Mr. Robert Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Government of South Africa about that country's continued incursions into Angola.

Mrs. Chalker: Our condemnation of cross-border raids is well known to the South African Government. In October 1986, we joined our partners in the Twelve in urging South Africa to exercise restraint and to respect the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of her neighbours. We continue to take opportunities to make known our concern.

41. **Mr. Livsey** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to meet representatives of the South African Government to discuss United Kingdom-South African relations.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend met the South African ambassador on 9 February.

65. **Mr. Hunter** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent contact he has with black South African representatives of organisations other than the African National Congress; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We maintain contact with a wide cross-section of black South African opinion. For example, during his presidency mission to South Africa last July my right hon. and learned Friend met the Chief Ministers of KaNgwane and KwaZulu as well as leading black businessmen.

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about Anglo-South African relations.

Mrs. Chalker: As I told my hon. Friend on 21 January, relations with South Africa remain overshadowed by the issue of apartheid. We shall continue to work for the early and peaceful replacement of apartheid by a non-racial, representative system of government in South Africa.

Human Rights

16. **Mr. Gerald Howarth** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has received on the subject of human rights in eastern Europe.

Mr. Renton: We receive numerous representations on this subject both from organisations and from individuals. Recent examples have concerned religious freedom in Rumania, the treatment of ethnic minorities in Bulgaria, imprisonment of members of the Jazz Section in Czechoslovakia and freedom of travel in Poland.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his reply of 4 February, *Official Report*, column 666, what pressure his Department will bring to bear on those dependent territories which do not respond positively to his invitation to adopt the first protocol of the convention on human rights.

Mr. Eggar: The dependent territories are at present reviewing the situation with regard to the extension to them of the first protocol. Until this review is complete it would be premature to consider whether any further steps are necessary.

Dr. Worrall

17. **Mr. Anderson** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met Dr. Worrall, the former South African ambassador in London; and what was discussed.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I last met Dr. Worrall on 9 February. The hon. Member will understand that in accordance with normal diplomatic practice our discussions were confidential.

Central America

21. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to visit Central America, including Nicaragua.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend visited Mexico in January and my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has just visited Guatemala to attend the meeting of EC, Contadora and Central American Foreign Ministers on 9-10 February. My right hon. and learned Friend has no further plans to visit the area.

63. **Mr. Litherland** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with Mr. Philip Habib, President Reagan's special envoy, on Central America.

Mr. Eggar: During Mr. Habib's visit last month, neither my right hon. and learned Friend nor my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs were available and he was therefore received by a senior official. The discussions were, of course, confidential.

Campuchea

22. **Mr. Neil Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on human rights in Campuchea.

Mr. Renton: We are seriously concerned by reports that abuses of human rights are occurring in Cambodia under the Heng Samrin regime and the occupying Vietnamese forces. We have made our concern quite clear to the Vietnamese authorities on many occasions.

Czechoslovakia

23. **Mr. Robert Banks** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's relations with Czechoslovakia.

Mr. Renton: Our relations with Czechoslovakia are showing increasing substance and breadth. The latest in a series of bilateral ministerial visits was my visit to Czechoslovakia from 1 to 4 February. I had lengthy discussions with senior representatives of the Czechoslovak Government and was also pleased to be able to meet Cardinal Tomasek and leading members of opposition groups.

Afghanistan

24. **Mr. Watts** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current situation in Afghanistan.

Mr. Eggar: Seven years after invading Afghanistan, more than 110,000 Soviet troops continue to occupy a once free and independent non-aligned country. The Soviet Union is now reconsidering its policy. We hope that it will withdraw its troops completely and promptly, in accordance with the principles laid down in successive United Nations resolutions.

Chile

27. **Mr. Lofthouse** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what advice his Department offers to Chilean exiles resident in the United Kingdom who consider returning to Chile.

Mr. Eggar: We have not received any such requests in recent years.

Soviet Union

28. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent meetings have been held between Foreign Office Ministers and their Soviet counterparts.

Mr. Renton: I held discussions in Moscow on 14 and 15 January with the Soviet Foreign Minister, Mr. Shevardnadze, and with First Deputy Foreign Minister Kovalev.

29. **Mr. Richard Shepherd** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on recent developments in the granting of exit visas to dissidents in the Soviet Union.

Mr. Renton: There has been welcome evidence of movement in the reports that exit visas are to be granted to the imprisoned dissidents, Anatoly Koryagin and Sergei Khodorovich and that others are to be released, but many continue to suffer imprisonment and persecution for their beliefs and to be denied exit visas. We shall keep up the pressure upon the Soviet authorities for improvement across the board in their human rights performance.

31. **Mr. Michael Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's relations with the Soviet Union.

Mr. Renton: We are conducting an active dialogue with the Soviet authorities with the aim of securing progress in arms control and on regional questions, including Afghanistan; greater respect for human rights; an increase in trade; and more contacts between people at all levels. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will pursue these questions when she visits Moscow.

33. **Mr. James Lamond** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if any Ministers from his Department will accompany the Prime Minister during her forthcoming visit to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Yes. My right hon. and learned Friend will accompany my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

36. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what initiatives he is taking in the context of relations with the Soviet Union.

Mr. Renton: We are playing a leading part in working for progress in arms control and for improvement in the Soviet human rights record. Over the last year we have developed co-operation in energy and agriculture. We look for an increase in bilateral trade.

38. **Mr. Lawrence** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assurances were received from the Soviet Foreign Minister during the recent discussions by the Minister of State the hon. Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton) on the subject of compliance by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics with its international obligations under the Helsinki agreements.

43. **Mr. Sumberg** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assurances he has received from the Soviet Foreign Minister on the subject of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic's compliance with its commitments under the Helsinki agreements, in particular in relation to the freedom of Soviet Jews to leave the country.

Mr. Renton: During my recent visit to the Soviet Union I was told that measures were in hand which would lead to a substantial increase in the number of Soviet citizens allowed to leave their country. We shall watch carefully to see whether such an increase takes place.

48. **Lord James Douglas-Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on recent developments in human rights in the Soviet Union.

Mr. Renton: We welcome the recent releases of dissidents. Any movement in the direction of a more humane and tolerant society is welcome. But many more are still persecuted or imprisoned for their beliefs. We shall continue to press for further improvements.

Hong Kong

30. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to visit Hong Kong.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. and learned Friend has no present plans to visit Hong Kong.

Namibia

32. **Mr. Maxton** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will raise in the European Economic Community Council of Ministers the extension of existing sanctions measures applying to Namibia.

Mrs. Chalker: We do not believe that applying sanctions to Namibia would advance the common objective of Namibian independence.

Persian Gulf

40. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on current United Kingdom interests in the Persian Gulf.

Mr. Renton: We enjoy long-standing relations with the states of the Persian Gulf. The region is of particular strategic and political importance and also represents a significant market for British goods and services.

Arms Control Talks

42. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress at the various security confidence-building and disarmament conferences under way.

61. **Mr. Merchant** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the East-West arms control negotiations in Geneva.

Mr. Renton: The current round of the Geneva nuclear and space talks began on 15 January and has several weeks still to run. It would not be appropriate to comment on the progress of the talks at present. The negotiations for a comprehensive ban on chemical weapons resumed on 3 February.

In December last year, we and our NATO allies proposed distinct negotiations on conventional arms control, one on confidence building, the other on conventional stability in Europe.

44. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the latest progress of the proposed chemical weapons compromise suggested by Her Majesty's Government at the conference on disarmament in Geneva.

Mr. Renton: As I told the hon. Member on 3 December 1986, the reaction of other delegations to the conference on disarmament has been generally encouraging. We have particularly welcomed a number of public expressions of support. The United Kingdom proposals continue to be the subject of detailed discussion among delegations in Geneva.

Mr. Strang: asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the recent approach from the Warsaw Treaty Organisation to discuss reductions in conventional forces; and whether Her Majesty's Government have forwarded any new proposals on NATO-Warsaw Treaty Organisation conventional disarmament.

Mr. Renton: At the meeting of NATO Foreign Ministers in Brussels last December my right hon. and learned Friend and my NATO colleagues put forward proposals calling for the opening of East/West negotiations to enhance conventional stability in the whole of Europe. Contacts between representatives on NATO and Warsaw pact countries on a mandate for these negotiations began on 17 February in Vienna.

Iran (Arms Sales)

45. **Mr. George Robertson** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about recent British arms sales to Iran.

Mr. Renton: All applications for the export of defence-related equipment to Iran or Iraq are rigorously scrutinised against guidelines which my right hon. and learned Friend anounced to the House on 29 October 1985 in his written reply to the right hon. Member for Tweedale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel). All exports allowed, including any recent sales, are consistent with those guidelines.

Israel

46. **Mr. Latham** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on his recent meeting in London with Mr. Shimon Peres, Foreign Minister of Israel.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. and learned Friend had a valuable exchange of views on Arab/Israel and other regional issues.

Diplomatic Service

47. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he is satisfied that applicants for the administrative grades of the Diplomatic Service have an equal chance of success regardless of their university or polytechnic of study.

Mr. Eggar: Yes.

Middle East

49. **Mr. Walters** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on recent progress towards a middle east peace settlement.

Mr. Renton: The lack of progress towards a solution of the Arab/Israel dispute is disappointing but there is a growing consensus that a properly managed and prepared international conference could help. We are ready to support realistic initiatives by the parties to narrow the gap on outstanding issues.

62. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking, and what support the United Kingdom will provide, to assist the pursuit of the peace process both in regard to the Egyptian-Israeli dispute and in the middle east generally.

Mr. Renton: Together with our European partners, we are ready to support in any way we can realistic initiatives by the parties to seek negotiated solutions to conflicts in the middle east. We welcome the agreement of Egypt and Israel in September 1986 to arbitration of the dispute over Taba.

Falkland Islands

50. **Dr. Godman** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the capital cost of implementing the Falkland Islands conservation zone.

Mr. Eggar: The Falkland Islands Government have budgeted £4 million to cover the costs of implementing the Falkland Islands interim conservation and management zone (FICZ) in 1987. The bulk of the costs come from turn-key contracts for two patrol vessels and a surveillance aircraft, within which some capital costs are included. An accurate figure for the capital costs will not be available until the end of the year.

Guatemala (Ministerial Conference)

51. **Mr. Patchett** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the meeting of the European Economic Community Foreign Ministers and Central American Foreign Ministers in Guatemala city.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the recent visit by the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office to Guatemala for the meeting of the Foreign Ministers from the European Community, central America and the Contadora group.

Mr. Eggar: The British delegation led by my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State took an active role in the meeting in Guatemala on 9-10 February of the Foreign Ministers of the European Community, central America and the Contadora group. My right hon. and noble Friend reiterated our support for efforts to achieve a peaceful settlement in central American on the basis of the Contadora principles, and for the strengthening of democracy in all the countries of the region.

Southern Africa

52. **Mr. Buchan** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to consult the front-line states of Africa both jointly and severally with a view to responding to their appeals for assistance to withstand South African aggression and destabilisation.

Mrs. Chalker: My hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development visited Botswana, Zimbabwe and

Mozambique from 3 to 11 February to attend the annual meeting of the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC) in Gaborone, 5-6 February, and for bilateral consultations. During his visits my hon. Friend announced a further £10 million of British Aid for SADCC projects, to help reduce member states' dependence on South Africa; £10 million additional aid for Zimbabwe; and £6·5 million for Mozambique.

United Nations

53. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy on the financial crisis facing the specialist and technical agencies of the United Nations.

Mr. Eggar: We remain committed to supporting effective United Nations agencies. We meet our financial obligations in full and expect others to do the same. We are working for solutions which will deal in the short term with shortfalls in income and will restore a stable level of funding for the agencies.

European Community (Policies)

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the development of co-ordinated community policies in the European Community.

Mrs. Chalker: A record of agreements reached in the European Community in the period July to December 1986 under the United Kingdom presidency has been deposited in the Library of the House. The Government believe that the entry into force of the Single European Act will further the development of co-ordinated policies of benefit to Britain and the European Community as a whole.

Turkey

55. **Mr. Tom Cox** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the Turkish Foreign Minister; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend last met the Turkish Foreign Minister at the NATO ministerial meeting in Brussels on 12 December 1986. They discussed a wide range of issues of mutual interest including bilateral relations, human rights and relations between Turkey and the European Community.

Cyprus

57. **Mr. Norman Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made towards a settlement in Cyprus following his most recent talks with both Greece and Turkey.

Mr. Eggar: Although my right hon. and learned Friend sees both his Greek and Turkish colleagues frequently in the margins of various international meetings, he has not held discussions with either of them about Cyprus for some time. Meanwhile, the United Nations Secretary General is continuing his efforts to find a settlement in Cyprus. The United Nations under-secretary general for political affairs visited Cyprus last November, and again at the beginning of this month, to try to find a way forward. We lose no opportunity to urge both sides to show the flexibility and good will necessary to resolve the dispute.

British Missions

58. **Mr. Burt** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any plans to review the level of commercial representation in British missions abroad.

Mrs. Chalker: Commercial staffing at each post is regularly reviewed by FCO inspectors. In addition, commercial staffing world wide is reviewed annually by FCO's top management and in a joint FCO-DTI market assessment exercise aimed at matching resources with demand from exporters.

Visas

59. **Mr. Lawler** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what percentage of temporary visa applications are being dealt with on the same day that they are lodged at the United Kingdom's diplomatic posts in the Indian subcontinent.

Mr. Eggar: In the last month for which complete statistics are available—December 1986—the percentage of short-term visa applications received and determined on the same day was over 97 per cent.

60. **Mr. Spencer** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the most recent position in the working of the visa system in the Indian subcontinent.

Mr. Eggar: The visa regime continues to operate smoothly. All personal applicants for short-term visas are being seen on the day they apply and in December 1986 more than 97 per cent. of all applications were being determined on the day of application.

In the small number of cases that require more than a very brief interview, the waiting time is four days in New Delhi and Bombay and three days in Madras. Elsewhere in the subcontinent there are no queues and interviews take place on the day of application.

Test Ban Treaty

64. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what initiatives the Government have proposed with a view to making progress towards a comprehensive test ban treaty; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: As the hon. Member will be aware from previous parliamentary answers, we have:

(a) tabled a paper in July 1985 on seismic monitoring for a comprehensive test ban;

(b) played a leading role in the work of the ad hoc group of scientific experts at the conference on disarmament (CD); and

(c) together with other Western countries, proposed a mandate for an ad hoc committee on nuclear testing issues at the Geneva CD.

We have also discussed nuclear testing issues with the Soviet Union to explain the difficulties we have with proposals for the immediate resumption of negotiations. We have urged the Soviet Union to agree to the Western mandate at the CD and to pursue the approach to nuclear testing issues agreed at Reykjavik.

UNITA (Arms Supplies)

67. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will raise with his European Economic Community counterparts the supply by EEC countries of arms to UNITA.

Mrs. Chalker: Since we are not aware that any EC country is supplying arms to UNITA, we do not consider that it would be appropriate to raise the matter with our partners. Our view, that Western interests in Southern Africa would be best served by the peaceful negotiation of a settlement leading to a withdrawal of all foreign troops from the region and the full independence of Namibia, is well known.

Poland

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on current relations with Poland.

Mr. Renton: Recent contacts with Poland have included a meeting between my right hon. and learned Friend and the Polish Foreign Minister at the United Nations General Assembly in September, and my own visit to Warsaw from 5 to 8 February. We intend to continue an active dialogue in which human rights and the need for national reconciliation in Poland will play a major part.

Departmental Contracts

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the contracts, with the subject of the assignment, awarded to management consultancy or accounting firms by his Department in 1986, with the name of the consultants concerned.

Mr. Eggar: Details of contracts awarded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in 1986 to management consultancy or accounting firms are as follows:

Firm and Subject of assignment

Coopers and Lybrand
Audit of FCO travel centre.

Peat, Marwick, Mitchell
Audit of FCO freight contract.

Price Waterhouse
Appraisal of computerisation of FCO overseas estate management.

Touche Ross
Study of FCO computer audit requirement.

Boarding School Provision

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the total number of children of personnel serving in diplomatic and consular posts overseas currently attending boarding schools in the United Kingdom where the fees are met wholly or partly by his Department; how many of the pupils are in *(a)* the maintained and *(b)* the independent sector; and what is the current cost per annum to his Department.

Mr. Eggar: In January 1987, 760 children of Foreign and Commonwealth Office staff (including the ODA and the communications departments) serving overseas were attending boarding schools in the United Kingdom. Out of these, one child attends a state maintained school. The estimated cost for the 1986-87 financial year is £3,208,945.

Siberian Pipeline

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy towards the maintenance of each point made to the United States Government in his notes of 1982 and 1983 regarding the Siberian pipeline; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible and place copies of my letter in the Library.

Foreign Affairs Council

Mr. Hanley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Foreign Affairs Council held on 16 February.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary and I attended the Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels on 16 February.

The Council discussed the Commission proposals for new financial protocols for some of the Community's Mediterranean preferential partners. Discussion will continue at the March Council.

The Council discussed the Commission proposals for a draft mandate for an EC/Hungary trade and economic co-operation agreement and noted the Commission's wish for an early adoption of its mandate.

The Council discussed a continuation of the arrangements, agreed after the Chernobyl nuclear accident, limiting permissible contamination in food imported into the Community. Meeting in Political Co-operation, Foreign Ministers issued a statement on Palestinian camps in the Lebanon. A copy of the statement has been placed in the Library of the House.

Belize

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the present British military role in Belize.

Mr. Stanley: I have been asked to reply.

The role of the British garrison in Belize is to assist in the external defence of the country and in the training of the Belize defence force. In addition to the garrison, there are 15 loan service personnel serving with the Belize defence force to help with its training and development.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Maternity Payments

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the London borough of Redbridge received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in the London borough of Redbridge are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 2,140 claims to

maternity allowance were made at Ilford, 1,101 at Woodgrange Park and 1,048 at Leytonstone, the Department's offices which cover the London borough of Redbridge, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in the London borough of Redbridge will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Michie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Calder Valley received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Calder Valley are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,748 claims to maternity allowance were made at Halifax, the Department's office which covers the area, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Calder Valley will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Michie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Sheffield, Heeley, claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Sheffield, Heeley, are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested. The Sheffield, Heeley constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Sheffield south-east and Sheffield south-west although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the two local offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Numbers
Sheffield, south-east	1,243
Sheffield, south-west	1,793

It is not possible to predict how many women in Sheffield, Heeley will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Michie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Sheffield, Heeley, received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Sheffield, Heeley, are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 810 claims to maternity allowance were made at Sheffield, South-east and 1,180 claims at Sheffield, South-west, the Department's offices which cover the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Sheffield, Heeley will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Michie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Calder Valley claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Calder Valley are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Calder Valley constituency is covered by the Department's office at Halifax although its boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The number of claims received for maternity grant in the Halifax local office during the calendar year 1986 was 2,482.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Calder Valley will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Healey asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Leeds, East constituency claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in the same constituency are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Leeds, East constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Leeds, East and Leeds, North although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the two local offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Leeds, East	1,815
Leeds, North	2,239

It is not possible to predict how many women in the Leeds, East constituency will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Healey asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Leeds, East constituency received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in the same constituency are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 957 claims to maternity allowance were made at Leeds, Central and 1,396 claims at Leeds, North, the Department's offices which cover the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Leeds, East will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that

in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the London borough of Barking and Dagenham received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in the London borough of Barking and Dagenham are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,395 claims to maternity allowance were made at the Department's Barking and Dagenham offices and 2,140 claims at Ilford, the offices which cover the London borough of Barking and Dagenham, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in the London borough of Barking and Dagenham will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the London borough of Barking and Dagenham claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in the London borough of Barking and Dagenham are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The London borough of Barking and Dagenham was covered by the Department's offices at Barking and Dagenham although their boundaries are not conterminous with the borough. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the two local offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Barking	1,508
Dagenham[1]	412

[1] Dagenham local office closed on 14 August 1986 when its work was transferred to Barking.

It is not possible to predict how many women in the London borough of Barking and Dagenham will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the London borough of Redbridge claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in the London borough of Redbridge are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested. The London borough of Redbridge is covered by the Department's offices at Ilford, Leytonstone and Woodgrange Park, although their boundaries are not conterminous with the borough. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the three local offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Ilford	3,103
Leytonstone	1,529
Woodgrange Park	1,848

It is not possible to predict how many women in the London borough of Redbridge will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. John Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Edinburgh, South constituency received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Edinburgh, South constituency are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,215 claims to maternity allowance were made at Edinburgh, South and 839 claims at Edinburgh, City, the Department's offices which cover Edinburgh, South, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Edinburgh, South will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. John Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Monklands, East constituency received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Monklands, East constituency are expected to receive statutory maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, the following number of claims to maternity allowance were made at the Department's offices which cover the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous:

	Number
Coatbridge	495
Shotts	124
Airdrie	422

It is not possible to predict how many women in Monklands, East will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. John Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Edinburgh, South constituency claimed maternity grants in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Edinburgh, South constituency are expected to qualify for maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Edinburgh, South constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Edinburgh, city and Edinburgh, south although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the two local offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Edinburgh, city	325
Edinburgh, south	1,684

It is not possible to predict how many women in Edinburgh, South constituency will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. John Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Monklands, East constituency claimed maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in the Monklands, East constituency are expected to qualify for maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Monklands, East constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Airdrie, Coatbridge and Shotts although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the three local offices during the calendar year of 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Airdrie	707
Coatbridge	804
Shotts	181

It is not possible to predict how many women in the Monklands, East constituency will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Foot asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Blaenau Gwent claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Blaenau Gwent are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Blaenau Gwent constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Abertillery and Ebbw Vale although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the two local offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Abertillery	392
Ebbw Vale	326

It is not possible to predict how many women in Blaenau Gwent will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Foot asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Blaenau Gwent received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Blaenau Gwent are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 549 claims to maternity allowance were made at Ebbw Vale and 241 claims at Abertillery, the Department's offices which cover the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Blaenau Gwent will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Peterborough received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Peterborough are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 2,703 claims to maternity allowance were made at Peterborough, the Department's offices which covers Peterborough, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Peterborough will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Wandsworth claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Wandsworth are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested. The number of claims received for maternity grant in the Wandsworth local office during the calendar year was 1,120.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Wandsworth will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Clackmannan claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Clackmannan are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Clackmannan constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Falkirk and Sterling although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the two local offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Falkirk	499
Stirling	1,485

It is not possible to predict how many women in Clackmannan will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Bradford claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Bradford are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Bradford is covered by the Department's offices at Bradford, east, Bradford, south and Bradford, west although their boundaries are not conterminous with the Bradford constituencies. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the three local offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Bradford, east	1,815
Bradford, south	2,173
Bradford, west	1,724

It is not possible to predict how many women in Bradford will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Bradford received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Bradford are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, the following claims to maternity allowance were made at the Department's offices which cover Bradford, although the boundaries are not conterminous:

	Number
Bradford, east	1,025
Bradford, west	867
Bradford, south	962

It is not possible to predict how many women in Bradford will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Faulds asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Warley, East received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Warley, East are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,346 claims to maternity allowance were made at Smethwick, the Department's office which covers the constituency although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Warley, East will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Faulds asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Warley, East claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Warley, East are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested. The Warley, East constituency is covered by the Department's office at Smethwick although its boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The number of claims received for maternity grant in the Smethwick local office during the calendar year 1986 was 2,398. It is not possible to predict how many women in Warley, East will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Silkin asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Lewisham, Deptford, received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Lewisham, Deptford, are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, the following claims to maternity allowance were made at the Deprtment's offices which cover the constituency although the boundaries are not conterminous:

	Number
Greenwich Park	855
Lewisham	1,027
Peckham	1,431

It is not possible to predict how many women in Lewisham, Deptford will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Manchester, Wythenshawe constituency claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in the constituency of Manchester, Wythenshawe are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Manchester, Wythenshawe constituency is covered by the Department's office at Wythenshawe. The number of claims received fo maternity grant at Wythenshawe local office during the calendar year 1986 was 1,027.

It is not possible to predict how many women in the Manchester, Wythenshawe constituency will qualify for maternity payments fom the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Manchester, Wythenshawe constituency received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in the Manchester, Wythenshawe constituency are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 607 claims to maternity allowance were made at Manchester, Wythenshawe, the Department's office which covers the contituency although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in the Manchester, Wythenshawe will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the London borough of Brent received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, the following numbers of claims to maternity allowance were made at the Department's offices which cover the Borough of Brent, although the boundaries are not conterminous:

	Number
Harlesden	967
Hendon	1,111
Ealing	2,019
Notting Hill	744
Neasden	1,363
Cricklewood	489
Paddington	696

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Brent claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested. Brent is covered by the Department's local offices at Cricklewood, Ealing, Harlesden, Hendon, Neasden, Notting Hill and Paddington, although their boundaries are not conterminous with the London borough of Brent. The numbers of claims for maternity grant in each of these local offices during the 1986 calendar year were as follows:

	Number
Cricklewood	633
Ealing	2,200
Harlesden	1,143
Hendon	1,750
Neasden	1,911
Notting Hill	742
Paddington	1,138

Mr. Campbell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Dumbarton constituency claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in the constituency are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested. The Dumbarton constituency is covered by the Department's office at Dumbarton although its boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The number of claims received for maternity grant at Dumbarton local office during the calendar year 1986 was 1,119. It is not possible to predict how many women in the Dumbarton constituency will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Campbell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Dumbarton constituency received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in the constituency are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 757 claims to maternity allowance were made at Dumbarton, the Department's office which covers the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Dumbarton will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Stott asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Wigan claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Wigan are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested. The Wigan constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Wigan although its boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The number of claims received for maternity grant in the Wigan local office during the calendar year 1986 was 2,633. It is not possible to predict how many women in Wigan will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Stott asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Wigan travel-to-work area received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many such women are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,900 claims to maternity allowance were made at Wigan, the Department's office which covers the Wigan constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous. It is not possible to predict how many women in Wigan and the surrounding area will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is

estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women claimed maternity grant in Portsmouth in the last year; and what estimates have been made as to the likely number of claimants for maternity payments for the year after the introduction of payments from the social fund.

Mr. Major: The number of claims for maternity grant made at the Department's local office at Portsmouth during the 1986 calendar year was 2,665. It is not possible to predict how many women in Portsmouth will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Board and Lodging Allowances

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how much his Department is paying to persons living in *(a)* Burnley and *(b)* Pendle for board and lodging allowances;

(2) how many people living in *(a)* Burnley and *(b)* Pendle are (i) single persons under 26 years, (ii) single persons over 26 years, (iii) married couples without children and (iv) married couples with children, and are receiving board and lodging payments.

Mr. Major: I regret that the information requested is not collected by individual local offices and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Family Income Supplement

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people in Scotland are currently in receipt of family income supplement; and what is his estimate of the numbers dependent on incomes between 100 and 140 per cent, of supplementary benefit level in Scotland.

Mr. Major: The information is provided in the table.

	Number
Number of recipients of Family Income Supplement in Scotland at May 1986 (lastest available date).	[1 3]24,000
People in assessment units not in receipt of supplementary benefit or housing benefit supplement and with relative net resources between 100 and 140 per cent. of the supplementary benefit scale-rates	[2 3]78,000

[1] Estimated from a 10 per cent. sample of family income supplement recipients.

[2] Based on assumptions contained in "Low Income Families—1983" copies of which are in the Library.

[3] These two figures should not be added together.

All estimates of people calculated in the low income figures are subject to sampling error. Any Scottish estimates of people who are not receiving supplementary benefit are particularly prone to this statistical problem. This is because of the small number of sample cases available in the family expenditure survey.

The Scottish samples have been translated into population estimates using factors based on data for Great Britain as a whole. Since the family expenditure survey response rate in Scotland may differ from that of Great Britain as a whole, and since the extent of the difference may vary from one year to another, the Scottish estimates are more prone to grossing error than data for Great Britain.

Taken together, these two sources of statistical error make both trends and levels in the Scottish estimates peculiarly difficult to interpret. These statistical problems will be considered as part of the low income technical review.

Day Nurseries

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to which local authorities have reduced the number of places in day nurseries since 1979; and what has been the percentage reduction in each case.

Mrs. Currie: Thirty two local authorities in England reduced their number of day nursery places between 1981 and 1985 and the following table shows the percentage reduction in each case.

Local authority	*Percentage change 1981-85*[1]
Cleveland	−7·4
Durham	−16·7
North Tyneside	[2] −1·1
South Tyneside	−43·5
Sheffield	−5·4
Wakefield	[2] −71·4
Cheshire	−4·7
Bolton	−12·6
Knowsley	−16·7
Wirral	−4·5
Coventry	−23·1
Berkshire	[2] −62·7
Cambridgeshire	−2·8
Hertfordshire	−53·4
Suffolk	−21·4
Hammersmith	−1·9
Wandsworth	−6·6
Westminster	−8·0
Barking	−10·3
Ealing	−2·8
Enfield	−6·9
Havering	−10·5
Merton	−14·4
Newham	−1·2
Richmond upon Thames	−4·6
Waltham Forest	−1·8
Dorset	[2] −23·8
Hampshire	−7·1
Kent	[2] −53·1
East Sussex	−40·9
Devon	[2] −75·7
Gloucestershire	[2] −57·3

[1] For some authorities the percentage change is based on estimated figures for 1981 or 1985.

[2] In these authorities there were less than 100 day nursery places provided by the local authority in 1985 and so the percentage changes are based on relatively small numbers.

The information relating to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland is a matter for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales, Northern Ireland, and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

AIDS

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will now give general practitioners the right

to prescribe condoms on National Health Service prescriptions as part of the campaign against the spread of AIDS; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 10 February, at column *202*.

Hospital Charges

Mr. Anderson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what sums were collected by each of the English area health authorities from non-United Kingdom residents for hospital charges in 1985 and 1986.

Mr. Newton: The table shows the income under section 121 of the National Health Service Act 1977 recorded in the annual accounts of health authorities for 1984-85 and 1985-86. This income is shown net of any sums written off in the relevant year (including those due from earlier years); in a few cases the result is a negative figure (figures shown in brackets in table). The table does not include income received under sections 65 and 66 of the Act from overseas residents treated as private patients.

Income from overseas visitors (under section 121 of the National Health Service Act 1977)

District Health Authorities	*1985-86* £	*1984-85* £
Northern Region		
Hartlepool	—	364
North Tees	—	461
South Tees	8,749	5,826
East Cumbria	5,023	6,880
South Cumbria	10,209	6,685
West Cumbria	1,002	(492)
Darlington	1,580	2,486
Durham	5,128	2,610
North West Durham	1,112	306
South West Durham	1,537	97
Northumberland	7,688	3,458
Gateshead	1,480	281
Newcastle upon Tyne	65,748	40,756
North Tyneside	1,847	4,933
South Tyneside	345	3,825
Sunderland	1,667	903
Total	113,115	79,379
Yorkshire Region		
Hull	3,771	4,598
East Yorks	495	5,455
Grimsby	4,935	1,988
Scunthorpe	386	2,295
Northallerton	386	364
York	31,271	18,047
Scarborough	2,532	2,701
Harrogate	6,619	3,840
Bradford	7,098	(683)
Airedale	3,874	439
Calderdale	12	48
Huddersfield	592	95
Dewsbury	387	624
Leeds Western	9,361	2,218
Leeds Eastern	16,153	7,086
Wakefield	993	728
Pontefract	4,033	—
Total	92,898	49,843
Trent Region		
North Derbyshire	2,802	—
South Derbyshire	2,158	9,806
Leicestershire	20,959	10,049
North Lincolnshire	275	348
South Lincolnshire	1,614	3,416
Bassetlaw	411	279
Central Nottinghamshire	918	1,526
Nottingham	15,194	13,261
Barnsley	—	—
Doncaster	(1,391)	1,620
Rotherham	1,503	5,421
Sheffield	40,673	8,731
Total	85,116	54,457
East Anglian Region		
Cambridge	48,132	56,176
Peterborough	1,557	266
West Suffolk	6,562	4,603
East Suffolk	(1,154)	8,546
Norwich	7,988	10,291
Great Yarmouth	282	1,390
West Norfolk and Wisbech	712	1,082
Huntingdon	3,972	470
Total	68,051	82,824
North West Thames Region		
North Bedfordshire	5,753	4,085
South Bedfordshire	12,842	4,107
North Hertfordshire	3,601	721
East Hertfordshire	1,081	594
North West Hertfordshire	8,918	1,829
South West Hertfordshire	—	2,464
Barnet	21,322	14,170
Harrow	6,643	4,923
Hillingdon	24,902	29,159
Hounslow and Spelthorne	21,436	32,243
Ealing	6,142	3,436
Brent	22,044	1,342
Paddington	199,717	208,497
Riverside	180,914	187,760
Total	515,315	495,330
North East Thames Region		
Basildon and Thurrock	4,736	12,511
Mid Essex	12,650	104
North East Essex	2,861	3,364
West Essex	9,298	5,313
Southend	4,726	1,636
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	3,427	11,971
Hampstead	73,755	31,457
Bloomsbury	150,170	109,637
Islington	9,020	14,887
City and Hackney	13,088	27,712
Newham	3,692	635
Tower Hamlets	9,318	2,056
Enfield	2,978	2,574
Harringey	6,510	9,354
Redbridge	6,684	3,281
Waltham Forest	5,399	6,703
Total	318,312	243,195
South East Thames Region		
Brigton	33,437	12,321
Eastbourne	4,987	5,737
Hastings	4,701	1,551
South East Kent	14,785	15,971
Canterbury and Thanet	12,153	8,311
Dartford and Gravesham	1,596	437
Maidstone	779	481
Medway	5,369	2,878
Tunbridge Wells	5,530	6,837
Bexley	(458)	1,692
Greenwich	14,261	5,392
Bromley	5,008	8,929
West Lambeth	32,307	6,359
Camberwell	(2,802)	55,476
Lewisham and North Southwark	32,179	18,572

District Health Authorities	1985-86 £	1984-85 £
Total	163,832	150,944
South West Thames Region		
North West Surrey	125	3,612
West Surrey and North East Hampshire	14,175	2,655
South West Surrey	11,973	9,645
Mid Surrey	32	117
East Surrey	19,155	14,112
Chichester	5,833	1,738
Mid Downs	18,163	9,578
Worthing	5,739	5,651
Croydon	4,363	2,362
Kingston and Esher	7,473	3,834
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	22,016	8,298
Wandsworth	36,260	42,354
Merton and Sutton	2,207	11,655
Total	147,514	115,611
Wessex Region		
East Dorset	31,948	5,076
West Dorset	3,143	—
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	6,015	7,208
Southampton and South West Hampshire	15,719	18,008
Winchester	2,173	1,222
Basingstoke and North Hampshire	754	322
Salisbury	25,143	23,410
Swindon	4,798	—
Bath	1,077	10,695
Isle of Wight	—	—
Total	90,770	65,941
Oxford Region		
East Berkshire	10,599	8,365
West Berkshire	5,764	3,221
Aylesbury	17,508	—
Wycombe	4,105	5,781
Milton Keynes	125	(5,248)
Kettering	2,231	2,878
Northampton	2,312	6,761
Oxford	64,330	45,187
Total	106,974	66,945
South Western Region		
Bristol and Weston	11,962	13,826
Frenchay	6,905	2,164
Southmead	3,573	3,312
Cornwall	7,180	—
Exeter	3,516	7,477
North Devon	1,480	2,231
Plymouth	11,339	8,324
Torbay	18,546	13,668
Cheltenham	8,617	4,185
Gloucester	664	4,307
Somerset	7,599	3,844
Total	81,381	63,338
West Midlands Region		
Bromsgrove and Redditch	230	(239)
Hereford	2,662	3,240
Kidderminster	800	317
Worcester	7,866	1,978
Shropshire	4,516	3,453
Mid Staffordshire	—	2,219
North Staffordshire	1,799	1,727
South East Staffordshire	2,079	29
Rugby	1,503	5
North Warwickshire	—	—
South Warwickshire	10,340	18,946
Central Birmingham	38,610	12,425
East Birmingham	5,557	4,909
North Birmingham	9,754	53
South Birmingham	41,002	6,305
West Birmingham	25,150	11,730
Coventry	17,279	2,359
Dudley	5,261	1,949
Sandwell	12,487	6,775
Solihull	3,298	1,681
Walsall	9,348	1,760
Wolverhampton	7,477	14,176
Total	207,018	95,797
Mersey Region		
Chester	6,698	6,265
Crewe	15,170	16
Halton	51	—
Macclesfield	—	—
Warrington	1,590	1,782
Liverpool	16,800	9,739
St. Helens and Knowsley	50	813
Southport and Formby	8,496	29,896
South Sefton	16,164	9,649
Wirral	2,790	848
Total	67,809	59,008
North Western Region		
Lancaster	3,809	887
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	2,037	855
Preston	5,048	12,614
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	1,831	2,347
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendal	4,648	6
West Lancashire	1,156	2,291
Chorley and South Ribble	343	5
Bolton	512	—
Bury	832	2,963
North Manchester	1,616	3,334
Central Manchester	10,510	26,058
South Manchester	23,083	24,710
Oldham	10,081	2,755
Rochdale	982	264
Salford	7,354	9,118
Stockport	1,018	1,162
Tameside and Glossop	(1,711)	(201)
Trafford	759	169
Wigan	2,479	315
Total	76,387	89,652
SPECIAL HEALTH AUTHORITIES		
Hospital for Sick Children	17,787	6,311
National Hospital for Nervous Diseases	2,124	23,486
Moorfields Eye Hospital	—	—
Bethlem Royal Hospital and Maudsley Hospital	27,984	4,779
National Heart and Chest Hospital	14,884	1,732
Royal Marsden Hospital	7,927	18,306
Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's Hospital	71,257	43,502
Eastman Dental Hospital	—	—
Total	141,963	98,116

Departmental Contracts

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the contracts, with the subject of the assignment, awarded to management consultancy or accounting firms by his Department in 1986, with the name of the consultants concerned.

Mr. Newton: The list is as follows. It includes contracts awarded by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys and also extensions to existing contracts awarded in 1986.

Firm and Subject of Assignment

PE Consultancy Services
Budgetary Control System (Computer Support Review).

Census Field Branch
ADP requirement to assess information flows.

Spicer and Pegler
Decision support system for planning services for the elderly.
HCHS Projects—Application Generator.

Computerised Management Aids
Caseload management model for social security local offices.

D. Bubley
Manpower planning system for medicines inspectorate.

Coopers and Lybrand
Policy model for health promotion.
ALACs.

C. Squared Systems
Comparative efficiences of health authorities Regional Liaison.
Development of aggregate performance indicators for social security regions.

Arthur Young
Work on alignment of benefits.
Planning support for Disablement Services Division.
Production of Specialty Costing User Guide.
HCHS Projects—General Support.
Support for management budgeting project at Southmead, North Tees and Basingstoke and evaluation of progress of implementation.
Development of interim activity data connection system for management budgeting at Worcester.
Production of Data Model for activity data collection system at Worcester.
Support for management budgeting project at Newcastle.
Office Technology Projects—STB.

Arthur Andersen and Co.
DHSS Operational Strategy—Progress Management.
National Unemployment Benefit System (NUBS) Phase 2.
Family Credit.
Review of Terminal Replacement Enquiry Service.

Baxter Systems Ltd.
National Unemployment Benefit System (NUBS) Software Support.

BIS Ltd.
Strategy Systems Administration.

B. T. Tallis
Network communications.

CAP Ltd.
Technical architecture.
Strategy Assurance Program.
Strategy Terminals Intergration Testing.
Local Office Microcomputer Project (LOMP).

Computer Sciences Company Ltd.
Strategy Security.
Review of Terminal Replacement and Enquiry Service (TRES).
Data dictionary.
Departmental Integrated Project Support Environment (DIPSE).
Strategy Database Administration.

Fastastro Ltd.
National Unemployment Benefit System (NUBS) — Software support.

Honeywell Information Systems Ltd.
National Unemployment Benefit System (NUBS).

HUSAT (Human Sciencies Advanced Technology Research Centre)
Human Factors.

ICL Ltd.
Departmental Integrated Project Support Environment (DIPSE).
Technical Architecture.
National Unemployment Benefit System (NUBS) — Software support.
National Unemployment Benefit System (NUBS) — Communications timers.

Logica
PPA Systems Sizing & Pilot Trials Evaluation Telecommunications.
HCHS Projects—Facilities & Hammersmith Hospital.

Model Systems Ltd.
Departmental Integrated Application Development Methodology (DIADEM).

MOM International Ltd.
Project Information and control system.

Sanport Pty
Departmental Integrated Application Development Methodology (DIADEM).

System Concepts Ltd.
Office Automation.

Task Force Group plc
National Unemployment Benefit System — Software support.
Communications at DHSS North Fylde Central Offices.

Stemm Computing
Enhancement to Manpower Information System of Management Information Pilot Project.
Further work on Patient Information System. Variable report writer.
Reprogramming of Patient and Facilities Information System.
Maintenance of Patient and Facilities Information System.

Alternative Systems Ltd.
Maintenance and modifications COMCARE software.

W. Abbott
Implementation Study. MIPP System.
HCHS Projects — Communication Production of Speciality Costing User Guide.
HCHS Projects—IT '86.

Abbey Business Consultants
Project management for implementation of Körner finance system at Frenchay District Health Authority.
Evaluation report on Frenchay project.
HCHS Projects—General Support.

BIS Applied Systems
Additional expenditure on evaluation project management costs at Frenchay District Health Authority.

Price Waterhouse
Evaluation work. Bradford & Calderdale System to test suitability for meeting Körner Sixth Report requirements.
Support for management budgeting project at Southmead, North Tees and Basingstoke and evaluation of progress of implementation.

Thorn EMI
Completion of version 2 of Bradford and Calderdale Finance System.

The Consortium
Communications strategy for the NHS.

Taylor Hutchinson
Estate management.

Research Surveys of Great Britain Ltd.
Personal Pensions Survey.

Hambros
General Practice Finance Corporation.

R. W. Palmer
Review of NHS MS Branch.

Social and Community Planning Research
Study of Communications in DHSS HQ.

Binder Hamlyn
Study of Dentists practising as Associates.

Wolf Olins
Social Security Communications.

David Mayston
Capital Asset Accounting.

PA Consultants
Whole Unit Concept Study.
Payment Methods.

Touche Ross
Study of Payment Systems in the NHS.

MMM Consultancy Group
Leaflets unit at Cannons Park.

National Computer Centre
Payroll Software.

Deloitte Haskins Sells
Support for management budgeting project at Southmead, North Tees and Basingstoke and evaluation of progress of implementation.

Brook Systems
HCHS Projects—Nursing Division Support.

BIT Ltd.
HCHS Projects—PARC Programme.

DATEC
FPS Projects—FPC data dictionary.
FPS trials software.

Langton Ltd.
FPS Projects—Evaluation.
Exeter FPS Unit.

I. Penrose
FPS Projects—Accommodation Study.

PActel
FPS Projects—Guide.
Project Control.
Exeter FPS (CU).

J. Garber
Barlow Computer Project.

Metron
FPS General Studies.
Computer Readable.

Meditel
Medical Card.

Ernst and Whinney
Office Technology Projects—SSI Information.
FA/FB Support.
Health Building Division.

Cedar Design Systems
Office Technology Projects—Support.

Spectacles (Voucher System)

Mr. Butterfill asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what are the arrangements for spectacle repairs for children in the spectacles voucher system;

(2) what are the arrangements for spectacle repairs for adults in the spectacles voucher system.

Mr. Newton: Financial assistance is available towards all repairs of children's spectacles. The amount of assistance varies according to the nature of the repair up to a maximum of the value of a full voucher in cases where it is necessary to replace the spectacles completely. For repairs to damaged spectacles adults are expected to take advantage of guarantee arrangements which are increasingly available from optical suppliers. However, where the spectacles have been rendered unserviceable by fair wear and tear vouchers are available to adults in the eligible groups towards the cost of their replacement.

Mr. Butterfill asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied with arrangements in the spectacles voucher system for repair to glasses for children or adults who are disabled or are otherwise at risk of frequently breaking their glasses.

Mr. Newton: Comprehensive arrangements exist for the repair of childrens' glasses. The Department has received representations about the arrangements for adults who are disabled and who are prone to break their glasses frequently. We are reviewing these arrangements.

Mr. Butterfill asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether, in the case of complex lens users receiving only the £2 (single vision) or £14 (bifocal) voucher, opticians are expected to offer glasses at voucher prices so that customers have the opportunity to buy basic models of single vision complex glasses at £31 or bifocals at £52; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Spectacles are now supplied entirely through the private market and prices are determined by the suppliers. I understand that current full voucher values for complex prescriptions can enable those on low incomes to obtain a basic pair of spectacles in the private market to meet their clinical needs.

Abortions

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how far the targets cited by the Family Planning Association in 1976 have been achieved in relation to the reduction by half of that year's figures for unwanted pregnancies and abortions.

Mr. Newton: The number of legal abortions to residents of England and Wales rose from 101,912 in 1976 to 147,030 in 1985, an increase of 44 per cent. Over the same period the number of legal abortions per thousand of the resident female population aged 15 to 44 rose from 10·53 to 13·66, an increase of almost 30 per cent.

Not all abortions necessarily follow an unwanted pregnancy.

The number of unwanted pregnancies is not known.

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Social Services to what factors his Department attributes

the fall in the number of abortions among those under 16 years in the first half of 1985; and the subsequent rise in those numbers.

Mr. Newton: Since my predecessor's reply to my hon. Friend on 25 June 1986 at column *210*, the relevant figures for the first three quarters of 1986 and the population estimates for 1985 have become available. The table has been updated as follows:

Legal abortions to females aged under 16
Number and rates per thousand population. Residents

Quarter	1984 Number	1984 Rate per thousand[1]	1985 Number	1985 Rate per thousand[1]	1986 Number	1986 Rate per thousand[1]
March	1,067	1·43	985	1·33	1,028	1·39
June	973	1·30	925	1·25	980	1·33
September	1,017	1·36	960	1·30	900	1·22
December	1,048	1·41	1,030	1·39	—	—
Total[2]	4,158	5·58	4,002	5·41	—	—

[1] The rates (per thousand population) for the under 16 age group are based on the population of females aged 14 and 15. The denominator for 1984 is the mid-1984 estimated resident population figure. That for 1985 and 1986 is the mid-1985 estimated resident population.
[2] Includes late notifications, 53 in 1984 and 102 in 1985, not assigned to any quarter.

The slight fall in the rate of abortions in 1985 compared with 1984 and the slight rise in the first two quarters of 1986 compared with the same period in 1985 are insufficient to indicate a trend.

Cervical Cancer

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list the number of registrations from 1982 to the present day of malignant neoplasms and carcinoma-in-situ of cervix uteri showing those under 35 years as percentages of total of all ages;

(2) what are the latest figures available to him on the incidence of cancer of the cervix among women under 35 years of age; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The table gives the latest available information from the registration of newly diagnosed cases of malignant neoplasm of cervix uteri and of carcinoma in situ of cervix uteri for women of all ages and aged under 35 years for England and Wales.

Registrations of newly diagnosed cases of malignant neoplasm of cervix uteri (ICD[1] (9) 180) and carcinoma in situ of cervix uteri (ICD[1] (9) 233.1), numbers all ages and numbers and percentage aged under 35 years. England and Wales 1982, 1983

Year	Malignant neoplasm of cervix uteri: All ages	Under 35	Per cent.	Carcinoma in situ of cervix uteri: All ages	Under 35	Per cent.
1982	3,909	546	14·0	5,427	3,066	56·5
1983	3,875	621	16·0	5,409	2,965	54·8

[1] International Classification of Diseases 9th revision.

The most comprehensive information available to OPCS on the incidence of cancer comes from the registration of newly diagnosed cases of cancer. Complete data for 1984 have not yet been provided to OPCS by the regional cancer registries.

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Social Services to what factors he attributes the increase in the combined registrations for malignant neoplasm of cervix uteri and carcinoma-in-situ of cervix uteri among women under 35 years of age.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Family Planning Association and Brook Advisory Centre

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received regarding the accountability of the Family Planning Association and the Brook Advisory Centre for the public money allocated to them.

Mr. Newton: We have received no such representations in the last 12 months.

Nurses (South Manchester)

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has received the letter from the hon. Member for Stretford dated 6 February containing information about nurse staffing levels in South Manchester health authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: As the allocation of staffing resources at local level is a matter for individual health authorities, I have written to the chairman of South Manchester health authority asking him to reply to the hon. Member at the same time as reporting to me.

North Western RHA (Computers)

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the audit report concerning the North Western regional health authority procurement and development of the integrated personnel system and the patient administration computers.

Mrs. Currie: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) on 16 February.

Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is able to announce his decision in respect of the application for funding by the Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People.

Mr. Major: This application is receiving full consideration following a recent meeting between officials and the chairman and director of the council. We shall announce our decision as soon as possible.

Mass Screening (Stonehouse)

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to receive the results of the mass screening programme undertaken at Stonehouse, Gloucestershire.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Neasden Hospital (Staff Accommodation)

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many *(a)* nurses and *(b)* other National Health Service staff were transferred against their wishes from their residences in Neasden hospital on 2 December 1986; if any reimbursement is being made to offset any additional expenses now falling upon residents; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: This information is not held centrally. The hon. Member may like to consult the Brent health authority.

Dentists (Hypodermic Needles)

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take immediate action to prohibit the practice of dentists re-using needles for injecting local anaesthetics.

Mrs. Currie: Dentists in the community and hospital dental services are provided with a fresh needle for each patient. In the general dental service general dental practitioners' terms and conditions of service already require the use of suitable instruments. Recent guidance issued on control of cross-infection in dentistry has stressed that it is essential to use a fresh disposable needle for each patient. I would expect any complaint that a dentist has failed to observe that guidance would be subject to an investigation by the service committee of the relevant family practitioner committee.

Nuclear Installations (Cancer)

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he can yet give a firm date for the publication by the Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys of the statistical study of cancer incidence and mortality in the vicinity of nuclear installations in England and Wales.

Mr. Newton: I regret that I cannot yet be absolutely definite, but now expect it to be around mid-March. However, in view of the widespread interest that has been expressed in the context of the forthcoming debate on Sizewell, I am taking exceptional steps to make available a limited number of photocopies of the first rough proof from the printers. I hope to place 20 copies in the Library later today, as soon as the copying has been completed.

I must stress that this proof has only just been received by OPCS. It is subject to printers' errors and a final further cross-check by the authors between the derived tables in the text and the free-standing computer tables at the back of the report.

I remind my hon. Friend that, as I said in answer to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) on 16 February, the purpose of the investigation was to assemble and publish data as a basis for identifying any prima facie excesses of cancer which might merit further investigation; the study does not itself test causal connections.

The study was carried out on an independent basis by five scientists, using data available to OPCS. It was supported by the Medical Research Council and the Imperial Cancer Research Fund cancer epidemiology and clinical trials unit. The authors are Mrs. Paula Cook-Mozaffari, Mr. T. Vincent, Mr. D. Forman, Mr. F. Ashwood, and Dr. M. Alderson.

Interpretation of the figures and decisions on any further work will have to be considered when the full report is published, and in the light of advice from the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment.

Benefits

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will report the outcome of his investigation into the practice of referring back decisions to medical boards in claims for industrial disablement benefit.

Mr. Lyell: In seeking consistent adjudication it was for many years the practice for the Department's medical staff to refer claims back to the medical board if it was thought that the board's decision, or the record of it, needed clarification or reconsideration. Following a commissioner's decision which criticised this practice, instructions were issued in 1985 to prevent reference back to medical boards by Departmental staff outside the terms of the legal provisions.

The Department has been looking into the extent of this practice as regards industrial disablement benefit and the possibility that some claimants may have been disadvantaged by it. A sample comprising about 4,000 decisions by medical boards has been examined. About 9 per cent. of these were found to have been referred back to the board by the Department's medical staff for reconsideration. In less than 0·3 per cent. of the cases was the outcome potentially adverse to the claimant. The changes made were fully consistent with other unamended decisions made in similar circumstances and amounted in most cases to no more than minor adjustments, for example, to the date set for the next review of a provisional award.

In the light of this information, I have considered whether a wider-ranging search for such cases should be undertaken. To seek out all such instances would involve the scrutiny of some 17·5 million decisions made since the industrial injuries scheme was set up in 1948. The high cost involved and the delays this could cause to other claimants would be out of all proportion to the amounts of benefit at stake. I have therefore decided to take no further action to identify amended industrial disablement decisions.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Vehicle Excise Duty

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will publish a table showing for each district council area in Northern Ireland the number of summonses issued for not displaying a road fund licence on a motor vehicle, together with the number of people fined as a result, those who were given a custodial sentence for non-payment of fines and the number and amounts of fines outstanding;

(2) how many summonses were issued in the west Belfast area in the years 1973 to 1986 for not displaying a road fund licence on a motor vehicle; how many people were subsequently fined or had a custodial sentence imposed for non-payment of fines; and how many fines remain unpaid.

Mr. Scott: The information is not readily available and can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Departmental Contracts

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the contracts, with the subject of the assignment, awarded to management consultancy or accounting firms by his Department in 1986, with the name of the consultants concerned.

Mr. Scott: The information is as follows:

Firm and Subject of Assignment

Arthur Andersen and Co.
Financial appraisal for the Industrial Development Board (IDB).

Beecom Management Consultants Ltd.
Finance for Managers course.

Binder Hamlyn
Business appraisal for Urban Development Grant.

Business and Management Consultants
Financial appraisal for IDB.

CM Consultants
Financial appraisal for IDB.

Centerhouse Management
Financial appraisal for IDB.

Coopers and Lybrand
Professional services for Warne Surgical Products.
Provide accountancy advice in monitoring the affairs of the public transport companies.
Review the format and content of the annual accounts prepared for Castlenavan Quarry.
Survey of public attitudes to healthy lifestyles for the Department of Health and Social Services.
Market research on Blood Transfusion Services.
To establish a methodology for evaluating training assistance.
Study of retail provision in the Belfast urban area.
Financial appraisals for IDB (6 studies).
Marketing appraisal for IDB.

David Rigby Associates
Linen task force update.

D. C. Ives
Financial appraisal for IDB.

D. E. Barnard Systems
Review of Central Print Unit and Forms Design Bureau in the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

Deloitte Haskins and Sells
To review the information and management needs of the Department of the Environment (NI) Works Service.
Financial appraisals for IDB (5 studies).

Ernst and Whinney
Review of Internal Audit in the NI Civil Service.
Financial appraisal for IDB.

Fintrac Consulting Ltd.
Examine supply and use of timber in Northern Ireland.

Froggatt and Company
Marketing appraisal for IDB.

Goldblatt Management Consultants
Carpet sector review.
Financial appraisals for IDB (5 studies).

Gryphon Group Consultancy
Market appraisal for IDB.

Hanna Thompson and Co.
Financial appraisal for IDB.

Hill, Kennedy and Co.
Business appraisal for Urban Development Grant.
Financial appraisal for IDB.

IMS London International
Marketing appraisal for IDB.

Industrial Training Services
Financial appraisal for IDB.
To assist companies making application for the Training on Employers' Premises Scheme to develop training programmes.
Provide specialist advice and input to IDB's Executive Development Programme.

IOTA Ltd.
Business appraisals for Urban Development Grant (5 studies).

ISCOL Ltd.
Provision of training in Management and Manpower Review Division of the Department of Finance and Personnel.

J. B. Kennedy and Co.
Business appraisal for Urban Development Grant.

Jackson Andrews and Co.
Financial appraisal for IDB.

Kenneth G. Burnett and Partners
Sales Development training programme.

Langham Management Consultants
Marketing appraisal for IDB.

Linn Medical
Employed to advise Warne Surgical Products on a particular product.

M & A Management Services
Business appraisals for Urban Development Grant (4 studies).

Management Development Services
To provide business training and advice to participants in the Enterprise Allowance Scheme.
Marketing appraisal for IDB.

McFarland Edmund
International investment—market research.

McIvor Jenkins Associates
Marketing appraisal for IDB.

Newchurch Ltd.
Advise on arrangements for small firms and encouraging enterprise.

PA Management Consultants
To assess the implications of introducing the Home Office 'Fresh Start' proposals for the prison service in England and Wales into the Northern Ireland prison service.
Financial Management Initiative project in DED.
Top structure review in the IDB.
Marketing appraisal for the IDB.
Financial appraisal for the IDB.

Pactal
To assess the use of the system of communicating word processors in the Belfast and London offices of the Northern Ireland Office.

Peat Marwick Mitchell and Co.
Financial appraisal for the IDB.
Commercial potential for an irradiation facility in Northern Ireland.

Price Waterhouse
Financial appraisals for the IDB (4 studies).
Toolmaking requirements for a tooling facility for injection moulding.
Assistance with vetting of contractors accounts regarding appointment to select list.

Purchasing Index (UK) Ltd.
Overview of procurement and supply functions in Northern Ireland Government Departments.

Quinn Associates
Financial appraisal for the IDB.

Professor N. S. Tutt and Miss M. P. Brown
Review of Economics and Social Divisions of the Policy Planning and Research Unit of the Department of Finance and Personnel.

Touche Rose
Development of computer audit capability in DHSS.
To advise on specified matters relating to Short Brothers plc and Harland and Wolff plc.
A review of the Standard Capital Grant Scheme.

Warner International
Marketing appraisal for the IDB.
Financial appraisal for the IDB.

William Fitch and Co.
Financial appraisal for the IDB.

Gaelic Athletic Association

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will request the chairman of the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights to expedite the commission's consideration of allegations made in 1984 of discrimination practised in Northern Ireland by the Gaelic Athletic Association through clubs benefiting from public funds and to issue an interim report thereon pending the next annual report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tom King: The Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights is an independent body and it is for the commission to decide when to publish its views on any matter.

The commission's twelfth annual report (HC 151), published on 10 February 1987, gives a target date of September 1987 for the completion of the commission's review of the adequacy and effectiveness of legislation to prevent discrimination on grounds of religious or political belief. I understand that the commission intends to publish a separate report on the outcome of this review.

Remands

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many prisoners charged with scheduled offences in the latest calendar year for which figures are available were remanded in custody prior to trial for periods between *(a)* up to three months, *(b)* three to six months, *(c)* six to nine months, *(d)* nine to 12 months, *(e)* 12 to 18 months and *(f)* over 18 months for scheduled and non-scheduled offences, respectively.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 February 1987, c. *462*]: The length of time spent on custodial remand for persons tried during 1986 and who were in custody at the time of their trial and charged with scheduled and non-scheduled offences respectively was as follows:

Time in custody	*Scheduled offences*	*Non-scheduled offences*
Less than 3 months	193	343
3 months up to 6 months	85	50
6 months up to 9 months	51	17
9 months up to 12 months	35	6
12 months up to 18 months	27	2
Over 18 months	61	0
TOTAL	452	418

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what percentage of prisoners on custodial remand for scheduled and non-scheduled offences, respectively, were *(a)* given a non-custodial sentence, *(b)* given a custodial sentence, and *(c)* found not guilty or not preceeded against in 1986.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 February 1987, c. *462*]: The information in relation to those tried in 1986 and who were in custody at the time of trial is as follows:

Disposal	*Scheduled offences (per cent.)*	*Non-scheduled offences (per cent.)*
(a) Non-custodial sentence	6·9	13·9
(b) Custodial sentence	73·0	55·2
(c) Found not guilty or not proceeded against	20·1	30·9

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the average period between remand and trial for prisoners refused bail and charged with scheduled offences in Northern ireland in 1986.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 February 1987, c. *462*]: For persons tried in 1986 and who were *(a)* in custody at the time of their trial; *(b)* never released on bail; and *(c)* were charged with scheduled offences, the average time spent on custodial remand was 37·5 weeks.

Evidence (Accomplices)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people have been convicted in the current year either on their own admission of guilt or following a plea of not guilty on the basis of evidence on behalf of the Crown given by alleged accomplices in cases concerning scheduled offences in Northern Ireland; how many suspects arrested on the basis of such evidence have been released as a result of the retraction of evidence given by accomplices; how many people are presently awaiting trial as a result of evidence obtained from alleged accomplices; and how many people have been found not guilty, or not guilty on appeal, on the basis of such evidence.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 February 1987, c. *463*]: One person was convicted and two persons acquitted in cases concerning scheduled offences during 1986 following trials in which the evidence of a former accomplice was given on behalf of the Crown or on the basis of their statements of admission made during

enquiries arising from the evidence of a former accomplice. A further 52 persons had their convictions overturned on appeal. There were no instances of an alleged accomplice withdrawing his or her evidence.

There have been no such trials so far in 1987 but two persons are still awaiting trial as a result of statements of admission made to the police.

Security

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the security statistics for the second half of 1986 are now available, together with details of persons charged with terrorist-type activities and convictions for scheduled offences for the year.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 February 1987, c. *465*]: Yes. The statistics together with those since 1971 are as follows:

Statistics on security

Part I—Statistics of Terrorist Activity

Yearly totals for 1971-1986

Statistics for terrorist activity comprise the following:

(i) Number of shooting incidents.
(ii) Number of explosions.
(iii) Number of bombs and devices neutralised.
(iv) Weight of explosives in bombs and devices neutralised.
(v) Number of armed robberies and amount stolen.
(vi) Number of malicious fires.
(vii) Number of deaths and injuries of RUC/RUC"R", Army and civilians.

Part II—Statistics of Security Forces' Activity

Yearly totals for 1971-1986

Statistics for security forces' activity comprise the following:

(i) Number of houses searched.
(ii) Number of weapons, pounds of explosives and rounds of ammunition found.
(iii) Number of people charged with terrorist type offences (murder, attempted murder, explosives offences, firearms offences, armed robbery and other offences relating to the security situation, e.g. arson, membership of illegal organisation, etc.).

Part III—Statistics of Persons Convicted of Scheduled Offences

Six monthly total for July-December 1986

Statistics on Security
Part I—Statistics of Terrorist Activity
Yearly Figures 1971-1986

	1971	*1972*	*1973*	*1974*	*1975*	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*
Shooting Incidents[1]	1,756	10,628	5,018	3,206	1,803	1,908	1,081	755	728
Explosions	1,022	1,382	978	685	399	766	366	455	422
Bombs Neutralised	493	471	542	428	236	426	169	178	142
Weight of explosives in lbs[1]									
Explosions	10,972	47,462	47,472	46,435	13,753	17,596	2,839	5,343	11,181
Neutralised	3,001	19,978	32,450	27,094	11,159	16,252	2,188	5,860·5	4,530
Armed Robberies	437	1,931	1,215	1,231	1,201	813	591	442	434
Amount stolen	303,787	790,687	612,015	572,951	572,105	545,497	446,988	232,650	568,359
Malicious Fires[2,3]	—	—	587	636	248	453	432	269	315
Deaths:									
Civilian	115	322	171	166	216	245	69	50	51
Army/UDR	48	129	66	35	20	29	29	21	48
RUC/RUC "R"	11	17	13	15	11	23	14	10	14
Injuries:									
Civilian	1,838	3,813	1,812	1,680	2,044	2,162	1,027	548	557
Army/UDR	390	578	548	483	167	264	188	135	153
RUC/RUC "R"	315	485	291	235	263	303	183	302	165

[1] Estimated weight only
[2] Consolidated figures not available for earlier years
[3] No figure for April-June 1981
[4] Figures in ( ) refer to shots heard only and not included in the total

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Shooting Incidents[4]	642	815 (327)	382 (165)	290 (134)	230 (104)	196 (41)	285 (107)
Explosions	280	398	219	266	193	148	172
Bombs neutralised	120	131	113	101	55	67	82
Weight of explosives in lbs[1]	9,059	9,261	11,199	6,923	8,545	11,711	11,309
Explosions neutralised	6,405	9,168	7,300	7,503	6,114	7,715	9,463
Armed robberies	412	587	580	622	627	459	724
Amount stolen (£)	496,825	854,929	1,392,202	830,258	701,903	655,690	1,207,152
Malicious Fires [2,3]	275	536	499	528	840	740	906
Deaths:							
Civilian	50	57	57	44	36	25	37
Army/UDR	16	23	28	15	19	6	12
RUC/RUC "R"	9	21	12	18	9	23	12
Injuries:							
Civilian	530	878	328	280	513	468	773
Army/UDR	77	140	98	88	86	33	55
RUC/RUC "R"	194	332	99	142	267	415	622

[1] Estimated weight only.
[2] Consolidated figures not available for earlier years.
[3] No figure for April-June 1981.
[4] Figures in ( ) refer to shots heard only and not included in the total.

Statistics on Security
Part II—Statistics of Security Forces' Activity
Yearly Figures: 1971-1986

	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979
Houses Searched[1]	17,262	36,617	74,556	71,914	30,092	34,939	20,724	15,462	6,452
Finds									
Firearms	717	1,264	1,595	1,260	825	837	590	400	301
Ammunition (rds)	157,944	183,410	187,399	147,202	73,604	70,306	52,091	43,512	46,280
Explosives	2,748	41,488	38,418	26,120	11,565	21,714	3,809	2,108	1,996

Persons Charged with terrorist type offences[2]

	31 July-31 December 1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979
Murder	13	71	77	138	120	131	60	45
Attempted Murder	16	85	76	88	121	135	79	39
Firearms Offences	242	631	545	460	353	301	225	177
Explosives Offences	86	236	161	100	215	146	79	40
Theft Act	111	186	239	314	188	203	151	159
Other	63	205	276	97	279	392	249	210
Total	531	1,414	1,374	1,197	1,276	1,308	843	670

[1] Includes occupied and unoccupied houses searched.
[2] These figures are not available in consolidated form for earlier years.

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Houses searched[1]	4,106	4,104	4,045	1,497	1,282	812	1,273
Finds							
Firearms	203	409	317	200	197	238	215
Ammunition	28,078	47,127	41,452	32,451	17,211	13,748	29,061
Explosives	1,810	7,536	5,066	3,762	8,534	7,373	5,386
Persons charged with terrorist type offences[2]							
Murder	63	48	50	75	41	24	12
Attempted murder	59	72	96	60	68	52	28
Firearms offences	112	155	173	150	155	105	128
Explosives offences	39	39	41	48	21	37	31
Theft Act	128	158	130	119	94	65	70
Other	149	446	196	161	149	239	386
Total	550	918	686	613	528	522	655

STATISTICS ON SECURITY (PART III)
July-December 1986
Notes on the tables:

1. The offence classifications are based on those used by the Crown and Peace Office in their annual return.
2. The tables relate to persons convicted at the Belfast Crown Court. This covers all scheduled offences tried on indictment.
3. Some jury trials are included in cases where the Attorney-General certified out of the scheduled mode of trial, ie non-terrorist serious offences.
4. Where a person had been convicted of more than one offence only the most serious or that which received the longest sentence is recorded in the statistics.

Convictions for scheduled offences—1 July to 31 December 1986

Offence	*Number convicted*	*Non-custodial sentence*	*Young offenders centre training schools*	*Less than 5 years*	*5 years and less than 7 years*	*7 years and less than 10 years*	*10 years and less than 20 years*	*15 years and less than 20 years*	*20 years and over*	*Life*
Murder	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Attempted murder	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
Conspiracy to murder	6	9	0	0	0	2	4	0	0	0
Manslaughter	7	0	2	0	1	4	0	0	0	0
Wounding with intent to do grievous bodily harm	18	4	6	6	2	0	0	0	0	0
Causing grievous bodily harm	6	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0
Assault occasioning grievous bodily harm	4	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Causing explosion	2	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Possessing explosives with intent	12	4	0	1	0	1	5	0	1	0
Other explosives offences	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Possessing a firearm with intent	23	7	1	6	3	1	5	0	0	0
Possessing a firearm	7	4	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0

Offence	Number convicted	Non-custodial sentence	Young offenders centre training schools	Less than 5 years	5 years and less than 7 years	7 years and less than 10 years	10 years and less than 20 years	15 years and less than 20 years	20 years and over	Life
Carrying a firearm with intent	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other major firearms offences	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Robbery	65	22	9	28	4	0	2	0	0	0
Unlawful collection of information	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Kidnapping and false imprisonment	7	1	0	5	1	0	0	0	0	0
Hijacking	14	7	3	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Arson	27	4	10	12	1	0	0	0	0	0
Petrol bomb offences	30	9	12	9	0	0	0	0	0	0
Criminal damage	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Assisting offenders	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Intimidation	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Withholding information	5	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Common law riot	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	257	79	48	83	14	9	17	1	1	0

Note: Where a person has been convicted of more than one offence only the most serious or that which received the longest sentence is recorded in the statistics.

Firearms

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will detail the number of arms found in 1986 under the headings of *(a)* machine guns, *(b)* rifles, *(c)* shotguns, *(d)* pistols-revolvers and *(e)* others.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 February 1987, c. *464*]: The information is as follows:

	Number
Machine guns	11
Rifles	57
Shotguns	45
Pistols-revolvers	61
Others	41

Note: "Others" refers to rocket launchers and mortar tubes.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* to show how many firearms, by type, namely, handguns, rifles, shotguns or fully automatic weapons, were seized by the security forces in Northern Ireland in 1986; and, for each type, how many were legally held weapons stolen by terrorist organisations from (i) civilians, (ii) the Royal Ulster Constabulary, (iii) the Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve, (iv) the Ulster Special Constabulary, (v) the Ulster Defence Regiment and (vi) the Regular Army.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 February 1987, c. *464*]: Information is not readily available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, information about weapons which have been recovered or stolen is given in the following table.

1 January 1986 to 31 December 1986

	Pistols-revolvers	Rifles	Machine guns, sub-machine guns	Shotguns
Terrorist firearms recovered by the security forces in Northern Ireland	48	47	11	28
Legally held firearms stolen in Northern Ireland				
Stolen from:				
Army	—	—	—	—
Ulster Defence Regiment	3	1	—	—
Royal Ulster Constabulary/RUC Reserve	4	—	—	—
Civilians	1	1	—	20

Note: Ulster Special Constabulary were disbanded in 1970.

Plastic Bullets

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many plastic bullets were fired in Northern Ireland in the second half of 1986; in what circumstances and in what location the bullets were fired; and how many persons were injured as a result.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 February 1987, c. *464*]: During the last six months of 1986, 1,434 plastic baton rounds were fired in Northern Ireland. 37 people were allegedly injured as a result in the period.

I am writing to the hon. Member with the information he has requested about the circumstances and places in which the baton rounds were fired. A copy of my letter will be placed in the Library.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many attacks on Royal Ulster Constabulary personnel took place in each month of 1986, showing whether the attack was on *(a)* a foot patrol or *(b)* a mobile patrol, *(c)* the total attacked while on duty each

month together with details of the type of attack, namely (i) physical assault, (ii) stone throwing, (iii) petrol bomb, (iv) explosion, (v) shooting and the number of persons made amenable.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 February 1987, c. *464*]: Information is not available in the form requested and can be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, in 1986, there were over 1,400 incidents in which the police were attacked either on duty or at home. Of these, 55 incidents involved the use of explosives and 82 the use of firearms.

Prison Sentences (Review)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the procedure for the review of life sentences for prisoners convicted of offences in Great Britain but serving their sentences in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 February 1987]: Under section 26(4) of the Criminal Justice Act 1961, a prisoner permanently transferred from Great Britain to serve his sentence in Northern Ireland is treated for the purposes of detention, release, recall and otherwise as if the sentence had been imposed in Northern Ireland. It follows that the review procedures in these cases are the same as those which apply to persons convicted in Northern Ireland, but in cases of murder the trial judge in the jurisdiction in which the sentence was imposed must be consulted before the prisoner is released on licence.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 19 February 1987

THE ARTS

Items in lieu of Tax

Mr. Stern asked the Minister for the Arts whether Her Majesty's Government have accepted any items in lieu of tax in accordance with the arrangements announced on 6 February.

Mr. Luce: I am pleased to announce that an enhanced provision of £1,165,000 to Class XIII, Vote 10 to be charged to the Contingency Reserve has allowed the acceptance of a painting of the "Madonna and Child" by Giovanni Bellini, which would be allocated to the Ashmolean museum, Oxford, in accordance with the conditions attached to the offer. The amount of tax satisfied by this acceptance is £725,000. The offer of a second item (which would be similarly funded) is in the final stages of agreement. Further details will be made available when the acceptance has been completed.

TRANSPORT

Prometheus Project

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will make a statement on his Department's participation in the Prometheus project; and what progress has been made to date.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Prometheus project commenced on 1 October 1986. The first year is being devoted to the definition of a wide range of studies which complement each other. There is close consultation between Departments and the Science and Engineering Research Council. The Department's participation is principally in the traffic system and route choice aspects which are closely linked with the Department's AUTOGUIDE initiative, itself the subject of close consultation with industry and with potential operators and users. The Department is also coordinating the work of research teams in five countries in this field, and is participating in the work of a council which brings together the interests of the participating companies and their five Governments. Good progress is being made in planning future years' research. Consultants and universities are engaged in preliminary studies with Government financial support.

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information has been given to him by his departmental representative on the Prometheus project on the participation of industrial sub-contractors in the car manufacturing industry in *(a)* France, *(b)* West Germany and *(c)* the United Kingdom; and what steps he is taking to encourage United Kingdom subcontractors to join.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The participants in the Prometheus project are motor manufacturers based in the Eureka member countries. Industrial sub-contractors are not eligible to join in their own right. The participants, who expect assistance from their Governments, will require extensive support from supplying industries and public research institutions in their respective countries. There is no requirement that participants should disclose in detail their links with subcontractors but the motor companies in France (three) and the Federal Republic of Germany (four) are known to be in close touch with their electronics industries, as is the United Kingdom participant. This is Gaydon Technology, acting for Austin Rover, Jaguar and Rolls-Royce. The definition phase of Prometheus commenced in October 1986. Progress has not yet reached the stage at which sub-contracts have been placed. It is a primary objective of the Department and of the Department of Trade and Industry that British firms should seek the maximum technological and commercial benefit from contributing to this and other Eureka projects. The Government will give every encouragement to them to do so.

Bedford Bypass

Sir Trevor Skeet asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he proposes to announce the route for bypassing Bedford, and a timetable for the sequence of events.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I shall announce the preferred route shortly. The next stage would be to develop the scheme in sufficient detail to enable publication of orders. I shall carefully consider the possibility of publishing orders in separate sections.

A22 (Improvements)

Mr. Gow asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the improvements planned for the A22 London-Eastbourne road and the dates on which he expects each such improvement to be completed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The A22 is not a road for which this Department is responsible. Improvements are a matter for the appropriate local highway authorities, the Surrey, West and East Sussex county councils, and the London borough of Croydon.

We plan to improve the junction of the A27 Lewes road with the A22 at Polegate by early next year.

Level Crossing (Eastbourne)

Mr. Gow asked the Secretary of State for Transport what studies he has made of the delays caused to road traffic at the Hampden Park level crossing north of Eastbourne; and what proposals he has for diminishing the delays.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Hampden Park level crossing is on a local road for which East Sussex county council is responsible.

"Highway Code"

Mr. Hind asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he proposes to publish a revised "Highway Code"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The revised "Highway Code" will be published on 4 March. This is the first major revision since 1978 and includes improved advice to road users on a number of important topics.

ENVIRONMENT

Planning Inquiries

Mr. Richard Shepherd asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what responses he has had to the draft circular on awards of costs at planning inquiries; and what advice he now proposes to issue.

Mr. Waldegrave: Comments were received from nearly 50 organisations and individuals. Copies of the responses from those who gave express permission for their comments to be made public have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses, and in the Department's library, and are available for inspection.

The circular is being published in final form today. It is the first major restatement of policy on the award of costs for over 20 years. The basic principle remains the same—that costs will be awarded not for the success or failure of an appeal, but only where unreasonable behaviour by one party at an inquiry has caused another party unnecessary expense.

The circular gives details of the sort of behaviour which may give rise to an award of costs. For example, costs may be awarded against a planning authority which fails without good reason to determine a planning application within the statutory period, or gives no good reason for refusing permission. On the other hand costs may be awarded against an appellant who (for example) persists with proposals for major development on green belt land when it is obvious that permission will not be granted.

I hope all those concerned with planning appeals will study the circular closely. It is further evidence of our determination to cut out unnecessary expense and delay in the planning process.

Urban Development Grant

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the proportion of private finance to urban development grants in urban development grant applications approved by his Department during the last 12 month period for which figures are available, broken down by region.

Mr. John Patten: 58 projects were approved for urban development grant during 1 February 1986 to 31 January 1987.

Region	*Number of projects*	*Grant £ million*	*Private investment £ million*
East Midlands	5	2·2	5·8
Greater London	7	5·2	24·4
Merseyside	3	3·1	18·2
North West	11	1·6	4·4
Northern	10	2·2	5·6
South West	1	0·1	0·6
West Midlands	13	6·4	32·4
Yorks & Humbs	8	1·6	3·6
Total	58	22·4	95

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total number of urban development grant applications approved to date where the grant has been under £100,000; and what percentage of all applications approved this figure represents.

Mr. John Patten: 65 projects with urban development grant of less than £100,000 have been approved. This represents 28·5 per cent. of all approved projects.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many schemes have been approved to date involving urban development grant on the commercial part, and housing association grant on a related residential part, of a project; and if he will list these schemes in the *Official Report*, indicating their location and the value of each grant in each case.

Mr. John Patten: None.

Trafalgar Square

Ms. Clare Short asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many applications have been made for the use of Trafalgar Square for meetings in the past 12 months; how many have been granted; and how many refused;

(2) if he will list the organisations which have been given permission to hold meetings in Trafalgar Square and those which have been refused over the past 12 months.

Mr. Waldegrave: An application from the Co-ordinating Committee for British Withdrawal from Ireland for a meeting on 2 February 1986 was refused. Permission was given for the following 48 events:

Date	*Events*
2 March 1986	Cyprus Turkish Association
15 March 1986	International Fund for Animal Welfare
22 March 1986	Liberty High School Grenadier Band
30 March 1986	Full Gospel Youth Movement
31 March 1986 am	Elim Pentecostal Church
31 March 1986 pm	Linkopings Skolmusikar (Swedish Band)
5 April 1986	Eelam Solidarity Campaign
6 April 1986	SOGAT
19 April 1986	Black Horse and Standard Morris Dancers
20 April 1986	Revolutionary Communist Party
10 May 1986	Westminster Morris Men
17 May 1986	Human Rights in Iraq
18 May 1986	Methodist Association of Youth Clubs
24 May 1986	Garston Church
26 May 1986 am	Scripture Text Carriers Association
26 May 1986 pm	Terence Higgins Trust
1 June 1986	Steelband Association
7 June 1986	United Evangelistic Mobile Units
8 June 1986	Bengali New Year Festival
14 June 1986	The open Air Mission
15 June 1986	Enkopings Paradorkester (Swedish Band)
21 June 1986	Travelling Gospel Workers Mission & Society for Evangelising London
5 July 1986	Trafalgar Square Evangelistic Rallies
12 July 1986	London City Mission
19 July 1986	London Entertains
20 July 1986	Essex International Arts Festival
26 July 1986	Asian Christian Church
27 July 1986	Universal Pentecostal Church
2 August 1986	Organisation of Human Rights in Iraq
9 August 1986	Youth with a Mission
10 August 1986	Tell a Tourist
31 August 1986	Polish Solidarity Campaign
6 September 1986	Concert World Bomhus Band (Swedish Band)
7 September 1986	Speakeasy (Musical entertainment)
13 September 1986	East Saxon Sword (Morris Men)
14 September 1986	Havering Girl Pipers
20 September 1986	United Evangelistic Mobile Units
27 September 1986	The Society for Evangelising London
5 October 1986	Metropolitan Templar Federation

Date	*Events*	
11 October 1986	The Scripture Text Carriers Association	
18 October 1986	Labour Party Young Socialists	
19 October 1986	Sea Cadet Association	
25 October 1986	Lynx	
2 November 1986	Jarrow 86	
9 November 1986	Anti-Fascist Action	
16 November 1986	Festival of Prophet's Birthday	
10 January 1987	Tamil Eelam Support Committee	
24 January 1987	Student Organisation of London Tamils	

In addition applications for use of the Square up to 30 April 1987 have been decided as follows:—

21 February 1987	National Union of Students	Refused
14 March 1987	City of London Anti-Apartheid Group	Refused
15 March 1987	Internation Fund for Animal Welfare	Given
11 April 1987	United Evangelistic Mobile Units	Given

Permission for large meetings is currently being refused on public safety grounds while Nelson's column is being cleaned.

Work on major refurbishment of the square is expected to begin this summer and to last for at least two years. During that time no meetings of any kind will be allowed at the square except for the traditional events before Christmas and on new year's eve.

Derelict Land Grant

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many derelict land grants have been repaid in respect of schemes in Lancashire in each of the last three years; and (i) in which boroughs the schemes were sited, (ii) how much grant was paid and (iii) what was the total value of the scheme.

Mr. John Patten: For 1984-85 this information could not be provided except at disproportionate cost. The information for 1985-86 and 1986-87 to date is as follows:

Year	*Number of schemes on which repayments were made*	*Borough in which schemes cited*	*Total grant paid (Gross)*[1]	*Amounts of repayments*[2]
			£	£
1985-86	7	Blackburn	48,616	3,000
		Bolton	64,335	500
		Chorley	13,408	6,000
			15,400	4,000
		Fylde	43,799	43,799
		Ribble	[3]614,788	111,475
		Rossendale	39,180	12,180
1986-87[3]	8	Chorley	35,606	500
		Hyndburn	150,756	2,972
			36,838	20,000
			30,112	150
		Pendle	67,256	23,228
		Rossendale	15,019	450
			131,011	100
		South Ribble	415,995	258,000

[1] The figures represent the total grant paid over the life of the scheme at a rate of 100 per cent. of eligible costs.

[2] Representing payment of after-value realised on disposal of reclaimed land and income generated in the course of reclamation.

[3] To date.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many derelict land grants have been paid in respect of schemes in Birmingham in each of the past three years; how much grant was paid; and what was the value of the schemes.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 February 1987, c. *238*.]: In 1984-85 nine grants were paid totalling £206,064. Total value of these schemes was £2,216,812. In 1985-86 two grants were paid totalling £32,589. Total value of these schemes was also £32,589.

In 1986-87 16 grants have been paid, totalling £855,385. Total value of these schemes was £2,213,000.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list current applications for derelict land grants in Birmingham and the west midlands.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 February 1987, c. *238*]: In 1986-87 there are 160 applications for derelict land grant being processed in the west midland region, four in Birmingham, 94 in the Black Country and 62 in the shire counties. Applications are submitted to the Department in confidence and it is not therefore possible to publish details.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all projects funded by derelict land grants in the west midlands during the past three years.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 February 1987, c. *238*]: In the period 1984-87, 609 successful applications for grant were processed in the west midlands, totalling over £31 million. Details of those schemes could be made available only at disproportionate cost.

Rate Payments (Default)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many summonses were issued by each district and borough council in East Sussex for each year since 1979 for rate payment defaults and recovery through magistrates courts.

Mr. Chope: The Government do not keep records of the number of summonses issued by local authorities. The information is, however, to be found in the annual rate collection statistics published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy.

Loft Insulation

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many households in the Birmingham, Erdington constituency have benefited from the 66 per cent. loft insulation grant; and what has been the annual cost in each of the years for which the scheme has been running.

Mr. Tracey: This information is not collected for individual constituencies.

New Towns Commission (Asset Disposal)

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria he uses in determining asset disposal targets for the New Towns Commission.

Mr. John Patten: For housing and land for housing development, disposal targets are set following discussions of the Commission's forecasts between the commission and the Department. Targets for disposal of industrial and commercial property and of other assets are set following a review by the Department (with advice from independent property consultants) of the commission's disposals programme and analysis of future prospects.

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the targets set by him for asset disposals and the amount realised by the New Towns Commission during the last five years.

Mr. John Patten: Targets for capital receipts and outturn achieved by the Commission for the New Towns in the years 1981-82 to 1985-86 are as follows (£ million):

	Receipts target	*Outturn*
1981-82	76·6	60·3
1982-83	44·1	49·6
1983-84	46·6	51·2
1984-85	40·2	55·8
1985-86	84·4	95·0

Local Authority Debt

Mr. David Howell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what protection Her Majesty's Government provide for lenders and other creditors in the event of default by a local authority.

Mr. Ridley: A local authority's debt and its creditworthiness have always been its own responsibility. The Government do not stand behind local authority debt. The great majority of local authorities understand the importance of maintining their creditworthiness and behave in accordance with the rules of financial good practice.

All loan debt is a statutory charge on all the revenues of an authority. If a local authority were to default, creditors—including those who have provided finance for authorities under arrangements such as deferred purchase schemes which do not legally constitute borrowing—might have to take action in the courts to recover their money. The Public Works Loan Board could not lend to an authority which chose to act illegally or which appeared unable to service and repay the debt, even under its lender of last resort facility.

Council Housing

Sir Hugh Rossi asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the comparative figures for arrears in England and Wales of *(a)* council house rents and *(b)* local authority mortgage repayments, showing (i) the global sum, (ii) the number of cases and (iii) the relationship of these figures to the total numbers of lettings and mortgages, respectively.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to the reply*, 5 February 1987, c. *765-66*]: The latest estimates of arrears of mortgage repayments are that about 16,000 mortgagors or 3¼ per cent. of private persons with mortgages outstanding to English local authorities, were in arrears of six months or more at the end of 1985-86, for a total of about £10 million.

On council house rent arrears, I have nothing to add to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) on 10 December 1986, at column *188*.

Homes (Radon Levels)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the highest know level of radon in any dwelling in Truro constituency; what is the calculated annual effective dose equivalent associated with such a level; what number of dwellings in Truro constituency have been found to have radon levels above the 20 milliSievert action level; what funds are available for remedial building work on such dwellings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 February 1987, c. *855-56*]: I am advised by the National Radiological Protection Board that the highest level of radon found in any dwelling in Truro constituency in the course of its surveys to date is 7,725 becquerels per cubic metre, which is equivalent to an annual effective dose of 390 milliSieverts (mSv). This is more than twice the level found in any other house in the constituency, but 15 other dwellings were found in which the occupants receive annual doses above the 20 mSv action level.

The NRPB's preliminary survey identified a total of seven houses, all in Devon and Cornwall, where the annual effective dose was above 100 mSv. The NRPB is in touch with the householder concerned to offer confirmatory measurements and advice.

As I stated on 27 January, responsibility for remedial measures must rest with the house owner or landlord. The Government are prepared to consider offering financial assistance towards the costs of remedial work to the most needy owner-occupiers, but until we have received further evidence from NRPB on the extent of the problem and advice from the Building Research Establishment on the most effective remedial measures, it is too early to estimate the funds that may be needed for remedial building work.

As the participants in the NRPB's preliminary survey were given an assurance that the results would remain confidential it would not be appropriate for me to identify the properties concerned.

Greenwich Royal Observatory

Mr. Faulds asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether all the Greenwich royal observatory's activities, with the exception of the equatorial group of telescopes, will be accommodated on the Madingley road site.

Mr. Walden: I have been asked to reply.

It is planned that all the United Kingdom-based activities of the Royal Greenwich Observatory will be accommodated on the Madingley road site, with the exception of the archives section which will be housed in the university library. The future requirement and location for the satellite Laser Ranger is being reviewed by a scientific committee set up by the Science and Engineering Research Council.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Education Expenditure

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* the young mature entry index and the older mature participation index (as defined in the public expenditure White Papers Cmnd. 9702, table 3.12.10, page 194 and Cmnd. 9428, table 3.10.4 page, 150), for the latest public expenditure White Paper, Cmnd. 56 *(a)* for higher education, and *(b)* for universities only.

Mr. Walden: The information is shown in the following table:

Young Mature Entry Index and Older Mature Entry Index for initial home[1] entrants to higher education and universities in Great Britain.

Academic year beginning	Higher Education YMEI[2]	Higher Education OMPI[3]	Universities YMEI[2]	Universities OMPI[3]
Actual				
1981	7·5	0·245	2·0	0·052
1982	7·2	0·246	1·7	0·046
1983	6·9	0·261	1·5	0·048
1984	7·2	0·256	1·6	0·051
1985[4]	7·6	0·267	1·6	0·054
Projection P				
1986	7·6	0·267	1·6	0·054
1987	7·6	0·267	1·6	0·054
1988	7·6	0·267	1·6	0·054
1989	7·6	0·267	1·6	0·054
Projection Q				
1986	7·8	0·267	1·6	0·054
1987	8·0	0·268	1·6	0·055
1988	8·1	0·270	1·6	0·055
1989	8·1	0·271	1·6	0·056

[1] The term "home entrants" refers to entrants domiciled in the United Kingdom.

[2] The young mature entry index is defined as the number of initial home entrants aged 21 to 24 expressed as a percentage of those in the relevant age group who obtained one or more A-levels at age 18 but did not then enter HE.

[3] The older mature participation index is defined as the number of initial home entrants aged 25 or more expressed as a percentage of the population aged 25 to 34.

[4] Provisional.

Student Grants

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the total cost to the Exchequer of student maintenance grants in each year since 1970 expressed in the following ways *(a)* cost terms, *(b)* indexed, using 1979 as 100 (real terms), *(c)* including fees and *(d)* real terms (cash).

Mr. Walden: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the total value of all full value awards granted by local authorities to students over 19 years for the last five years for which data are available at outturn and at 1986-87 prices, and indexed using 1979 as a base; and what was the total value of mandatory awards according to the same categories.

Mr. Walden: Figures are given in the following table for all mandatory awards and other full value awards. Figures are not available by age of student, but most will be aged 19 or over.

Expenditure on mandatory and full value awards: 1979-80 to 1984-85

England and Wales

Academic years	Mandatory awards: Maintenance expenditure £ million	Mandatory awards: In 1986-87 real terms[1] £ million	Mandatory awards: Real terms indexed (1979-80 = 100)	All full value awards: Maintenance expenditure £ million	All full value awards: In 1986-87 real terms[1] £ million	All full value awards: Real terms indexed (1979-80 = 100)
1979-80	332	528	100·0	382	608	100·0
1980-81	398	548	103·4	451	621	102·0
1981-82	443	561	106·0	499	632	104·0
1982-83	472	562	106·4	531	633	104·1
1983-84	502	572	108·1	566	645	106·1
1984-85	480	523	98·9	545	594	97·7

[1] Based on the GDP deflator for academic years plus estimate for the 1986-87 deflator.

Student Grants

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to review the relative tax position of those students who receive their grants from *(a)* their parents and *(b)* local authorities; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I have been asked to reply.

In the normal way there is no difference in the relative tax position of students who receive grants either from their parents or from local authorities. Local authority maintenance grants to students are not liable to tax; nor are ordinary (non-covenanted) parental contributions to students' maintenance.

If the parent makes his contribution in the form of payments under a deed of covenant, the tax position is different for both the parent and the student. The parent normally obtains tax relief for the payments by deducting basic rate tax from them. The payments form part of the student's taxable income, and by setting his personal allowances against them he may be entitled to repayment of the tax deducted at source.

School Closures

Mr. Pendry asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to the reply, 3 November, *Official Report*, columns *302-4*, whether St. Nicholas preparatory school, Birmingham, and Newcourt Christian school, London, have since *(a)* closed, *(b)* met the terms of the notice of complaint or *(c)* had the period for compliance further extended.

Mr. Dunn: I regret to say that St. Nicholas preparatory school has failed to make the necessary improvements. The terms of the order made by the independent schools tribunal thus come into force requiring its closure by the end of the present school year. The period for compliance in the case of Newcourt Christian school runs until 31 May 1987.

University Grants Committee

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official*

Report the formulae currently used by the University Grants Committee in the allocation of resources to universities.

Mr. Walden: The University Grants Committee's resource allocation procedures were described in the committee's circular letter 22/85 of 19 November 1985, a copy of which has been placed in the Library. Supplementary information is contained in the committee's circular letters 4/86 and 6/87, in which recurrent grant to universities was announced for the academic years 1986-87 and 1987-88 respectively. Copies of these letters are also available in the Library.

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make available finance to the University Grants Committee to cover fully the cost of the recent pay and salary settlement for university staff.

Mr. Walden: As my right hon. Friend told my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Henderson) on 23 January, at column 745, the government are willing to make available additional funding for university academic pay restructuring on certain conditions. The total cost of a settlement will need to be met from that additional funding and the recurrent grant to universities to which my right hon. Friend announced substantial increases on 6 November 1986, at columns 487-96 for 1987-88 and beyond.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the percentage change in real terms, measured by the gross domestic product deflator, in the funding of each university by the University Grants Committee between 1980-81 and 1987-88, excluding those amounts representing compensation for changes in home student fees, compensation for redundancy and early retirement, changes to take account of minor capital works from the recurrent grant and changes in the level of local authority rates *(a)* including and *(b)* excluding additions made for the information technology and new blood programmes; and if he will give similar figures for the provisional distribution for 1989-90.

Mr. Walden: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Primary Schools (Expenditure)

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much was spent per pupil in primary schools in each local authority area in England for the year 1984-85; and what was the average figure for England as a whole.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information requested is given in the following table:

Net institutional expenditure per primary school pupil

	£
Barking	860
Barnet	865
Bexley	760
Brent	1,045
Bromley	780
Croydon	795
Ealing	980
Enfield	735
Haringey	1,155
Harrow	805
Havering	775
Hillingdon	840
Hounslow	920
Kingston-upon-Thames	800
Merton	800
Newham	1,045
Redbridge	770
Richmond-upon-Thames	850
Sutton	720
Waltham Forest	915
ILEA	1,255
Birmingham	700
Coventry	825
Dudley	685
Sandwell	815
Solihull	710
Walsall	780
Wolverhampton	860
Knowsley	820
Liverpool	845
St. Helens	715
Sefton	690
Wirral	690
Bolton	655
Bury	660
Manchester	840
Oldham	750
Rochdale	745
Salford	745
Stockport	740
Tameside	760
Trafford	705
Wigan	725
Barnsley	840
Doncaster	830
Rotherham	755
Sheffield	885
Bradford	785
Calderdale	755
Kirklees	720
Leeds	740
Wakefield	795
Gateshead	850
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	900
North Tyneside	835
South Tyneside	830
Sunderland	740
Isles of Scilly	1,125
Avon	735
Bedfordshire	770
Berkshire	725
Buckinghamshire	710
Cambridgeshire	680
Cheshire	710
Cleveland	750
Cornwall	670
Cumbria	735
Derbyshire	730
Devon	670
Dorset	700
Durham	730
East Sussex	705
Essex	685
Gloucestershire	695
Hampshire	685
Hereford and Worcester	680
Hertfordshire	730
Humberside	815
Isle of Wight	705
Kent	645
Lancashire	670
Leicestershire	755
Lincolnshire	665
Norfolk	710
North Yorkshire	730
Northamptonshire	705
Northumberland	720
Nottinghamshire	785

	£
Oxfordshire	765
Salop	715
Somerset	655
Staffordshire	770
Suffolk	725
Surrey	675
Warwickshire	710
West Sussex	660
Wiltshire	695
ENGLAND	760

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Postal Services

Mr. Yeo asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if when he next meets the chairman of the Post Office, he will discuss postal services in rural areas.

Mr. Butcher: I have nothing to add to the reply given to my hon. Friend on 28 January, at column *267*.

House of Fraser

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received from Mr. Tiny Rowlands of Lonrho over the last month about the takeover of House of Fraser by Al Fayed.

Mr. Howard: My right hon. Friend has received four letters from Mr. R. W. Rowlands dated 12 January, 22 January, 4 February and 12 February.

Airbus

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what sums have been provided by Her Majesty's Government to date to help finance each type of the European Airbus; what rates of interest have been paid on such sums; what repayments have been made to date; and what repayments have yet to be made and when.

Mr. Pattie: To date, Her Majesty's Government have provided launch-aid of £192·3 million to British Aerospace in respect of the Airbus A320 programme. British Aerospace funded its share of the development costs of earlier Airbus programmes wholly from its own resources. The Government's launch-aid for the A320 programme is repayable by a combination of fixed instalments and levies from aircraft sales calculated to yield a real rate of return on the Government's investment. No repayments have yet been made. The first fixed instalment is due to the Government on 1 January 1990 and levy payments are expected to commence during the 1989-90 financial year.

Takeovers (Share Purchase)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what informaion he has as to how many merchant banks have offered inducements to individuals and bodies corporate to buy the shares of companies involved in takeover battles in the knowledge that the cost would be recovered directly or indirectly from the companies whose shares had been acquired.

Mr. Howard: Specific allegations have been made in only one case. These allegations are being investigated.

Insider Trading

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of the cases of insider trading referred to his Department for investigation since 1983 together with his findings, indicating which of these cases have been or will be re-opened to make use of the powers which are now available to him.

Mr. Howard: No. Those involved in the investigation of a possible offence are entitled not to be identified if no prosecution ensues. I could not identify cases where further investigations were being undertaken without jeopardising the prospects of establishing whether a contravention occurred.

Trade Statistics

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the volume of United Kingdom manufactured exports and imports in 1972, 1979 and 1986, respectively, taking 1972 as 100.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is as follows:

The volume of United Kingdom exports and imports of manufactures taking 1972 as 100 is given below for years 1972 and 1979 to 1986 1972 = 100 OTS basis, seasonally adjusted

	Export volume	*Import volume*
1972	100·0	100·0
1979	133·4	180·6
1980	134·8	179·2
1981	126·8	175·6
1982	129·1	192·3
1983	128·7	217·7
1984	140·7	240·3
1985	149·3	252·2
1986	153·6	266·7

National Girobank

Mr. Allan Roberts asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the future of National Girobank; and if there are any plans for privatisation in the future.

Mr. Pattie: I am confident that, to the benefit of its customers and staff, Girobank can build upon its encouraging record in recent years of prudent and profitable growth. As we have made clear, the Post Office, including its wholly-owned subsidiary Girobank plc, is not excluded from our policy of transferring activities from the public to the private sector wherever it is practicable and commercially sensible to do so. There are, however, no plans to privatise the Post Office or any of its constituent businesses in the present parliament.

United States (Distribution Licensing)

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what consideration he has given to the implications for United Kingdom responsibilities under European Community law of proposals for United States investigations to conduct internal audits of United Kingdom high technology companies for examining compliance with United States re-export controls; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: I do not consider that there are any such implications.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the audit requirements of the United States inspectors he now proposes to admit to the United Kingdom to examine the books of United Kingdom computer companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The United States authorities have requested that United States officials should be allowed to check the procedures which United Kingdom firms choosing to use the distribution licence system agree to put in place under it.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received from the United Kingdom audit profession in relation to the United States-sponsored internal control programme for high technology companies in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: None.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he has taken to ensure that United States investigators conducting internal audits of United Kingdom defence contractors in the high technology field are not given access to information whose disclosure would prejudice national security or breach commerical confidentiality.

Mr. Alan Clark: Any visit, if allowed, would take place only on conditions which safeguarded national security and commercial confidentiality.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry under what circumstances he is prepared to allow United States auditors to examine the accounts of British high technology companies in order to investigate compliance with United States re-export controls.

Mr. Channon: The Government have made clear their rejection of extra-territorial re-export controls on many occasions. We also reject the principle of audit visits designed to monitor compliance with such controls, since any controlled goods imported into this country are subject to our own stringent export licensing requirements.

A number of interested trade associations have made it clear that some of their members see advantage in approved foreign consignee status under the distribution licence system, and would not wish the Government to take any action which would deny them those benefits. Even so, I shall not normally allow audit visits except where I am satisfied that a company wishes to maintain approved foreign consignee status and does not therefore wish the Government to reject an application for a visit.

In such cases, a number of further restrictions would apply. Where United Kingdom companies refuse visits they should not, on that account, be subject to penalties other than the loss of approved consignee status under the scheme. No information gained as a result of a visit should be used as the basis for United States proceedings or administrative action in relation to activities carried on in the United Kingdom. Finally, all visits would be governed by the guidelines already applicable to the conduct of foreign officials while in this country. In any case, I would not expect more than a handful of visits a year.

WALES

Hospital Charges

Mr. Anderson asked the Secretary of State for Wales what sums were collected by each of the Welsh area health authorities from non-United Kingdom residents for hospital charges in 1985 and 1986.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information requested is as follows:

Income from Overseas Visitors	*1984-85* £	*1985-86* £
Clwyd	1,693	5,239
East Dyfed	1,400	6,582
Gwent	6,327	19,660
Gwynedd	2,907	11,992
Mid Glamorgan	605	9
Pembrokeshire	1,281	3,794
Powys	546	443
South Glamorgan	29,849	17,625
West Glamorgan	4,431	(104)
WALES	49,039	65,240

Source: The annual accounts of health authorities.

Note:

The table shows income under section 121 of the National Health Service Act 1977 but does not include income received under sections 65 and 66 of the Act from overseas residents treated as private patients.

The table shows net income; the negative figure for West Glamorgan is a result of the cancellation of a bill raised in an earlier year.

Cereals

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to introduce quotas on cereals in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: No.

Annual Review of Agriculture

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* the corresponding tables for Wales to those published in the annual review of agriculture 1987, Cm. 67, as tables 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 20, 21, 22 and 26.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards [*pursuant to his answer*, 12 February 1987, c. *295-6*]: The information available is given in the tables. Certain elements are not available for Wales.

TABLE 1
Agriculture in the Welsh Economy

	Average of 1975-77	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986[p]
Agriculture's contribution to gross domestic product[1]						
£ million	209	380	329	406	390	†
Per cent.	4·3	3·9	3·1	3·7	3·1	†
Agricultural gross fixed capital formation[2]						
£ million	†	113	123	133	136	119
Manpower engaged in agriculture[3] ('000)	55	56	54	56	57	56
Percentage of total civilian manpower engaged in all occupations[3]	4·9	5·4	5·3	5·4	5·6	5·5

[1] Excluding appreciation in value of work in progress and stocks. Gross domestic product at factor cost, current prices. Estimates of regional GDP are based mainly on income data. Data necessary to measure GDP in expenditure or output terms are not available at regional level.
[2] All fixed assets (excluding work in progress and stocks).
[3] Manpower engaged in agriculture between 1982 and 1986 comprises the numbers of self-employed, employers and employees in employment (excluding farmers' wives/husbands) given in the June censuses conducted by the Welsh Office. Estimates for labour on minor holdings (previously called statistically insignificant holdings) in Wales, not surveyed in the respective June censuses, are included.
[p] Provisional.
† Not available.

TABLE 3
Crop areas and livestock numbers in Wales[a]
At June of each year

	Average of 1975-77	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
A. Crop areas (hectares)						
Total area	1,680,240	1,684,532	1,690,097	1,690,891	1,693,902	1,696,579
of which:						
Wheat	5,686	8,631	8,860	10,792	10,081	10,451
Barley	56,910	55,384	50,714	49,460	50,418	50,567
Oats	13,153	5,934	5,587	5,606	5,861	4,675
Mixed corn	3,817	1,083	900	822	845	643
Rye	61	87	144	154	146	177
Total cereals[b]	79,627	71,119	66,205	66,834	67,351	66,513
Potatoes	6,073	5,835	5,935	5,804	5,736	5,431
Sugar beet	203	122	142	172	195	152
Oilseed rape	207	213	345	364	535	621
Hops	1	3	2	2	5	4
Vegetables grown in the open[3]	1,082	1,096	937	879	898	959
Orchard fruit	163	124	117	102	99	95
Soft fruit[4]	173	277	331	313	292	285
Ornamentals[5]	293	226	202	173	180	189
Total horticulture[3,6]	1,753	1,758	1,630	1,510	1,509	1,572
Total tillage[7]	109,978	97,208	91,649	90,191	90,907	89,903
All grasses under five years old	166,712	166,189	167,227	164,465	173,775	168,947
Total arable	276,690	263,397	258,876	254,656	264,682	258,850
All grasses five years old and over	775,222	845,031	861,589	866,026	854,086	870,776
Rough grazing						
Sole rights	413,139	350,408	344,237	345,319	347,987	339,480
Common (estimated)	181,020	181,020	181,020	181,265	181,265	181,265
Other land (including woodland)[8]	34,230	44,676	44,376	43,625	45,882	46,208
B. Livestock numbers ('000 head)						
Total cattle and calves	1,450·1	1,432·3	1,434·6	1,445·6	1,398·3	1,390·1
of which:						
Dairy cows	346·5	364·9	377·0	378·6	364·5	364·8
Beef cows	209·7	183·3	179·4	178·2	174·6	173·0
Heifers in-calf	81·6	83·6	83·1	81·9	84·0	96·2
Total sheep and lambs	6,924·5	8,416·3	8,721·2	9,000·8	9,129·7	9,446·1
of which:						
Ewes	2,820·3	3,342·2	3,477·4	3,591·0	3,643·1	3,724·7
Shearlings	665·0	783·8	792·9	801·2	815·3	836·8
Total pigs	153·0	139·3	147·3	128·4	125·8	129·5
of which:						
Sows in-pig and other sows for breeding	17·2	14·4	15·0	12·9	13·8	13·8
Gilts in pig	3·1	3·1	2·4	2·1	2·3	2·3

	Average of 1975-77	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Total fowl[9]	7,807·3	7,705·5	5,799·5	6,486·6	6,747·9	6,700·6
of which:						
Table fowl (including broilers)	4,580·2	4,415·2	3,574·3	4,236·6	4,538·5	4,574·1
Laying fowl	1,973·1	2,054·3	1,391·6	1,319·7	1,195·4	1,228·5
Growing pullets	872·7	771·0	480·4	413·8	475·5	411·2

[1] For all years the figures relate to all known agricultural holdings including minor holdings.
[2] Cereals for threshing excluding maize.
[3] Following a change of definition in England and Wales in 1986 "Vegetables grown in the open" and "Total horticulture" now include "Peas for harvesting dry and for human consumption". Data for 1984 and 1985 reflect this change.
[4] Includes small area of soft fruit grown under orchard trees.
[5] Hardy nursery stock, bulbs and flowers.
[6] Most of the difference between total horticultural area and the sum of individual sectors is made up by glasshouse area.
[7] Includes area of other crops and bare fallow not shown in the table.
[8] Other land comprises farm roads, yards, buildings (excluding glasshouses), ponds and derelict land and gardens.
[9] Because of changes in coverage of poultry holdings, data for 1983 and subsequent years cannot be directly compared with data for earlier years.

TABLE 4
Numbers and size of holdings and enterprises[1]

	At June 1983	At June 1986[3]
Crops and grass area		
Number of holdings ('000) with:		
0·1 to 19·9 hectares	12,084	11,861
20 to 49·9 hectares	9,663	9,312
50 to 99·9 hectares	5,193	5,355
100 hectares and over	1,951	2,088
Total	28,891	28,616
Average crops and grass area per holding (hectares)[2]	38·2	39·0
Percentage of total crops and grass area on holdings with		
0·1 to 19·9 hectares	10·1	9·6
100 hectares and over	28·7	29·6
Total cereals (excluding maize)		
Number of holdings ('000) with:		
0·1 to 19·9 hectares	4,911	4,527
20 to 49·9 hectares	647	628
50 hectares and over	200	225
Total	5,758	5,380
Average area (hectares)	11·5	12·3
Percentage of total grass area on holdings with 50 hectares and over of cereals	26·6	29·2
Potatoes		
Number of holdings ('000) with:		
0·1 to 9·9 hectares	2,718	2,187
10 to 19·9 hectares	89	102
20 hectares and over	55	40
Total	2,862	2,329
Average area (hectares)	2·0	2·3
Percentage of total potato area on holdings with 20 hectares and over on potatoes	27·8	24·3
Sugar beet		
Number of holdings ('000) with:		
0·1 to 9·9 hectares	4	11
10 to 19·9 hectares	4	6
20 hectares and over	3	2
Total	11	19
Average area (hectares)	12·9	8·0
Percentage of total sugar beet area on holdings with 20 hectares and over of sugar beet	55·6	38·2
Rape grown for oilseed		
Number of holdings ('000) with:		
0·1 to 19·9 hectares	33	45
20 to 49·9 hectares	5	11
50 hectares and over	—	—
Total	38	56
Average area (hectares)	9·0	10·4
Percentage of total oil seed rape area on holdings with 50 acres or more of oilseed	—	—
Dairy cows		
Number of holdings ('000) with:		
1 to 29	3,266	2,684
30 to 59	2,822	2,701
60 and over	2,172	2,155
Total	8,260	7,540
Average size of herd	45·5	48·3
Percentage of total dairy cows in herds of 60 and over	55·0	56·7
Beef cows		
Number of holdings ('000) with:		
1 to 19	8,140	7,830
20 to 49	2,597	2,516
50 and over	566	577
Total	11,303	10,923
Average size of herd	15·6	15·6
Percentage of total beef cows in herds of 50 and over	23·6	24·5
Breeding sheep		
Number of holdings ('000) with:		
1 to 99	6,178	6,234
100 to 499	7,448	7,591
500 and over	2,409	2,680
Total	16,035	16,505
Average size of flock	263·4	273·6

	At June 1985	At June 1986[3]
Percentage of total breeding sheep in flocks of 500 and over	50·7	52·8
Breeding pigs		
Number of holdings ('000) with:		
1 to 19	1,368	1,032
20 to 49	96	96
50 and over	73	64
Total	1,537	1,192
Average size of herd	10·6	13·1
Percentage of total breeding pigs in herds of 50 and over	50·2	55·9
Fattening pigs		
Number of holdings ('000) with:		
1 to 199	1,131	867
200 to 999	82	70
1,000 and over	11	11
Total	1,224	948
Average size of herd	67·3	76·8
Percentage of total fattening pigs in herds of 1,000 and over	28·5	34·2
Laying fowls		
Number of holdings ('000) with:		
1 to 4,999	6,934	6,166
5,000 to 19,999	43	30
20,000 and over	10	12
Total	6,987	6,208
Average size of flock	195·2	195·9
Percentage of total laying flocks of 20,000 and over	47·9	51·9
Broilers		
Number of holdings ('000) with:		
1 to 9,999	46	62
10,000 to 99,999	26	27
100,000 and over	4	6
Total	76	95
Average size of flock	46,771·5	47,832·1
Percentage of total broilers in flocks of 100,000 and over	71·3	71·4

[1] The figures in this table do not include minor holdings.
[2] The average size of holdings based on total area was:
1985 49·7 hectares of which 76·9 per cent. was under crops and grass.
1986 50·0 hectares of which 78·0 per cent. was under crops and grass.
[3] Provisional.

TABLE 5

Number of persons engaged in agriculture[1]

At June of each year

	Average of 1985 to 1977	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Workers						
Regular whole-time:						
Hired:						
Male	4,960	4,406	4,252	3,934	3,735	3,476
Female	564	432	384	311	308	278
Family:						
Male	4,314	2,737	2,727	2,507	2,745	2,855
Female	1,908	659	640	596	580	599
All male	9,274	7,143	6,979	6,441	6,480	6,331
All female	2,472	1,091	1,024	907	888	877
TOTAL	11,746	8,234	8,003	7,348	7,368	7,208
Regular part-time:						
Hired:						
Male	1,158	1,259	1,260	1,254	1,380	1,492
Female	638	479	455	432	431	480
Family:						
Male	1,511	1,269	1,300	1,179	1,360	1,399
Female	1,230	622	603	602	641	688
All male	2,669	2,528	2,560	2,433	2,740	2,891
All female	1,868	1,101	1,058	1,034	1,072	1,168
TOTAL	4,537	3,629	3,618	3,467	3,812	4,059
Seasonal or casual:						
All male	5,456	7,038	6,736	7,191	7,537	7,329
All female	1,736	1,990	1,903	1,679	1,683	1,473
TOTAL	7,192	9,028	8,639	8,870	9,220	8,802
Salaried managers	320	272	273	267	272	294
TOTAL EMPLOYED	23,795	21,163	20,533	19,952	20,672	20,363

	Average of 1985 to 1977	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Farmers, partners and directors:						
Whole-time	23,925	24,617	24,168	25,359	24,461	24,403
Part-time	6,778	9,991	9,016	10,298	11,852	11,340
TOTAL	30,703	34,608	33,184	35,657	36,313	35,743
TOTAL	54,498	55,771	53,737	55,609	56,985	56,106
Wives/husbands of farmers, partners and directors (engaged in farm work)	. .	10,707	11,605	11,199	11,459	11,571

[1] The figures are based on returns in the Agricultural Census. Wives/husbands of farmers, partners and directors engaged in farm work were collected for the first time in 1977. Figures for earlier years exclude this category and this is thought to explain the decrease in the number of regular whole-time and part-time female workers from 1977 onwards. Figures include estimates for all minor holdings in Wales not surveyed in the respective June censuses (see footnote *(a)* to table 3).

TABLE 6
Estimated average yields of crops and livestock products in Wales

	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986[1]
Crops (tonnes/hectare)					
Wheat	6·19	4·91	6·96	5·97	6·58
Barley	4·62	4·13	5·15	4·49	4·60
Oats	4·03	3·87	4·89	4·19	4·06
Potatoes	28·84	29·25	29·59	30·09	28·94
Turnips and swedes	54·92	46·36	39·40	47·60	n/a
Mangolds and fodder beet	84·67	51·11	65·70	78·10	n/a
Kale, cabbage, savoy and kohl rabi for stockfeeding	43·01	42·87	38·20	38·80	n/a
Maize for threshing and stockfeeding	41·42	42·80	43·80	51·90	n/a
Milk (litres/cow)	4,588	4,703	4,646	4,547	4,618
Eggs (No./bird)	250·5	253·8	256·1	258·1	257·9

[1] Forecast.
n/a not available.

TABLE 7
Compound feeding stuffs[1]
Figures in thousands of tonnes

	1982	1983	1984	1985
Cattle	202·9	226·7	163·8	145·5
Calf	11·4	12·7	10·2	13·4
Pig	8·9	13·0	8·4	8·6
Poultry	76·7	82·4	89·6	86·8
Sheep and lamb food and any other compounds and concentrates	10·0	13·7	19·6	19·4
Total compounds, balancers and concentrates	309·9	348·5	291·6	273·5

[1] Production by compounders and millers in Wales.

TABLE 20
Gross Capital Formation, Wales

£ million

	Average of 1975 to 1977	1982	1983	1984	1985	[3]1986
Current prices						
Plant, machinery and vehicles	..	42	43	47	45	46
Buildings and works	..	71	80	86	91	73
Gross fixed capital formation[1]	..	113	123	133	136	119
Breeding livestock capital formation	..	8	4	−3	4	5
Stock appreciation	..	..	..	..	..	..
Value of physical increase[2]	..	4	−2	−3	−7	−10
Increase in book value of stocks and work in progress	..	..	..	..	..	..
Constant 1980 prices						
Plant, machinery and vehicles	..	38	38	39	35	..
Buildings and works	..	68	77	83	87	..
Gross fixed capital formation	..	106	115	122	122	..
Breeding livestock capital formation	..	..	..	..	..	..
Value of physical increase in stocks and work in progress	..	..	..	..	..	..

[1] The figures represent gross expenditure before crediting any grants which reduce the cost to the owner or occupier. Annual charges in the form of depreciation on fixed capital are made for these items in calculating farming income.
[2] See Table 22 (item 10 minus item 15).
[3] Forecast.
.. = Not available.

TABLE 21
Average Earnings and Hours of Agricultural Workers in Wales[1]

	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*[5]1986*
Earnings £ per week[2]	97·72	106·65	111·07	124·16	132·4
Hours per week[3]	45·1	44·7	44·9	45·9	45·2
Earnings index in real terms (1980 = 100)[4]	100	104	103	109	112

[1] For all hired regular whole-time male workers 20 years old and over.
[2] Earnings include pay for statutory holidays and payments in kind which are valued at rates set down by the Agricultural Wages Boards. Payments in kind comprise houses (the principal benefit in England and Wales valued at £1·50 per week since 20 January 1976), board and lodgings and milk.
[3] All hours worked and statutory holidays.
[4] Deflated by the Retail Price Index.
[5] Forecast.

TABLE 22
Output, Input and Farming Income for Wales

Current Prices £ thousands

	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*[13]
Farm Crops:					
Wheat	4,793	4,161	5,656	5,491	5,878
Barley	7,696	5,520	9,222	8,524	7,900
Oats	642	441	1,288	794	444
Other Cereals[1]	—	—	—	—	—
Total Cereals	13,131	10,122	16,166	14,809	14,222
Potatoes	13,742	15,203	12,998	9,846	12,563
Sugar beet	152	153	219	232	135
Hops	14	8	10	15	13
Hay	512	644	650	673	777
Grass and clover seed	31	37	48	82	87
Oilseed rape	188	261	355	440	609
Fodder and Other Minor Crops[2]	145	158	128	139	128
1. Total Farm Crops	27,915	26,586	30,574	26,236	28,534
Horticulture:					
Vegetables (including mushrooms)	6,018	7,167	7,447	7,797	8,715
Fruit	1,496	2,264	2,101	2,290	2,531
Flowers, bulbs and hardy stock	4,529	4,545	4,531	4,537	4,820
Other[3]	—	—	—	—	—
2. Total Horticulture	12,043	13,976	14,079	14,624	16,066
Livestock:					
Fat cattle and calves	122,021	126,180	127,645	132,595	122,391
Fat sheep and lambs	102,745	110,800	123,472	124,656	131,492
Fat pigs	17,551	17,679	20,142	17,712	18,650
Poultry[12]	26,772	26,989	32,453	37,881	36,588
Store cattle and calves	62,486	63,825	68,996	67,946	69,166
Store sheep	6,082	6,820	8,501	8,260	8,432
Other Livestock[4]	500	500	541	568	574
3. Total Livestock	338,157	352,793	381,723	389,618	387,293
Livestock Products:					
Milk and Milk Products (farm manufacture only)	244,458	268,438	253,199	246,102	260,536
Eggs	14,921	12,808	14,105	12,639	12,432
Clip Wool	6,562	7,196	7,196	7,400	8,200
Other livestock products[5]	1,739	1,763	2,847	3,408	3,785
4. Total Livestock Products	267,680	290,205	277,347	269,549	284,953
5. Total Own Account Capital Formation	17,988	17,472	10,752	14,546	13,782
6. TOTAL OUTPUT (1+2+3+4+5)	663,783	701,032	714,475	711,573	730,628
7. Total Compensation Payments etc	5,523	5,118	26,897	27,225	31,388
8. Total Production Grants	28,534	29,380	28,706	30,990	34,162
9. TOTAL RECEIPTS (6+7+8)	697,840	735,530	770,078	769,788	796,178

	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986[13]
Work-in-Progress and output stocks					
Value of physical change in:					
Work-in-Progress	+3,594	−1,775	−5,086	−6,264	−9,671
Output Stock	+ 281	+ 330	+2,346	−1,260	− 189
10. Total Value of Physical Change	+3,875	−1,445	−2,740	−7,524	−9,860
11. Gross Output (9+10)	701,715	734,085	767,338	762,264	786,318
Intermediate Output:					
Feed	11,110	8,567	13,610	12,356	11,780
Seed	884	667	1,148	998	882
12. Total Intermediate Output[6]	11,994	9,234	14,758	13,354	12,662
13. Final Output (11−12)	689,721	724,851	752,580	748,910	773,656
Input					
Feeding stuffs	167,028	193,829	175,054	178,632	179,113
Seeds	7,895	8,309	8,226	6,992	6,153
Livestock (imported and inter-farm expenses)	15,304	15,479	16,340	16,195	18,985
Fertilisers and Lime (before Subsidy)	53,383	63,074	69,129	69,820	66,189
Total Machinery	55,486	62,931	65,018	69,656	68,665
Total Farm Maintenance	14,744	16,655	17,478	18,674	19,506
Miscellaneous Expenditure[7]	70,751	80,459	87,713	93,275	98,600
14. Total Expenditure	384,591	440,736	438,958	453,244	457,211
15. Total Stock Change due to Volume	+ 50	+ 945	− 86	− 35	+ 33
16. Gross Input (14+15)	384,641	441,681	438,872	453,209	457,244
17. Net Input (16−12)	372,647	432,447	424,114	439,855	444,582
18. Gross Product (11−16) or (13−17)	317,074	292,404	328,466	309,055	329,074
Depreciation:					
Plant, Machinery and Vehicles	52,700	54,600	55,600	58,000	55,100
Building and Works	36,100	37,500	40,000	42,700	40,565
19. Total Depreciation	88,800	92,100	95,600	100,700	95,665
20. Net Product (18−19)	228,274	200,304	232,866	208,355	233,409
Comprising:					
Labour—Hired	39,173	41,923	40,146	41,479	43,677
Labour—Family and partners[8]	64,468	68,441	77,987	87,166	91,786
Interest[9]	39,790	42,550	37,680	50,432	46,704
Net Rent[10]	5,987	6,956	7,401	8,401	8,394
Farming Income[11]	78,856	40,434	69,652	20,877	42,848

[1] Mixed corn, maize and rye.
[2] Straw and other minor crops.
[3] Flower and vegetable seed and other minor products.
[4] Horses, rabbits and game.
[5] Goat milk and other minor livestock products.
[6] Sales included in Output but subsequently repurchased and so reappearing in Input.
[7] Electricity, veterinary expenses, pesticides, rates and other miscellaneous costs.
[8] Regular family workers together with directors and non-principal partners.
[9] On commercial debt for current farming purposes; ie excluding interest on land purchase.
[10] Landlord's expenses are included within farm maintenance, miscellaneous expenditure and depreciation on buildings and works. Net rent is the rent paid on tenanted land less these landlord's expenses and the benefit value of dwellings on that land.
[11] The income of farmers and their spouses after providing for depreciation and payment of interest and excluding stock appreciation.
[12] Including poultry exports.
[13] Forecast.

TABLE 26
Index numbers of average net farm income per farm in Wales
By main types of farming (1982-83 = 100)
A. Current prices

	Dairy	*LFA cattle and sheep*	*Lowland cattle and sheep*
1977-78	60	73	65
1978-79	74	90	71
1979-80	58	47	47
1980-81	65	74	80
1981-82	84	122	107
1982-83	100	100	100
1983-84	85	111	102
1984-85	61	135	41
1985-86	86	143	95
[1]1986-87	93	148	33

[1] Forecast.

B. Real terms

	Dairy	*LFA cattle and sheep*	*Lowland cattle and sheep*
1977-78	105	127	114
1978-79	120	146	115
1979-80	81	66	65
1980-81	78	89	96
1981-82	90	131	115
1982-83	100	100	100
1983-84	81	106	97
1984-85	56	123	37
1985-86	72	119	79
[1]1986-87	77	123	28

[1] Forecast.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

County Courts

Ms. Clare Short asked the Attorney-General how many sitting days each county court judge has sat in the courts to try on indictment a scheduled offence in each of the years 1984, 1985 and 1986.

The Solicitor-General: The number of days sat by each of the county court judges trying scheduled offences in Northern Ireland on indictment in the years 1984, 1985 and 1986 is shown in the following table:

Judge	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Judge One	8	14	15
Judge Two	5	—	—
Judge Three	8	1	18
Judge Four	11	10	11
Judge Five	16	4	19
Judge Six	26	13	20
Judge Seven	15	21	3
Judge Eight	3	18	1
Judge Nine	25	36	21
Judge Ten	21	24	68
Judge Eleven	3	1	8
Judge Twelve	—	—	20
Judge Thirteen	—	19	9

Crown Prosecution Service

Mr. Lawrence asked the Attorney-General if he will make an assessment of the working to date of the Crown Prosecution Service.

The Solicitor-General: The Crown Prosecution Service became operational in all areas by 1 October 1986 after submitting to a very tight timetable. The staff in the crown prosecution service have worked extremely hard to build a completely new Department from scratch, and have since continued the task of consolidation and improvement. The foundations have been laid for a very professional, dedicated and efficient service. Neverthless, much remains to be done. In particular, more professional staff must be recruited in London. Inevitably, the new service will need some time to achieve everywhere the efficiency that has been reached in most parts in England and Wales already. I am confident that with the co-operation of all the other agencies involved in the prosecution process this goal can be attained.

"Warfare as a Whole"

Mr. McNamara asked the Attorney-General when he became aware that General Sir Frank Kitson intended to publish a book entitled "Warfare as a Whole".

The Solicitor-General: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him today by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces.

Industrial Tribunals

Mr. Terry Davis asked the Attorney-General which part-time chairmen of industrial tribunals in Birmingham are barristers.

The Solicitor-General: Mr. D. B. Akehurst and Mr. G. R. Sneath.

EMPLOYMENT

Community Programme

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General how many places have been removed from the planned community programme targets in each region, Scotland and Wales; and what is the saving as a result.

Mr. Lee: The planned maximum allocation for the community programme in 1986-87, together with the provisional allocation of places for 1987-88 for each region, Scotland and Wales are given in the table.

Community programme expenditure is planned to be some £1,120 million in 1987-88 compared with £1,038 in 1986-87.

The net saving to the Exchequer is estimated to be about £15 million.

The programme will continue to provide opportunities for some 300,000 people in 1987-88.

	November 1986 profile	*Proposed 1987-88 allocation*	*Reduction*
South-East	14,299	13,050	1,249
London	17,970	17,330	640
South-West	17,000	15,790	1,210
West Midlands	29,153	28,640	513
East Midlands	19,669	18,830	839
Yorkshire and Humberside	29,150	28,430	720
North-West	39,078	38,440	638
Northern	29,800	29,240	560
Wales	22,440	21,340	1,100
Scotland	31,400	30,910	490
National Charities Initiative	1,000	1,000	—

	November 1986 profile	Proposed 1987-88 allocation	Reduction
TOTAL	250,959	243,000	7,959

Dr. Godman asked the Paymaster General if he will list in the *Official Report* the percentage of community places under the Manpower Services Commission's community programme granted to religious bodies in each of the past five years; and if he will break this figure down by way of religious denomination.

Mr. Lee: It is not possible to give a breakdown of places in the form requested from records held centrally and this could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, the table shows at March 1984, the earliest date for which detailed statistics are available, and for each subsequent year, the total number of authorised community programme places, the number of those places sponsored by religious bodies and the percentage this represents of the total.

Position at	Total number of authorised places	Number of places sponsored by religious bodies	Per cent.
15 March 1984	130,312	1,771	1·3
27 March 1985	150,272	7,471	5·0
14 March 1986	219,722	12,426	5·6
24 November 1986[1]	272,980	16,489	6·0

[1] The latest date for which statistics are available.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Murphy asked the Paymaster General if he will indicate the number of jobs that have been created in the Welwyn Hatfield constituency since May 1979; and what are the comparable figures for *(a)* Hertfordshire and *(b)* the country as a whole.

Mr. Lee: The precise information requested is not available. Net changes in employment can be provided but, for areas smaller than regions, only for those dates when censuses of employment are taken.

The table gives the latest available set of comparable figures from the June 1978 and the September 1981 census of employment. No census was taken in 1979 and small area results from the September 1984 census are not yet available. Because constituency figures are not available for years prior to 1981, figures are given for the area covered by the jobcentre areas of Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield with corresponds most closely to the Welwyn Hatfield constituency.

Employees in employment

(thousands)

	June 1978	September 1981	Net change 1978 to 1981 Absolute	Per cent.
Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield	52·0	51·9	−0·2	−0·3
Hertfordshire	408·9	412·4	+3·5	+0·9
Great Britain	22,273·0	21,309·0	−964·0	−4·3

Between censuses, employment estimates are based on small scale sample inquiries which cannot produce reliable results for areas smaller than the standard economic regions.

These estimates show that at March 1983 there were 20,402,000 employees employed in Great Britain compared with 21,169,000 in September 1986 (the latest date for which figures are available); a net increase of 767,000. Between the same dates the employed labour force (that is including the self employed and Her Majesty's forces) increased by 1,317,000.

Mr. Forth asked the Paymaster General if he will give the unemployment figure for the constituency of Mid-Worcestershire for January 1986, June 1983 and June 1979.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. On 9 January 1986 the number of unemployed claimants in the Mid-Worcestershire parliamentary constituency was 6,491. The corresponding number on 9 June 1983 was 6,608. This comparison is affected by seasonal factors and by the 1983 Budget provisions for certain older men. Unemployment statistics for parliamentary constituencies are derived from the ward-based system and are available only from June 1983.

Mr. Winnick asked the Paymaster General (1) what is the number of those over 45 years now unemployed in *(a)* the west midlands region, *(b)* the black country area of the west midlands and *(c)* the Walsall travel-to-work area and the respective figures for May 1979 and the percentage change in each category;

(2) if he will state the number of those aged 20 years and under who are unemployed in *(a)* the west midlands region, *(b)* the black country area of the west midlands and *(c)* the Walsall travel-to-work area and the figures for May 1979 and the percentage change in each category.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. The table gives the latest figures of unemployed claimants aged under 20 years (not available aged 20 years) an over 45 years in the areas requested on 8 January 1987. For April 1979 (not available for May) the figures given are the numbers of unemployed registrants in those age groups in the west midlands region and the travel-to-work areas of the Black Country and Walsall as defined in 1978. The percentage changes have not been calculated because the figures for 1979 and 1987 are not comparable, due to changes in the method of collection and compilation of the data. A list of these changes was published on page 422 of the October 1986 *Employment Gazette*. Additional

discontinuities occured in local area statistics with the introduction of ward-based statistics and the revision to boundaries of travel-to-work areas.

	Aged under 20 years	*Aged over 45 years*
Unemployed registrants—April 1979		
West Midlands region	18,305	37,673
Black Country[1]	4,517	9,462
Walsall travel-to-work area (as defined in 1978)	1,239	2,901
Unemployed claimants—January 1987		
West Midlands region	49,710	92,390
Black Country[1]	14,072	26,957
Walsall travel-to-work area (as defined in 1984)	3,805	7,054

[1] Comprising the Dudley and Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton travel-to-work areas as defined at that time.

Mr. Winnick asked the Paymaster General what is the number and percentage of those who had been unemployed for 12 months and more in the *(a)* west midlands region, *(b)* in the black country of the west midlands and *(c)* in the Walsall travel-to-work area in May 1979 and now.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. The table shows the numbers of claimants who had been unemployed for over 12 months in the areas requested, and the percentage of the total unemployed they represent, on 8 January 1987. Comparisons of unemployment over the period requested are difficult to make because of changes in the method of collection and compilation of the data. However, the table also shows the numbers in April 1979 (not available for May) of unemployed registrants who had been unemployed for over 12 months in the west midlands region and the travel-to-work areas, as defined in 1978, of the Black Country and Walsall.

Claimants—unemployed for over 12 Months, January 1987

	Number	*Percentage of total unemployed*
West Midlands region	158,086	46·3 per cent.
Black Country[1]	48,290	49·9 per cent.
Walsall travel-to-work area (as defined in 1984)	12,566	48·3 per cent.
Registrants—unemployed for over 12 Months, April 1979		
West Midlands region	34,154	28·6 per cent.
Black Country[1]	8,164	27·9 per cent.
Walsall travel-to-work area (as defined in 1978)	2,495	28·8 per cent.

[1] Comprising the Dudley and Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton travel-to-work areas as defined at that time.

Mr. Winnick asked the Paymaster General how many were employed full-time in manufacturing in *(a)* the west midlands region, *(b)* the black country area of the west midlands and *(c)* the Walsall travel-to-work area in May 1979 and now; and if he will give the percentage change.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Separate statistics are not available for full-time employees in the manufacturing industries in the west midlands region. In June 1979 (figures are not available for May) 985,000 people were employed in manufacturing industries in the west midlands whereas in September 1986 (the latest date for which figures are available) the equivalent figure was 707,000 a change of minus 28 per cent. This is not necessarily an exact measure of any loss of jobs overall, as the increasing tendency of manufacturing companies to put out their services to sub-contractors means that jobs previously classified as being in manufacturing industries are now classified as being in service industries.

Employment statistics for local areas such as the Black Country and Walsall are available only for those dates when censuses of employment are taken and the most recent are for September 1981. No census was taken in 1979 and small area results from the September 1984 census are not yet available.

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Paymaster General if he will give for each year from 1979 to 1986 inclusive the percentage unemployment rate for each age group from 17 years to 60 years plus in *(a)* the Barnsley travel-to-work area and *(b)* Barnsley, West and Penistone constituency area using (i) the same formula for calculation as used in 1979 and (ii) as at present calculated.

Mr. Lee: The information requested is not available. Unemployment rates by age are calculated only at the national level because regular reliable estimates of the age of the working population are available only at that level.

Project Proposals

Dr. Godman asked the Paymaster General if he will list in the *Official Report* the project proposals accepted by area manpower boards of the Manpower Services Commission which were submitted by religious bodies; and if he will list these bodies in terms of religious denomination and award made.

Mr. Lee: In November 1986, the latest date for which information is available, there were 12,517 community programme projects, of which 667 were sponsored by churches.

The more detailed information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Portsmouth Jobcentre (Leaflets)

Mr. Hancock asked the Paymaster General why no Action for Jobs leaflets were available in the Portsmouth jobcentre on Friday 13 February.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am advised by the Manpower Services Commission, which controls the jobcentres, that the "Action for Jobs" booklets were on display and available in the public area of the Portsmouth jobcentre on Friday 13 February.

Steps have been taken to make the display more prominent.

Literacy and Numeracy

Mr. Ashdown asked the Paymaster General, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Yeovil on 11 February, *Official Report*, column *254*, concerning a review of literacy and numeracy skills being undertaken by the Manpower Services Commission, when this review was started; what is the extent of this review; what resources are being used in this review; when he expects results of this review to be available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: In December 1986 a working group was established within the Manpower Services Commission to

examine the extent of illiteracy among long-term unemployed people and how the commission might help to remedy it. The group's members included officials involved in managing employment and training programmes relevant to identifying and tackling literacy and numeracy problems, together with observers from my Department and the Department of Education and Science. A report of the group's findings is currently being considered by my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Employment and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

Community Schemes and YTS

Mr. Winnick asked the Paymaster General, if he will give the total number of those on all kinds of community schemes and YTS in *(a)* the west midlands region, *(b)* the black country area of the west midlands and *(c)* the Walsall travel-to-work area.

Mr. Lee: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Restart

Mr. Fisher asked the Paymaster General (1) what is the latest estimate of the cost of the advertising campaign for the restart scheme *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in Stoke-on-Trent;

(2) what estimates he has of the proportion of advertising for the restart scheme in relation to *(a)* each employer who makes a positive commitment to take part in the scheme and *(b)* each employee participating in the scheme;

(3) how many employers have made a positive commitment to take part in the restart scheme.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Fisher asked the Paymaster General what is the latest estimate of the cost of the restart scheme *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in Stoke-on-Trent.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We estimate that in 1986-87 the restart programme will cost about £53 million. The estimated cost in Stoke-on-Trent which was one of the pilot areas is £260,000.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Fresh Start

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the responses that he received from prison officers following his Department's letter to officers seeking to explain his Department's policy on fresh start.

Mr. Mellor: Correspondence between management and staff in the prison service is normally treated as confidential.

Lincoln Prison (Hepatitis)

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases of hepatitis A and B have been notified at Lincoln prison.

Mr. Mellor: In the last statistical year (ended 31 March 1986) eight cases of hepatitis B (five of them acute cases) were reported to the Prison Department. No case of hepatitis A was reported.

Forensic Pathology

Mr. Leigh asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has received the report prepared by the working party on forensic pathology.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. I understand that the report is at an advanced stage of preparation and that the working party hopes to complete it shortly.

Mr. Leigh asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, when he considers the report of the working party on forensic pathology, he will take into account archaeological techniques now available to investigators of modern buried evidence.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Yes. I understand that the working party has received evidence suggesting that in the investigation of suspicious deaths consideration should be given to the use of a range of specialists, including archaeologists, where appropriate.

Prison Population

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the yearly change since January 1980 in the prison population of England and Wales.

Mr. Mellor: The information is given in the table. The prison population can vary considerably from month to month; annual averages are given each year in Prison Statistics, England and Wales (table 1.4 of the latest issue for 1985, Cmnd. 9903).

Population of Prison Department establishments in England and Wales on 31 December, 1979-86

Number of persons[1]

Year	*Population*	*Change*	
		Number	*percentage*
1979	41,152		
1980	[1]36,757	−4,395	−11
1981	40,789	4,032	11
1982	42,187	1,398	3
1983	41,310	−877	−2
1984	41,443	133	—
1985	44,419	2,976	7
1986	46,277	1,858	4

[1] Because of the industrial action by the Prison Officers Association which affected the last three months of 1980, the population on 31 December was lower than otherwise; 760 prisoners were held in police cells.

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what response he expects to make to the views expressed this week by prison governors of the problems they face in running prisons in England and Wales due to the increase of the prison population; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The Government are already responding to the adverse conditions in some establishments to which the increase in the prison population has contributed. We are undertaking the largest prison building programme this century which, together with the programme of

redevelopment and refurbishment at existing establishments, has already produced 3,500 new places since June 1983 and will provide a total of 17,200 new places by 1995.

The Government have also taken steps to encourage the use of non-custodial disposals by the courts by strengthening the range of alternatives to custody for less serious offenders. Action to reduce the remand population includes the provision of 140 new or replacement court rooms and plans for 270 more, and plans for a scheme of time limits on the period spent on remand in custody.

Expenditure on the Prison Service has increased by 36 per cent. in real terms since May 1979. Staff numbers have increased by 19 per cent. over the same period. To make more effective use of these increased resources, improvements in management systems have been introduced. More recently, a package of proposals known as "Fresh Start" has been drawn up which is designed to produce more efficient and flexible working practices in prisons. The purpose of these efficiency measures is to release further resources for improving prison regimes.

Vincent Jones Hickey

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the inquiry into the conviction of Vincent Jones Hickey at present detained at Her Majesty's prison Parkhurst to be completed.

Mr. Mellor: We expect to receive shortly the report of the inquiry which has been conducted by officers of the Warwickshire constabulary into the case of Vincent Hickey and others. My right hon. Friend will then decide as quickly as possible whether there are grounds for action.

Police Car Chases

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what response he has given to the representations presented to him in January in relation to the problem of people killed and seriously injured in police high-speed car chases.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have emphasised that both the Government and the police service deeply regret the occurrence of serious accidents involving police vehicles, and have explained that the police face a genuine dilemma when dealing with drivers who refuse to stop. I have also set out the measures taken by the police service to minimise the risk of accidents taking place in such circumstances.

"The Secret Society"

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, pursuant to his statement of 3 February, *Official Report*, column 823, he has anything to add in respect of Ministerial knowledge of the steps which the police were proposing to take in the course of their investigation in connection with the BBC series "The Secret Society".

Mr. Hurd: No. I refer the hon. Member to the answers given to him by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland on 11 and 16 February, *Official Report*, c. *268* and *457*.

Mr. Nguyen Von Hai

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when visas to enable the family of Mr. Nguyen Von Hai to join him in the United Kingdom from a refugee camp in Indonesia as promised by his Minister of State in a letter dated 24 October 1985 to the hon. Member for Woolwich, reference N149420/2, were issued; what was the reason for the delay; and what action he has taken to prevent repetition of such delay.

Mr. Waddington: I wrote to the hon. Member on 18 February about this matter.

Metropolitan Police

Dr. Twinn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what will be the total cost to public funds of the Metropolitan police in 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: As police authority for the metropolis, I have approved estimates which provide for net revenue expenditure by the Metropolitan police of £929·081 million in 1987-88, an increase of 9 per cent. on the cash limit of £851·800 million which I set for 1986-87.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

BBC Scotland (Police Raid)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland pursuant to his answer of 16 February, how frequently the Lord Advocate expects to receive reports from the procurator fiscal on the police search of BBC premises in Glasgow.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: My noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate expects to receive reports from the procurator fiscal on the police search of the BBC premises in Glasgow as and when the procurator fiscal has any relevant information or developments to report. The frequency of such reports cannot be predicted.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland why the assistant procurator fiscal sought a warrant for the search of BBC premises in Glasgow concerning material for the whole series of programmes, "The Secret Society", and not just material for the programme on the Zircon satellite project as referred to in the *New Statesman* on 23 January.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the written question by the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) on 17 February 1987 at column *546* of the *Official Report* for 18 February 1987.

National Security

Mr. Dalyell asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland by what method he assesses the extent of the damage to national security for the purposes of determining the need for police inquiries.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I refer to my reply to the hon. Member's written question on 16 February at column *447*.

Publications (Official Secrets Act)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland what steps the Lord Advocate takes to ascertain, in advance of publication, whether a book or article is to be published which may constitute a breach of the Official Secrets Act, or in relation to which the public interest may require him to seek an interdict.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: It is not the practice of the Lord Advocate to disclose the details of operational matters relating to inquiries into potential or suspected breaches of the law.

ENERGY

Coal Imports

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Secretary of State for Energy what was the total amount of coal imported by country of origin for each quarter of 1986.

Mr. David Hunt: Quarterly imports of coal during 1986 were as follows:

Country	*Quantity '000 Tonnes* Q1	Q2	Q3
Australia	942	867	1,283
United States	763	950	970
Poland	265	424	232
West Germany	120	142	97
Canada	121	100	119
South Africa	155	79	57
Netherlands	56	87	9
Belgium	43	18	43
Bulgaria	—	47	56
Colombia	35	4	16
Others	45	48	22
TOTAL	2,545	2,767	2,903

Note:
1. Data for the fourth quarter are not yet available.
2. Due to rounding the sum of the constituent items may not add to the totals.

Source: Her Majesty's Customs and Excise.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Emergency Provisions

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many persons were detained under the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Acts 1973 to 1978 in the second half of 1986;

(2) how many persons were detained under the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978; and, of those persons, how many were charged with scheduled offences and how many were charged with non-scheduled offences in 1986.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 February 1987, *Official Report*, c. *463*]: In 1986 there were 903 arrests by the Royal Ulster Constabulary and 71 by members of the armed forces under the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978 (including 409 and 49 respectively in the second half of the year). Some of those arrested by members of the armed forces would be recorded in the Royal Ulster Constabulary figures if they were subsequently handed over to the police.

Of the arrests carried out by the Royal Ulster Constabulary, 159 were subsequently charged with scheduled offences and 11 with non-scheduled offences.

Prison Population

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the number of prisoners in Northern Ireland jails at 31 December 1986, detailing the numbers by sex, in prison and in young offenders centres separately.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 February 1987, *Official Report*, c. *464*]: On 31 December 1986, there were 1,765 inmates in Northern Ireland prison establishments, of whom 1,736 were men and 29 were women; 1,575 were in prisons and 190 in young offenders centres.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the size of the present prison population in Northern Ireland divided into terrorist offenders and other offenders categorised by age and by sex in the following groups: under 18 years old, 18 to 25 years, 25 to 30 years, 40 to 50 years, 50 to 60 years and over 60 years, giving a breakdown of the length of sentence being served by each age group under the following headings: (i) up to three months, (ii) over three months and up to six months, (iii) over six months and under 12 months, (iv) over 12 months and under 18 months, (v) over 18 months and up to four years, (vi) over four years and up to eight years, (vii) over eight years and (viii) life, together with a breakdown, divided into terrorist offenders and other offenders under the same sentence headings, of the numbers as a percentage of the total prison population.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 February 1987, c. *465*]: On 25 January 1987 (the latest date for which figures in such detail are available) there were 1,604 sentenced inmates in Northern Ireland prison establishments. This includes those detained in young offenders centres. The requested breakdowns of the population are set out in the table.

Breakdown by sex, age and length of sentence

Sentence length	*Offence type*	*Up to 18*	*18 up to 25*	*25 up to 30*	*30 up to 40*	*40 up to 50*	*50 up to 60*	*Over 60*
Males								
Up to three months	Scheduled	0	9	3	1	1	0	0
	Non-scheduled	0	18	7	7	5	0	0
Three to six months	Scheduled	0	11	2	1	0	0	0
	Non-scheduled	3	38	17	2	2	4	0
Six to 12 months	Scheduled	1	30	11	3	1	1	0
	Non-scheduled	5	69	14	18	5	1	1

Sentence length	Offence type	Up to 18	18 up to 25	25 up to 30	30 up to 40	40 up to 50	50 up to 60	Over 60
12 to 18 months	Scheduled	4	21	2	3	0	0	0
	Non-scheduled	9	14	5	9	6	1	0
18 months to four years	Scheduled	7	119	37	20	6	0	0
	Non-scheduled	4	57	26	32	15	2	0
Four to eight years	Scheduled	0	63	38	20	5	1	0
	Non-scheduled	0	17	10	10	9	1	0
More than eight years	Scheduled	0	60	98	98	13	0	0
	Non-scheduled	0	3	3	1	1	2	0
Life[1]	Scheduled	0	21	107	253	43	6	2
	Non-scheduled	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
TOTAL		33	550	380	478	113	19	3
Females								
Up to three months	Scheduled	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Non-scheduled	0	2	0	0	1	1	0
Three to six months	Scheduled	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Non-scheduled	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
Six to 12 months	Scheduled	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Non-scheduled	0	1	1	1	0	0	0
12 to 18 months	Scheduled	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Non-scheduled	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
18 months to four years	Scheduled	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
	Non-scheduled	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
Four to eight years	Scheduled	0	3	2	0	0	0	0
	Non-scheduled	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
More than eight years	Scheduled	0	1	1	2	0	0	0
	Non-scheduled	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Life[1]	Scheduled	0	1	3	0	2	0	0
	Non-scheduled	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL		0	8	9	5	4	2	0

[1] Including those detained at the pleasure of the Secretary of State.

Scheduled and non-scheduled offenders, by sentence length, as a percentage of the total sentenced prison population

Sentence length	Scheduled offences	Non-scheduled offences
Less than three months	0·9	2·5
Three to six months	0·9	4·2
Six to 12 months	2·9	7·2
12 to 18 months	1·9	2·8
18 months to four years	11·9	8·6
Four to eight years	8·2	2·9
Over eight years	17·0	0·6
Life (including SOSP)	27·3	0·1
TOTAL	71·0	29·0

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in how many cases in each year, since the introduction of the review procedure for life sentenced prisoners, on which the board had recommended that a release date be given, he has rejected the review board's recommendation.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 February 1987, c. *547*]: There have been no such cases.

DEFENCE

United Kingdom-USA (Trade Ratios)

Mr. Warren asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the total value of purchases from the United States of America and by the United States of America from the United Kingdom under the memorandum of understanding in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It has not been the practice of successive Governments to publish detailed figures for our defence trade with individual countries. The annual defence balance of trade ratios agreed with the United states for each of the last five years, United States: United Kingdom are:

	Ratios
1980-81	2·0:1
1981-82	2·0:1
1982-83	1·9:1
1983-84	2·1:1
1984-85	1·9:1

Royal Navy (Drugs)

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) when he expects the inquiry into allegations of drug taking and drug smuggling among Royal Navy seamen to be completed; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what evidence led to the inquiry into allegations of drug taking and drug smuggling among Royal Navy seamen.

Mr. Freeman: The investigation into the recent press allegations of drug taking and drug smuggling by Royal Navy ratings was set in hand solely on the basis of those allegations. It is expected to be completed shortly.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many inquiries have been held into allegations of drug taking and drug smuggling among Royal Navy personnel since 1980.

Mr. Freeman: The number of drugs investigations by the special investigation squad since 1980 is 279.

Haslar Hospital

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence why the chief medical officer in Haslar hospital released rosters for catering staffs to Gardner Merchant to assist with its planning.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The rosters were released in order that Gardner Merchant would be more fully aware of the details of the service to be provided.

RAF Binbrook

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) when he expects to make a decision on the future of RAF Binbrook;

(2) when the Lightning aircraft at RAF Binbrook will be moved to an alternative base.

Mr. Stanley: I cannot at present add to what was said on this matter by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces in the debate on the Royal Air Force on 2 February, at columns 1118-19.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many civilians are currently employed at RAF Binbrook.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: On 1 January 1987 the number was 109.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has received any recent representations from the civilian work force at RAF Binbrook.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to visit RAF Binbrook to speak to the civilian work force.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has no plans to visit RAF Binbrook.

"Warfare as a Whole"

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he or any officials in his Department have read a draft copy of General Sir Frank Kitson's book entitled, "Warfare as a Whole".

Mr. Stanley: Officials in this Department are currently examining it.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he became aware that General Sir Frank Kitson had written a book entitled, "Warfare as a Whole".

Mr. Stanley: The Ministry of Defence first became aware of the book on 13 February.

Zircon Project

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Defence under which Supply Estimate vote and sub-head expenditure on the Zircon project has been incurred.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not the practice to publish such information.

Overseas Accommodation

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on the living accommodation of troops in Gibraltar; what safety and sanitary inspections have been carried out on military accommodation on the rock over the last 15 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: A new build of 45 married quarters are under construction, and it is planned to modernise some of the single soldiers' living accommodation. There is also a programme to refurbish the older married accommodation. Once this is complete we shall be able to dispense with mobile homes and the poorer stock of old married quarters situated mostly in the town. Safety and hygiene inspections have been carried out at least annually as a matter of routine.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of British troops serving overseas are living in mobile homes.

Mr. Freeman: There are 43 service families living in mobile homes overseas. These are all in Gibraltar. This represents about 0·05 per cent. of the total number of British troops overseas.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many British troops stationed in Gibraltar are living in mobile homes; what were the dates of construction of these homes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: There are presently 43 Army and Navy families living in mobile homes in Gibraltar. These homes were produced in 1971 and 1976 and although well maintained they are approaching the end of their economic life. It is intended in the next two years to phase out these and the poorer old quarters situated mostly in the town.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Alternative Land Use

12. **Mr. Bill Walker** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to introduce a new regime to assist Highland farmers in Scotland and other parts of the United Kingdom to develop alternative land use.

Mr. Gummer: In his statement to the House last week my right hon. Friend announced an imaginative package on alternative land use which will assist farmers in the

Highlands and elsewhere. This includes a new farm woodlands scheme, some expansion of the forestry programme, further environmentally sensitive areas, aid for diversification on farms, including marketing, and more emphasis on novel crops and livestock in our research and development and advisory programmes.

19. **Mr. Nicholas Winterton** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he intends to announce his proposals on alternative land uses.

28. **Mr. Kenneth Carlisle** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to encourage diversification in the use of land.

43. **Mr. Cash** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to extend the scope of the agricultural improvement scheme to offer grants for purposes ancillary to agriculture.

46. **Mr. Lord** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is now in a position to announce his plans on farm forestry.

58. **Mr. Gale** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is now in a position to announce his plans on alternative land use and the rural economy.

Mr. Gummer: I refer my hon. Friends to the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Minister on 9 February and to the written reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) on the same day at columns *70-2*.

Farm Land (Taxation)

13. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received urging the introduction of an additional tax at a single national rate on the improved value of farm land.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have received a number of representations pointing out that this proposal in the Liberal policy document would in fact mean the rating of agricultural land.

Livestock Farms

14. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on *(a)* the average size of beef livestock farms in Britain and *(b)* comparable livestock farms in the rest of the European Economic Community.

Mr. Gummer: The average size of beef herd in the United Kingdom in 1985 was 17 cows, compared with 11 in the European Community as a whole.

Cereals

15. **Mr. Andy Stewart** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last discussed cereals surpluses with the President of the National Farmers' Union.

Mr. Gummer: My right hon. Friend and I frequently discuss all aspects of agriculture with the President of the National Farmers' Union.

31. **Mr. Forth** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on *(a)* the average size of cereal farms in Britain and *(b)* comparable cereal farms in the rest of the European Economic Community.

Mr. Gummer: The average area of cereals (excluding maize) grown on farms in Great Britain and the United Kingdom in June 1986 were 46·7 hectares and 43·6 hectares respectively.

Comparable information for other countries in the European Community is available only for 1983 and is shown in the table:

Average area of cereals (excluding maize) on holdings in 1983

	Area
West Germany	8·3
France	13·0
Italy	3·7
Netherlands	9·4
Belgium	6·9
Luxembourg	9·4
United Kingdom	41·2
Ireland	6·7
Denmark	18·6
Greece	2·9
EC 10	7·9

44. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further representations he has received on compulsory quotas on cereals.

Mr. Gummer: I continue to receive suggestions that the problems of over-production in the cereals sector could best be dealt with by the imposition of compulsory quotas on all cereal growers. I remain opposed to this approach because quotas would stifle initiative, strike hardest at those farmers who are most efficient at growing cereals, who are largely to be found in this country, and would pose enormous administrative problems.

59. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received regarding surpluses of cereal products in the European Economic Community.

Mr. Gummer: I continue to receive representations from many different sources.

Fishing Industry (Light Dues)

16. **Dr. Godman** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received from the fishing industry about the implications for the fishing fleet of the proposed extension to large fishing vessels of liability to light dues.

Mr. Gummer: We have received no representations on this subject, which is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. My right hon. Friend is considering proposals under which light dues from fishing vessels would go towards costs of the Racal Decca Navigator system which is so important to the industry.

Mr. Stott asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimates he has made of the impact on the British fishing industry of the changes in light dues.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman).

Fishing Fleet

17. **Mr. Ernie Ross** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the current performance and structure of the British fishing fleet.

Mr. Gummer: The United Kingdom fishing industry is in better shape than it has been for a number of years, largely due to the success of the common fisheries policy. The value of landings again increased last year, in spite of a lower catch, and demand for fish is buoyant.

EC (Two-tier Pricing)

18. **Mr. Bellingham** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the impact on British cereal growers of a two-tier pricing policy.

Mr. Gummer: A two tier price policy of the sort advocated by the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) would inevitably discriminate against producers in this country. The average United Kingdom cereal farmer would suffer a £6,000 per annum cut in revenue.

48. **Sir Peter Mills** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the effect on the net income of the average-sized beef livestock farm in the United Kingdom of a policy of two-tier pricing of beef.

49. **Sir Hector Monro** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the impact on British beef producers of a two-tier pricing system.

Mr. Gummer: A two-tier pricing system in the beef sector would presumably operate so that after a certain fixed number of cattle had been sold per holding, further sales would be on the basis of a reduced level of support. An approach of this kind involving a beef premium with a 50 beast headage limit per farm was proposed last year by the European Commission. We rejected it since it would have discriminated severely against United Kingdom producers. Instead, we secured agreement to the continuation of our beef variable premium scheme for a further two years.

54. **Mr. Latham** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make a statement on the prospects for beef producers in the light of the recent European Community agreement on dealing with surplus commodities.

Mr. Gummer: The EC beef support arrangements have been resulting in the production of huge surpluses which could be disposed of only at very substantial cost. The beef regime is now estimated to have cost the Community some 3·5 billion ecu last year (about £2·4 billion) and reform was essential.

The changes agreed by the Council in December ensure that the support regime takes greater account of market realities. The emphasis on intervention buying is reduced leaving support through premia to play a more important role. Some cut back in support was essential but we secured arrangements which protect the interests of our producers. The beef variable premium continues for 2 years and now applies at a higher rate as a result of the 6 per cent. devaluation of the green rate for beef. We have scope to increase the suckler cow premium from £24·74 to over £33 per head. The impact of the changed intervention arrangements is reduced in the United Kingdom by the green pound devaluation and by the adjustment to steer buying-in prices which will follow their harmonisation with those for young bulls. The support level will fall around £36 in the United Kingdom compared with over £40 on French steers and over £80 on French bulls. In Italy and Germany the drop is around £115 to £120 a beast.

The Agriculture Council recognise that the reforms agreed for the milk sector could result in cow culling which would put pressure on the beef market. Accordingly 435 mecu have been set aside for use by the Commission to provide extra support for the beef sector as necessary. The Commission has also accepted that it must be ready to institute emergency support measures if there is undue market weakness.

These arrangements give beef producers firm guidance for the next two years and set the industry on a path towards a better balance between supply and demand.

55. **Mr. Nicholas Baker** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the effect on the net income of the average-sized cereal farm in the United Kingdom of a policy of two-tier pricing of cereals.

57. **Mr. Key** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received on the implications of adopting a policy in the European Economic Community of two-tier pricing.

70. **Mr. Neil Hamilton** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the effect on British agriculture of a system of two-tier pricing.

Mr. Gummer: I refer my hon. Friends to the answer I gave today to the Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Howell).

56. **Mr. Cockeram** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the effect on the net income of the average-sized sheep farm in the United Kingdom of a policy of two-tier pricing of sheepmeat.

Mr. Gummer: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie).

Milk Quotas

20. **Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what impact the temporary suspension of quota with compensation scheme will have on the income of the average United Kingdom dairy producer.

76. **Mr. McLoughlin** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what impact the temporary suspension of quota with compensation scheme will have on the income of the average United Kingdom dairy producer.

Mr. Gummer: The level of compensation proposed, 6·5p per litre, compares favourably with the average profitability of dairy production, which is some 3 to 4p per litre in England and Wales. So while individual farmers'

circumstances differ widely, the compensation will clearly be very valuable to producers in dealing with the cuts in quota.

32. **Mr. Knox** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a further statement about the operation of milk quotas.

Mr. Gummer: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave him on 22 January.

33. **Mr. Strang** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received from the industry about the effect of the planned cut in milk quotas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I have received a number of representations concerning the effect of the December Council agreement on the milk sector. The agreement aims to reduce milk production across the Community by 9·5 per cent. through a mixture of direct cuts in quota, temporary suspension of quota and a tightening up of the quota system. Generous compensation arrangements have been introduced to help producers adapt to the lower level of production required.

Fertilisers

21. **Mr. Wrotch** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will now make it his policy to place restrictions on the use of nitrogen-based fertilisers in farming in Britain.

Mr. Donald Thompson: No. However, my Department will continue to publish recommendations on fertiliser use, and to encourage farmers to assess the requirements of their crops accurately.

Food Aid

22. **Mr. Burt** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received from the charities in charge of giving away free food to the needy.

65. **Mr. Steen** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received from the charities in charge of giving away free food to the needy.

Mr. Gummer: I have received views both directly and through my Department on a number of matters relating to the efficient and speedy distribution of this food and I intend to continue to keep closely in touch with the admirable work of the charitable organisations concerned.

35. **Mr. Page** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which charities have taken up the offer to disburse free food to the needy; and if he will report on progress to date.

41. **Mr. Whitfield** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which charities have taken up the offer to disburse free food to the needy; and if he will report on progress to date.

Mr. Gummer: I gave the list of charitable organisations in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) on 29 January. As to progress so far, I refer my hon. Friends to the reply I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon).

62. **Mr. Tom Cox** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of the costs of the total surplus food aid so far allocated will be taken up by the costs of preparation of the food in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Gummer: Of the United Kingdom costs covered by Community funds, I estimate that about 6 per cent. of those for butter are accounted for by re-packaging costs. For beef, the costs of preparation are for the charitable organisations themselves. No preparation is required for milk or cheese.

63. **Mr. Home Robertson** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many people in Britain are entitled to receive food under the current European Economic Community scheme; and how many have actually received any.

Mr. Gummer: The guidance I have given to charitable organisations on the coverage of the most needy group is in general terms, and I am not in a position to estimate how many people are covered by it. Nor does my Department maintain central records of the number of individuals who have received food.

78. **Mr. James Lamond** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the directors of the charities charged with distributing European Economic Community food aid in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Gummer: On 22 January last.

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list those commodities available in the United Kingdom for distribution under the European Economic Community food aid scheme which are not being distributed; and if he will give the reasons therefor.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 February 1987, c. *483*]: The information is as follows:

Commodity	
Sugar from intervention stocks	There are no intervention stocks in the United Kingdom for these products and supplies would thus need to be transported from elsewhere in the Community. The cost would be disproportionate to likely demand.
Flour milled from intervention stocks of bread-making wheat	
Olive oil from intervention stocks	
Full milk yoghurt from the open market	We are concentrating on butter, cheese and milk, and not yoghurt, as these are the dairy products most useful to needy people.

Mr. A. J. Beith asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has any plans to make surplus butter available at reduced cost to retirement pensioners not in receipt of non-contributory social security benefit.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 February 1987, c. *482*]: Butter is currently available to charities for distribution to the most needy under Community arrangements which apply until the end of March. There are no plans to introduce the social butter scheme in the United Kingdom.

Food Additives

23. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to publish information and guidance to members of the public on food additives and labelling.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My hon. Friend will by now have heard that I launched a new booklet "Food Additives: The Balanced Approach" last week. The booklet explains all about food additives and how they are controlled. It has been welcomed by supermarket chains up and down the country. We have so far, in just over a week, had requests for more than 1·4 million copies of the accompanying leaflet. As for food labelling, our earlier publication "Look at the Label" first issued in 1982 has also been a great success. We are currently considering a revision of this booklet to incorporate guidance for consumers on the nutrition information which is appearing on food labels.

Common Agricultural Policy

24. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his latest estimate of Britain's net contribution to the common agricultural policy; and if he will estimate the contribution for 1987-88.

Mr. Gummer: The United Kingdom contributes to the EC budget as a whole, rather than to individual items of expenditure, at approximately 20 per cent. abated by the Fontainebleau mechanism.

The 1987 draft budget provides for expenditure of 24,152 mecu (£15,500 million) under the common agricultural policy. The forecast of United Kingdom receipts from the CAP in 1987-88 is £1,399 million.

45. **Dr. Roger Thomas** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he intends providing any means of financial support for beef and dairy farmers as a consequence of quota and price cuts proposed for the common agricultural policy.

Mr. Gummer: The reforms of the beef and dairy regimes agreed at the December Agriculture council, which I announced to the House on 17 December, were urgently needed to take account of the realities of the market for these products, and so assist the development of a better balance of supply and demand.

In the beef sector, the variable premium has been maintained; there is scope to increase the suckler cow premium and the sector has also benefitted from the 6 per cent. devaluation of the green pound also agreed in December. Further, the commission has built 435 mecu into their calculation of expenditure on beef over the next two years to allow for extra support for this sector following the decisions on milk.

In the dairy sector the necessary cuts in production have been accompanied by increased compensation for the Community outgoers scheme; generous rates of compensation were also agreed for the temporary suspension of quota.

Horticulture

25. **Mr. Coachman** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the value of horticultural output from commercial holdings in 1985 and 1986.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe).

Fishing Industry

26. **Mr. Austin Mitchell** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals he has for compensating English fishermen for the drop in their catches and earnings consequent on the new 1987 catch quotas as agreed with the European Economic Community.

Mr. Gummer: It is not the Government's policy to compensate fishermen for the effect of natural fluctuations in the abundance of fish stocks or of measures taken to conserve stocks for the industry's own benefit.

Sheep

27. **Mr. Michael Forsyth** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on *(a)* the average size of sheep farms in Britain and *(b)* comparable sheep farms in the rest of the European Economic Community.

Mr. Gummer: The most recent information on the size of sheep farms in the European Economic Community shows that in 1983 the average flock size in the United Kingdom was 397 sheep and in the Community of Ten was 89 sheep.

North Sea Fishing

29. **Mr. Henderson** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the operation of the technical conservation regulation and its impact on North sea fishing.

Mr. Gummer: The Community's technical conservation regulation continues to play a vital role in ensuring an improved pattern of exploitation of fish stocks, particularly by reducing the mortality of juvenile fish. Nowhere is this more important than in the North Sea, given the present state of a number of the whitefish stocks there.

Agricultural Support

30. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will invite the next meeting of the Agricultural Council to consider plans to repatriate agricultural support to individual member states; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: No.

Set-aside Policies

34. **Mr. Haynes** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on any set-aside policies agreed by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Gummer: In December the Council of Ministers agreed in principle that aid should be offered to divert land out of commodities in surplus. Discussions are continuing on the detailed measures necessary to implement this agreement in principle.

Food Prices

36. **Mr. Franks** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will state, for 1986, the rise in the retail prices index and the rise in the price of food during the same period.

60. **Mr. Tim Smith** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will state, for 1986, the rise in the retail prices index and the rise in the price of food during the same period.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The increase in the retail prices index over the 12-month period to December 1986 was 3·7 per cent. The comparable increase for the food component of the retail prices index was 3·1 per cent.

37. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the European Commission's price proposals for 1987.

Mr. Gummer: We are studying the Commission's price proposals. In the course of negotiations on the proposals, I shall be seeking to make further progress on the reform of regimes in surplus or which involve excessive budgetary cost, and we shall be seeking an outcome which spreads the burden of reform fairly among all member states and does not discriminate against the United Kingdom.

Pesticides and Herbicides

38. **Miss Maynard** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many pesticides and herbicides are presently cleared for use in agriculture in Britain by his Department; and whether any are presently being considered for clearance.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Pesticide approvals in Great Britain are, under the control of Pesticides Regulations 1986 granted by Ministers acting jointly. The term "pesticide" includes herbicides as well as fungicides, insecticides, rodenticides and other control agents. Currently there are some 3,400 products holding MAFF registration numbers and a further 3,000 applications awaiting approval. The vast majority of these relate to changes or extensions of use of existing approved products. Of the first total some 50 per cent. are approved for use in agriculture.

Agricultural Holdings (Rates)

39. **Sir Paul Hawkins** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the impact on the net income of the average beef producer in the United Kingdom if rates were imposed on farm buildings and land.

40. **Mr. Jackson** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the impact on the net income of the average sheep producer in the United Kingdom if rates were imposed on farm buildings and land.

71. **Mr. Marland** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the impact on the net income of the average cereal farm in the United Kingdom if rates were imposed on farm buildings and land.

Mr. Gummer: I refer my hon. Friends to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) earlier today.

Farmers (Marketing Aid)

42. **Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will aid rural diversification by giving help and encouragement to farmers to market more of their own produce.

Mr. Gummer: The measures to encourage diversification, which my right hon. Friend announced on 9 February, will include help with marketing the products of ancillary farming businesses such as food processing. This will be in addition to the encouragement that is already given to farmers to market their primary produce through agricultural co-operatives, by the advice available from Food From Britain and grants under the agricultural and horticultural co-operation scheme.

Farmers (Capital Grants)

47. **Mr. Hargreaves** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received seeking the restriction of capital grants to farmers in disadvantaged areas, young farmers and in respect of environmentally beneficial practices only.

74. **Mr. Neale** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received seeking the restriction of capital grants to farmers in disadvantaged areas, young farmers and in respect of environmentally beneficial practices only.

Mr. Donald Thompson: We regularly receive suggestions on what items should be included in our capital grant schemes. In addition we consulted widely on the coverage of the agriculture improvement scheme introduced in 1985. This offers the highest rates of grant to less-favoured areas and to environmentally beneficial improvements. It also introduced special premiums for young farmers.

Agricultural Policy

50. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to publish a policy document for agriculture in 1987.

Mr. Gummer: As my right hon. Friend indicated in his statement on 9 February and in the answer he gave on that day to my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) he, together with my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland, for Wales and for Northern Ireland, intends to do so next month.

Fishing Industry (Policy)

51. **Mr. Pollock** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the new 10-year structural policy for the fishing industry recently agreed in the European Economic Community.

Mr. Gummer: The new Council Regulation, (EEC) 4028/86, provides the basis for the development and rationalisation of the Community's fishing fleet over the next 10 years and was one of a number of important measures adopted under the United Kingdom presidency.

Fisheries Departments are now discussing with the industry the measures to be introduced to cover the first five years of the structural policy, 1987-1991, with a particular view towards modernising the fleet and adjusting capacity. I recognise that the industry is anxious to know about the new schemes and I shall be making an announcement as soon as possible.

53. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received about levels of national grant assistance to the fishing industry following agreement of the European Economic Community structural policy.

Mr. Gummer: I have received a number of representations about the levels of national grant for the construction and modernisation of fishing vessels which might be made available this year to complement assistance from Community funds. I hope shortly to be able to consult the main industry organisations on a possible new grant scheme.

EC (Food Sales)

52. **Mr. Cunliffe** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what will be the estimated cost to the United Kingdom of the projected sale of surplus butter to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Mr. Gummer: No sales have been finalised so far this year, although some are expected soon. The cost to the Community is the difference between the buying-in price and the release price, which is set by competitive tender, offset by savings in storage costs. The United Kingdom contributes to the Community budget as a whole, rather than to individual items, at a rate of about 20 per cent. abated by the Fontainebleau mechanism.

Green Pound

61. **Mr. Colin Shepherd** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the prevailing differential between the green pound and the pound sterling.

Mr. Gummer: The difference between sterling's green rates and market rate against the ecu — the real monetary gap — is expressed as a percentage of the former.

The real monetary gaps applying in the United Kingdom in the week beginning 16 February are 24·746 per cent. for beef, 26·942 per cent. for pigmeat, 31·138 per cent. for dairy products and 32·944 per cent. for crops.

Animals (Exports)

64. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will introduce legislation to extend to the export of cattle and sheep the regulations controlling the export of horses for slaughter.

Mr. Donald Thompson: No. The measures which restrict the export of horses to those intended for breeding, riding or reacreational use, by imposing a system of minimum values, would not be appropriate to the export of cattle and sheep.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

66. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will consider increasing the number of, and funding for, environmentally sensitive areas.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My right hon. Friend announced on 9 February that a further £7 million per year will be made available for new ESAs from early 1988.

Farm Animal Welfare Visits

67. **Mr. Spencer** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what programme his Department has for farm animal welfare visits.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Amongst their other duties staff from the state veterinary service visit farms to assess the degree of compliance with the welfare codes. The frequency and pattern of inspections is decided locally. Other ADAS staff are also asked to keep an eye on welfare when visiting farms.

Farm Animal Council (Animal Husbandry)

68. **Mr. Greg Knight** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to implement the new Farm Animal Welfare Council proposals on animal husbandry.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I take it that my hon. Friend is referring to the Council's interim statement on welfare regulations published in November 1986.

We are obtaining the views of interested organisations on this and will be looking at them carefully before announcing our response.

Fishing Industry (Catch)

69. **Sir Michael Shaw** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the impact of the total allowable catch for 1987 on the fishing industry.

Mr. Gummer: Because of the number of factors involved, it is not possible to make a detailed assessment of the impact on the United Kingdom fishing industry of the changes in the TAC's and quotas agreed for 1987. While opportunities for the whitefish stocks in the North sea are reduced, the effect of this is likely to be offset to some extent by an increase in the unit value of landings, as a consequence of reduced supplies. Quotas for the main pelagic fisheries and for a number of other whitefish stocks have been increased.

Farm Products (Prices)

72. **Mr. Deakins** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the annual change in the prices paid to United Kingdom farmers for cereals, milk and beef between 1980-81 and the current marketing year.

Mr. Gummer: Information on the prices received at the first point of sale (on a calendar year basis) is set out in the annual review of agriculture White Papers for 1987 and earlier years, copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

Toxic Residues

73. **Mr. Gareth Wardell** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further plans he has to monitor, review and report on toxic residues in agricultural produce in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Department conducts a continuing programme of monitoring for toxic residues in agricultural produce under the auspices of the steering group on food surveillance. The programmes of its relevant working parties are regularly reviewed to take

into account current issues. The results of this programme are assessed by independent advisory committees and regularly published in reports of the steering group on food surveillance.

Rhubarb

73. **Mr. O'Brien** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to monitor the import of rhubarb into the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: We have no specific plans to do so. However, my Department regularly monitors developments in markets for horticultural crops, including rhubarb.

Soft Fruit

77. **Mr. Moynihan** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the performance of the soft fruit sector of the horticultural industry in 1986.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Overall the soft fruit sector performed well in 1986, despite extremes of weather leading to a variable quality of some raspberry and strawberry crops. The value of output of soft fruit was about 8 per cent. higher than in previous years. It is particularly gratifying that growers of soft fruit for processing experienced a considerably better season than in most recent years.

Hormone Legislation

Mr. Dalyell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on his latest discussions with European Economic Community Governments about policy on hormone legislation.

Mr. Donald Thompson: EC directives 81/602 EEC and 85/649 EEC require member states to prohibit the use of hormones in farm animals for all but a small number of specified uses. At its meeting in January the committee for veterinary medicinal products began its discussions under article 3 of 85/649 EEC on a list of products and conditions of use which may be permitted.

SCOTLAND

Regional Aid

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the total annual amount of regional aid paid to firms in Dundee in each year from 1976 to 1986; and if he will also express each of these figures at 1986 prices.

Mr. Lang: Total payments of regional selective assistance under section 7 of the Industrial Development Act 1982 to firms in Dundee city are set out in the table below:

Year	*Payments at current prices (£ million)*	*Payments at constant (1986) prices (£ million)*
1976-77	0·7	1·7
1977-78	0·9	1·9
1978-79	0·4	0·8
1979-80	0·9	1·5
1980-81	1·4	2·0
1981-82	1·5	1·9
1982-83	1·2	1·4
1983-84	2·2	2·4
1984-85	2·4	2·6
1985-86	2·0	2·1

Comprehensive information on payments of regional development grant on a local authority basis is not available. However, payments of RDG exceeding £25,000 to firms in the Dundee employment local office area are set out in the table below:

Year	*Payments at current prices (£ million)*	*Payments at constant (1986) prices (£ million)*
1976-77	0·7	1·7
1977-78	0·5	1·1
1978-79	0·9	1·7
1979-80	1·2	2·0
1980-81	1·4	1·9
1981-82	1·8	2·3
1982-83	3·4	4·0
1983-84	4·3	4·9
1984-85	5·4	5·9
1985-86	3·6	3·7

Job Clubs

Sir Russell Johnston asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will list the jobcentres in Scotland, indicating which of them operate the job club facility, which is promoted in the pamphlet, PL782, "Action for Jobs".

Mr. Lang: The information requested — as at 6 February 1987—is set out in the table below. Plans are in hand to increase the present total of 54 job clubs in Scotland to 110 within the next few months.

Jobcentres in Scotland

Aberdeen[1](2)
Airdrie[1]
Alexandria[1]
Alloa
Annan
Arbroath[1](o/h)
Ayr[1]

Banff
Barrhead
Bathgate[1]
Bellshilll
Blairgowrie
Blantyre
Bo'ness
Broxburn
Buckie

Cambuslang[1](2)
Campbeltown
Carluke
Castle Douglas
Clydebank
Coatbridge[1](2)
Cowdenbeath[1]
Cumbernauld
Cumnock[1]

Cupar

Dalkeith[1]
Dalmellington
Denny
Dingwall
Dumbarton
Dumfries[1]
Dundee[1](3, 1 of which o/h)
Dunfermline
Dunoon

East Kilbride[1](2)
Edinburgh
  Atholl Crescent
  Leith
  Portobello
  Shandwick Place[1](2)
  South St. Andrew Street
  Wester Hailes
Elgin[1]
Eyemouth

Falkirk[1]
Forfar
Forres
Fort William
Fraserburgh

Galashiels[1]
Girvan
Glasgow
  Central
  City
  Easterhouse[1](2)
  Govan
  Hillington[1]
  Maryhill
  Parkhead[1](2)
  Partick
  Shawlands[1](2)
  Springburn[1](2)
  Trongate
Glenrothes[1]
Grangemouth
Greenock[1]

Haddington
Hamilton
Hawick
Helensburgh

Invergordon[1]
Inverness
Irvine[1](2)

Johnstone

Kelso
Kilbirnie
Kilmarnock[1](o/h)
Kilsyth
Kilwinning
Kirkcaldy[1]
Kirkintilloch[1]
Kirkwall

Lanark
Largs
Larkhall
Lerwick
Leven[1]
Linwood
Livingston[1]
Loanhead
Lockerbie

Montrose
Motherwell
Musselburgh

Nairn
Newton Stewart

Oban

Paisley[1]
Peebles
Penicuik
Perth[1](o/h)
Peterhead[1]
Port Glasgow[1]
Portree

Renfrew[1]
Rothesay
Rutherglen

St. Andrews
Saltcoats[1](2, both o/h)
Sanquhar
Shotts
Stirling[1](o/h)
Stornoway
Stranraer

Thurso
Troon

Uddingston

Wick
Wishaw[1](2)

[1] Denotes job club facility.
Figures in parentheses denote number of Jobclubs, if more than one.
(o/h) Denotes outhoused Jobclub.

BBC Scotland (Police Raid)

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the correspondence of 10 and 13 February between himself and the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden, on the police operations at BBC Glasgow.

Mr. Rifkind: The terms of my reply of 12 (not 13) February to the hon. Member's letter of 10 February are as follows:

Scottish Office
Whitehall
London SW1

Donald Dewar Esq MP
House of Commons
London SW1A OAA

12 February 1987

Dear Donald

Thank you for your further letter of 10 February about whether there was Ministerial involvement in the police operation at the BBC's Glasgow offices.

I had no prior knowledge of the intention of the police to apply for a search warrant. After the warrant had been granted by the Court, on my arrival at the BBC's Glasgow offices on the evening of Friday 30 January—to take part with you and others in the recording of BBC Scotland's "Question Time" programme to be transmitted later that evening — I was informd for the first time by two Strathclyde Police officers, who had been assigned as a matter of routine to accompany me during my visit to Glasgow, that there was likely to be a police operation at the BBC premises the following day. I was given no details of the nature of that operation.

During the remainder of the weekend I received no further information nor did I or my Department communicate with the Police, the Lord Advocate, the Crown Office or any other Minister or Department on any matter relating to the investigation.

On the Monday morning I learned, for the first time, that Strathclyde Police, who were aware that you and I were to be at the BBC on Friday evening, were in touch earlier that day with one of my officials to say that a search warrant was being applied for and that if it were granted a police operation would follow. The police did not discuss the terms of any warrant with my officials.

My officials were in contact with the Prime Minister's Office on the morning of Monday 2 February but only to discuss which Minister might most appropriately answer the Private Notice Question were it to be allowed. On that morning also my officials were in contact with the Lord Advocate's officials about the PNQ.

As regards the point you raise in the final paragraph of your letter, I understand from Strathclyde Police that there is absolutely no truth in the report that appeared in the Glasgow Herald on 6 February.

Yours ever

Malcolm Rifkind

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has had from the National Union of Journalists over the police raid on BBC, Glasgow; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I have received a letter dated 17 February from one branch of the union.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information was made available to him as to why the police operation against BBC Scotland was postponed from Friday 30 January to Saturday 31 January.

Mr. Rifkind: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 16 February. I did not ask and was not told the reason for the timing of the police operation.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland for what purpose Strathclyde police notified his office on Friday 30 January about the proposed police operation at BBC Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: As a matter of courtesy, as it was known that I would be in the BBC building that evening.

Radiation (Dundee)

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when his Department expects to reply to the letter from Councillor Tom McLaughlin, environmental health convenor of Dundee district council, regarding monitoring radiation levels in Dundee during and after the radiation leak at Chernobyl.

Mr. Ancram: Shortly.

Archaeological Heritage

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the provision for the archaeological heritage in Scotland about which the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill has written to him, following representations from the Council for British Archaeology, Scotland.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. and learned Friend is considering the points made in the letter from the Council for British Archaeology Scotland enclosed with the hon. Member's letter to him of 14 February. He will be replying in due course.

Chiropodists

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many chiropodists are employed in each of the Scottish health board areas; and what were the corresponding figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. John MacKay: The information requested is shown in the table:

Chiropodists: whole-time equivalent by health board and Scotland at 30 September 1979 to 1986

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*[1]
Scotland	357·2	374·5	400·6	417·8	435·0	439·8	450·0	472·4
Argyll and Clyde	26·5	31·6	32·6	32·7	33·7	34·6	36·4	36·6
Ayrshire and Arran	31·1	32·5	35·6	37·6	42·6	45·2	47·5	49·7
Borders	—	1·0	6·3	6·3	7·3	9·3	8·3	8·3
Dumfries and Galloway	7·4	12·1	10·2	11·8	10·1	8·1	12·1	11·4
Fife	34·3	37·8	38·8	40·7	43·8	43·7	44·0	43·3
Forth Valley	22·3	19·3	21·3	21·7	22·7	21·8	23·3	25·9
Grampian	10·8	13·3	12·9	13·7	15·4	15·9	15·5	26·1
Greater Glasgow	69·6	67·8	68·9	71·1	74·0	77·2	84·1	86·9
Highland	5·7	6·7	10·2	11·2	12·2	13·2	13·2	15·2
Lanarkshire	40·4	38·9	45·4	46·7	46·9	44·9	45·9	46·9
Lothian	75·7	75·3	77·8	81·5	85·4	82·9	76·3	75·7
Orkney	—	—	1·0	1·0	1·0	1·0	1·0	1·0
Shetland	2·0	2·0	3·0	3·0	3·0	3·0	3·0	4·0
Tayside	28·4	34·2	34·6	36·8	34·9	37·0	37·4	39·4
Western Isles	3·0	2·0	2·0	2·0	2·0	2·0	2·0	2·0

[1] Provisional.

Manpower Services Commission Schemes

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the costs of each Manpower Services Commission scheme, and the numbers involved in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Greenock and Port Glasgow, respectively, in 1984-85, 1985-86 and 1986-87.

Mr. Lang: The costs and numbers involved in Manpower Services Commission schemes in Scotland for the financial years 1984-85 and 1985-86 were as shown in the following tables. For 1986-87, either estimates or the most recently obtainable figures are given as appropriate in each case. Corresponding information for Strathclyde and Greenock and Port Glasgow is not available.

Community Programme

	Filled places	*Expenditure (£ million)*
1984-85	17,834	70·529
1985-86	27,820	88·272
[1]1986-87	31,272	103·721

[1] 1986-87 filled places to 31 January. Expenditure to 24 November.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

	Starts	*Expenditure (£ million)*
1984-85	3,794	n/a
1985-86	5,311	9·100
[1]1986-87	5,765	10·007

[1] 1986-87 figures to 31 January.

Community Industry

	Filled places	*Expenditure (£ million)*
1984-85	1,435	4·972
1985-86	1,443	4·975
1986-87	[1]1,471	[2]5·185

[1] Figure at 31 January.
[2] Estimated expenditure for year.

Voluntary Projects Programme
(Estimates based on quarterly returns from sponsors)

	Positive progressions	*Expenditure (£ million)*
1984-85	n/a	0·902
1985-86	[1]801	1·051
[2]1986-87	1,209	0·892

[1] Found work (including Community Programme) and started training.
[2] Figure to 31 December. Found work (including Community Programme), self-employed (including Enterprise Allowance Scheme), started training and further education.

Youth Training Scheme

	Starts	*Expenditure (£ million)*
1984-85	45,180	70·247
1985-86	46,398	78·403
[1]1986-87	[2]51,623	85·787

[1] Estimated figures.
[2] Includes entrants to continuation places.
Note: 1986-87 statistics include only those young people entering youth training scheme for the first time. 1984-85 and 1985-86 figures include all starters on youth training scheme (entrants and re-entrants).

Adult Training

	Starts	*Expenditure (£ million)*
1984-85	8,989	19·623
1985-86	22,745	17·038
[1]1986-87	35,678	19·760

[1] Estimated figures.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the project proposals for Manpower Services Commission schemes under the Manpower Services Commission's community programmes approved by the Renfrewshire, Dumbartonshire and Argyll area manpower board of the Manpower Services Commission in each of the last five years, the names of those bodies to whom awards were made in respect of the aforementioned project proposals and the amount of each of these awards.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Kestrel Marine Life, Dundee

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his consideration of an application to include the Kestrel marine site, Dundee within the boundaries of the Dundee enterprise zone.

Mr. Lang: The Government have no plans to extend the Tayside enterprise zone.

Rape

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many men have been prosecuted for rape in the last five years in Scotland; how many have been convicted in each of these years; and, of these, how many have been sentenced to terms of imprisonment of (i) less than three years, (ii) between three and five years, (iii) between five and 10 years and (iv) over 10 years, respectively.

Mr. Rifkind: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) on 13 February 1987 at columns *385-86*.

Dog Wardens

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will now take steps to introduce a statutory dog warden scheme in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: Existing legislation already enables local authorities to appoint dog wardens. Under the Dogs Act 1906, as amended by the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982, such wardens, where appointed, have the same powers as the police to seize, detain and dispose of stray dogs. There are at present no plans for further legislation on this matter.

PRIME MINISTER

EC Commission (Meeting)

Q113. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the outcome of her meeting with Mr. J. Delors of the European Economic Community Commission on 5 February.

The Prime Minister: My discussions with Mr. Delors concentrated on the financial situation in the Community, the reform of the common agricultural policy and on the reorganisation of the structural funds called for by the Single European Act. I emphasised that the main reason for the Community's serious financial problems was inadequate control over expenditure. I made clear that the Community's first priority should be to agree new and effective budgetary control arrangements. In particular there was a need for effective stabilising mechanisms to control Common Agricultural Policy expenditure.

Light Dues

Q116. **Dr. Godman** asked the Prime Minister what assessment Her Majesty's Government have made of the implications for the viability of the United Kingdom fishing industry of the proposed extension to larger fishing vessels of liability for light dues; what assessment has been made of the impact on the merchant fleet of the proposed 14 per cent. increase in dues; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend will be holding discussions shortly with the fishing industry about the implications of extending light dues liability to its larger vessels. Light dues are typically a small fraction of ships operating costs. Less than 10 per cent. of dues are paid by United Kingdom registered ships.

Government Achievements

Mr. Soames asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the achievements of Her Majesty's Government since 1983.

The Prime Minister: Since the 1983 election, the inflation rate has remained low, and in recent months has been around the lowest level for 20 years. Gross domestic product has grown at an average annual rate of about 3 per cent., the United Kingdom is now in its sixth successive year of growth and GDP is at an all-time high. Since 1983, the United Kingdom has topped the European Community's growth league, reversing the position in the previous decade when we came bottom. Non-oil export volumes have risen by an average 8 per cent. a year and investment by an average of 4½ per cent. Manufacturing productivity has risen by over 4 per cent. a year and company profitability is at its highest level for over 20 years. Total employment has risen continuously since early 1983, the longest period of sustained employment growth for almost 30 years, and over 1 million new jobs have been created. The level of the United Kingdom's net overseas assets has almost doubled to £80 billion, yielding annual income approaching £5 billion a year.

The Government have continued to maintain sound public finances. Government programmes have provided better value for money. Public expenditure has been falling as a percentage of GDP since 1982-83 and is planned to fall further over the next three years. The public sector borrowing requirement in both 1985-86 and 1986-87 is likely to be lower as a percentage of GDP than in any year since 1971-72—with or without privatisation proceeds.

The Government have pursued a substantial programme of tax reform. Business taxation has been radically restructured: the United Kingdom now has one of the lowest rates of corporation tax of any industrialised country. For income tax payers, thresholds have been raised in real terms and the basic rate reduced. New schemes for tax relief have been introduced to promote wider share ownership and encourage charitable giving. Stamp duties have been reduced and restructured. Four taxes — the national insurance surcharge, development land tax, investment income surcharge and capital transfer tax on lifetime giving—have been abolished completely.

The programme of privatisation has continued to be highly successful. There have been 11 share sales since June 1983 including most recently the sale of British Airways. The privatisation of British Gas in December 1986 was the largest flotation ever in Europe or America and led to a further substantial increase in the number of people holding shares. The National Bus Company's programme to dispose of its subsidiaries is well under way. Preparations are well in hand for the privatisation of Rolls-Royce, Royal Ordnance, and BAA (formerly the British Airports Authority), and the Government have also announced their intention to privatise the water authorities in England and Wales in the next Parliament.

Further measures have been introduced to improve the operation of markets. Tax changes and the restructuring of national insurance contributions have increased incentives. Changes in employment legislation, the reduction in the powers of Wages Councils effected by the Wages Act 1986 and measures to increase labour mobility have improved the operation of the labour market. Regulations applying to a wide field of industry and finance have been removed entirely; the Building Societies Act 1986 gives societies new lending powers and permits the provision of other services. The small firms sector has been helped by a variety of schemes and the Government's programme of employment and training measures has been improved and extended. The Government have encouraged more competition in the professions.

Following a review in 1983 the Government have introduced a more cost effective and job related regional industrial policy. In 1986 British Steel returned to profitability for the first time in 10 years. The Government have supported a wide range of measures aimed at increasing the amount of research and development undertaken by industry including the Alvey programme in advanced information technology, the LINK programme which brings together academic and industrial researchers in collaborative projects, and the EUREKA initiative for collaborative research in Europe. The National Space Centre has been established.

Productivity per person in agriculture has continued to improve and has helped this sector to provide food to consumers at prices which have risen more slowly than the retail price index. The value of agricultural feed, food and drink exports has risen by an estimated 26 per cent. since 1983.

The task of tackling costly surpluses under the common agricultural policy has been considerably advanced by the agreement of the Agriculture Council in December 1986 during the United Kingdom's presidency of the Community, on reforms of the CAP milk and beef regimes and on an outline package of structural measures. The agreements in the milk sector to reduce Community production with compensation, and in the beef sector to restrict access to intervention whilst retaining the United Kingdom's beef variable premium, constitute the most important single contribution to the process of reform already begun with the agreements to curb over-production in the milk and wine sectors in 1984, and with successive reductions in CAP support prices in real terms in each year since 1983.

The Government have introduced grants to encourage farmers to diversify their sources of income. We have carried forward policies designed to ensure that landscape and conservation interests are maintained, and where possible enhanced, as farmers respond to change.

We secured in January 1983 a common fisheries policy on terms very favourable to the United Kingdom. Subsequent arrangements for the incorporation of Spain into the CFP have fully protected our fishermen's

interests. Conservation, control and structural measures have been strengthened, particularly under the United Kingdom presidency of the Fisheries Council.

We have substantially increased the manpower and resources available to the police and have strengthened their powers to deal with public disorder and the controls on their use of firearms. An independent Crown prosecution service is now in operation throughout England and Wales. Measures have been taken to ensure that the terms of imprisonment served by violent offenders fully reflect society's abhorrence of their crimes. Government assistance to the victim support movement has been greatly expanded: £9 million will be provided over the next three financial years to help local schemes.

A wide range of measures are being taken to counter drug misuse. The Video Recordings Act has brought video nasties under control. Legislation has also been put through for data protection; to provide more rigorous control of animal experimentation; to provide a framework for the development of broadcasting by satellite and cable television; to set out a new framework for police powers, for providing safeguards for the citizen and for handling complaints against the police, in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act; and to control the possession and sale of alcohol in connection with football matches. The Government have played a major role in developing international co-operation in the fight against terrorism and has strengthened police powers under the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

The Government have continued to be active in strengthening safeguards against fraud and in ensuring that the probity of our financial institutions is maintained without undermining their competitiveness. The Insolvency Act 1985 increased the scope for disqualifying directors of companies which have gone into liquidation or receivership, and introduced a new liability of directors for wrongful trading. The Financial Services Act 1986 broadens the general regulatory framework within which people in financial institutions have to operate.

The Criminal Justice Bill provides for the establishment of a serious fraud office and other improvements in the investigation, prosecution and trial of fraud offences, based on the recommendations of the Roskill committee.

In education, the Government have introduced many major initiatives to raise educational standards. Many of those affecting the schools were set out in the White Paper "Better Schools" (Cmnd. 9649). We have embarked on a reform of the school curriculum to prepare pupils better for adult and working life. We have given financial support to promote technical and vocational education for 14 to 18-year-olds in schools and colleges and supported pilot programmes for improving the education of lower attaining pupils. We have introduced the GCSE based on national criteria. We are introducing the AS level to broaden A-level studies. We are developing records of achievement for all school leavers. The Education (No. 2) Act 1986 promotes the more effective management of maintained schools and teaching quality within them.

In higher education the number of home students has risen by about 49,000 since 1983 without loss of quality and with a higher proportion studying science and engineering, thanks partly to the Government's information technology initiative and engineering and technology programme. Greater cost-effectiveness has been achieved, especially in the polytechnics where unit costs have fallen substantially. The funding of universities now includes greater selectivity in the interests of concentrating research activity in the best centres.

In further education, development plans have been introduced with gains in relevance and efficiency. Course and qualification patterns continue to evolve, including the certificate of pre-vocational education, which the Government launched in 1983. The work of the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education is leading to improvements in initial teacher training, and new specific grant support for in-service teacher training is being introduced in 1987-88. Education support grants are now well established.

The Government have revolutionised vocational education and training for young people through TVEI and two-year YTS. TVEI becomes a national scheme from autumn this year. YTS has given vocational training to over 1 million young people and already over 300,000 have entered two-year YTS. Every unemployed young person under the age of 18 is now guaranteed training leading to a recognised qualification: unemployment need no longer be an option for this group. We have recently announced a major new programme of quality training — the job training scheme — aimed particularly at long-term unemployed people aged under 25. We have established the National Council of Vocational Qualifications to ensure that in future there will be a clear system of relevant vocational qualifications. Through the restart programme, for the first time in this country, we are offering personal counselling and assistance to all long-term unemployed people.

The Government have encouraged new business, particularly through the expanded enterprise allowance scheme, which has helped nearly 200,000 unemployed people to start up in business.

We have continued the reforms which have transformed the industrial relations climate in this country. The Trade Union Act 1984 has promoted and protected democracy in trade union affairs.

In the Health Service, we have continued to develop services for patients. NHS spending has been increased to record levels — nearly £19 billion this year. More patients are being treated than ever before — 5·6 per cent. more in-patient cases in England alone in 1985 than in 1983, and 18·4 per cent. more day cases. We are investing in the largest sustained capital programme ever, costing over £1 billion in the current year. In England, over 400 schemes, each costing over £1 million, with a total value of about £3 billion, are at various stages of planning, design and construction.

There are more doctors and nurses working in hospitals and the community. Since April 1984, the first settlement from the Pay Review Body which this Government established, nurses' pay rates have gone up by just over 10 per cent. in real terms.

The drive for better management continues. Health authorities in England have achieved cash-releasing cost improvements worth over £240 million in the last two financial years, and plan further cash savings of some £150 million this year. A further £130 million is expected to be freed this year from sales of land which the National Health Service does not need.

We have also launched the first major reviews of primary care and community nursing since 1948.

In the social security field, the Government have protected and improved the real value of nearly all the

major social security benefits. Expenditure on social security as a whole has never been higher—both in cash and real terms. For example, real spending on the long-term sick and disabled has risen by nearly £6 billion. We have also conducted a major review of the social security system and the Social Security Act 1986 will make the system easier to understand, target help more effectively on those who need it and improve work incentives. Choice will also be widened in pension provision.

In energy, domestic gas and electricity prices have gone down in real terms, gas by 7 per cent. and electricity by 10 per cent. Britain has launched a successful energy efficiency campaign with savings already stimulated of more than £500 million a year in the industrial and commercial sectors. Energy efficiency in the home is proceeding apace and the Government are helping to fund voluntary groups who insulate the homes of low-income families and pensioners. Over 300,000 such homes have been insulated.

Deep mined productivity of coal production is now 60 per cent. higher than it was during the last year of the Labour Government.

In local government, the Greater London council and metropolitan county councils were abolished without the chaos predicted in some quarters, and to the substantial benefit of ratepayers. Legislation has been passed to regulate local authority publicity activities. We are considering the response to consultation on the report of the Widdicombe committee on the conduct of local authority business. We have prevented extravagant authorities from using creative accounting to get more than their fair share of resources, either at the expense of other authorities or, ultimately, their ratepayers. The Rates Act is protecting ratepayers from huge increases in rates in the highest spending councils. The Abolition of Domestic Rates etc. (Scotland) Bill now before Parliament, provides for the abolition of domestic rates in Scotland starting at 1 April 1989. It has been confirmed that a Bill similarly to replace domestic rates in England and Wales will be introduced as soon as possible and not later than the first session of a new Parliament.

Between May 1983 and December 1986 there has been a net increase in the number of dwellings of about 660,000 through new building and conversion in England which has more than kept pace with the growth in the number of households over the period. Since May 1983 the number of owner-occupied dwellings has increased by about a further million and 63 per cent. of all dwellings are now owner-occupied. The discounts available on the sale of council houses and flats have been further increased to encourage tenants to exercise their right to buy.

The Government have encouraged greater diversity in the rented sector by assisting housing associations and private sector landlords. A new Estate Action team has helped local authorities with more than 120 schemes to tackle problems of rundown estates. A scheme of assistance has been provided to the owners of defective houses previously in the public sector.

The Government have continued to promote enterprise, improve the environment and encourage self-help in the inner cities. Five new urban development corporations have been announced in addition to those existing in London and Merseyside docklands. The urban programme, which supports some 12,000 inner city regeneration projects, has been concentrated on the areas of greatest need and potential, and its management improved. The derelict land reclamation programme has been increased substantially and directed towards commercial, industrial or housing development on urban land. Some 34,000 acres have been removed from the land register of unused or under-used public land. Enterprise zones have continued to attract substantial private investment. Powers have been taken to pay urban regeneration grant to support private sector development packages. The UK2000 initiative has been launched to promote environmental improvement. The Scottish development agency continues to be a major instrument of urban renewal in Scotland and both Scottish and Welsh development agencies continue to play a vital part in economic and environmental policies.

The Government have taken a wide range of steps to simplify and improve the planning system and to speed up its operation, without reducing necessary protection to the environment in town and country.

In transport, London Transport has been transferred from the GLC to London Regional Transport and targets set for better value for money. In its first full financial year under Government control, LRT very nearly achieved its target of halving subsidy for which the Government have allowed three years, while providing additional services to meet increasing demand. The subsidy to British Rail has been reduced by 25 per cent., targets set for a further 25 per cent. reduction in the current level of subsidy and the improvement of customer service, and major new investments approved. The deregulation of local bus services has seen service levels maintained and has stimulated innovation through competition while cutting subsidies. A number of National Bus Company subsidiaries have also been privatised. In England alone during this period the Government have invested £2 billion in the motorway and trunk road system; 110 major road schemes have been completed of which 40 are bypasses and relief roads. The Government are supporting 310 major local authority road schemes through transport supplementary grant, two thirds of which help bypass or relieve communities. Private investment in the Channel tunnel project has already begun even though the Bill has not yet completed its passage through Parliament.

Since 1983 receipts from sales of new town assets have totalled £900 million. Basildon development corporation was wound up on 1 April 1986 and the Government have announced proposed wind-up dates for each of the remaining six corporations. The finances of the corporations have also been put on a more satisfactory basis.

In defence, the capability of our armed forces has continued to be strengthened. The Government have played their full part in implementing NATO's 1979 decision to modernise intermediate range nuclear weapons. Increased efficiency is being pursued by the continuing transfer of resources from the support areas to the frontline, and by introducing increased competition in defence contracts and promoting collaboration with our international partners. A major reorganisation of the headquarters structure of the Ministry of Defence has been introduced.

In foreign policy we have maintained Britain's firm commitment to national defence and the NATO Alliance, and promoted closer European defence co-operation, notably through a revived Western European Union. At the same time we have worked vigorously for a more stable relationship between East and West and for balanced and

verifiable reductions in nuclear and conventional weapons, and for a global ban on chemical weapons. British Ministers and representatives have been active in building up an East-West dialogue and in promoting the arms control process. We played a leading role in the Conference on Disarmament in Europe negotiations which were successfully concluded last autumn. At Camp David last November President Reagan and I agreed upon priorities for arms control after the Reykjavik Summit meeting.

Within the European Community we negotiated a favourable settlement of the longstanding budgetary dispute. We were instrumental in bringing about an agreement on amendments to the EC treaties which should improve Community decision-taking and hasten the creation within the Community of a genuinely free market for goods and services as well as giving for the first time a treaty basis to co-operation in the foreign policy field. The latest British presidency reached agreement on internal market measures and on significant reforms to the common agricultural policy. We have worked actively for maintenance of the world open trading system and the launch of a new round of multilateral trade negotiations.

We reached agreement with China about the future of Hong Kong. The Gibraltar border has been reopened, and negotiations started with Spain aimed at overcoming all our differences over the rock. We have stood by the people of the Falkland Islands.

We have at the United Nations and elsewhere supported the international rule of law and respect for human rights. With our Commonwealth and European partners we have worked towards ending apartheid in South Africa by peaceful means. We have worked successfully for financial and administrative reform in the United Nations and have promoted international co-operation to combat terrorism and drug-trafficking. We have maintained a substantial aid programme—totalling nearly £4,000 million since 1983. We have responded swiftly and generously to appeals for emergency aid to sub-Saharan Africa and bilaterally we have provided effective long-term assistance to some 120 developing countries.

Government Objectives

Mr. Soames asked the Prime Minister what are the objectives of Her Majesty's Government for the rest of this Parliament.

The Prime Minister: At home, we shall continue prudent and sound financial policies, designed to strengthen prospects for employment, involving a more flexible and competitive economy, which encourages initiative and enterprise. We shall aim to continue to keep public spending falling as a proportion of GDP, to keep public sector borrowing low and to reduce taxation. We will work for the still wider spread of wealth and ownership in our country, based upon the privatisation of industries, and an increase in individual home and share ownership.

We will help industry and commerce to increase the national production of wealth by creating the climate within which consumer choice and markets can properly operate. We will be active in ensuring that the rules by which markets are regulated are vigorously enforced.

We will use our legislation to protect householders and businesses from excessive rate demands and we will continue our efforts to ensure efficient and effective local government.

We will continue to promote private sector involvement in the regeneration of inner cities, and carry on our work to simplify and improve the planning system in the interests both of the economy and of the environment.

Through the Development Commission and in other ways, we will foster the diversification of rural economies in a way which protects the environment.

We will continue to promote consumer choice and efficiency through competition in the provision of transport services. We expect to privatise BAA (formerly the British Airports Authority) in the summer; we are proceeding with the third Dartford Crossing and legislation on the Channel tunnel project is currently before Parliament.

We shall continue to ensure that the increasing resources we are making available to the NHS go to improve the quality of service. We are launching a new drive to tackle hospital waiting lists and times. We shall continue the fight against AIDS, which will include the establishment of a new Health Education Authority, with powers to carry forward the public education campaign on AIDS.

Changes to the social security system will be implemented which will target help to those who most need it while improving incentives to work and widening individual choice in pension provisions.

We shall vigorously uphold the rule of law and fight crime, especially drug misuse and crimes of violence. The Criminal Justice Bill now before Parliament will improve the law on measures against fraud, on the sentencing of offenders, on compensation for victims and on confiscating the proceeds of crime.

We shall continue to work for a better educational system, by giving parents more say in the education of their children, by extending the training and vocational elements in teenage education, and by laying greater emphasis on higher standards.

We will press on with the implementation of our policies for a better school curriculum and examination system. We shall pursue the establishment of city technology colleges in urban areas and the extension throughout the country to 14-18 year olds of the technical and vocational education initiative.

In further and higher education we shall continue to increase opportunities for study, to put increasing emphasis on vocational education, especially in science and engineering, and to promote higher quality and greater efficiency.

In the energy field, our policies will promote the best use of our rich endowment of natural resources and scientific and innovative talent in a responsible, market-orientated environment.

We shall continue policies designed to promote employment and enterprise and to assist the unemployed back into work; to remove unnecessary constraints and burdens from the wealth and job creating sectors of the economy; and to encourage the spread of democratic procedures within trade unions.

We will continue to contribute to peace with freedom and justice in Europe by maintaining effective defences in co-operation with our NATO allies. We will ensure that Britain maintains an independent nuclear deterrent. We

will continue to discharge our defence responsibilities and protect British interests outside the NATO area. We will maintain our drive to secure better value for money from the defence budget, particularly through increased competition and international collaboration in the procurement of equipment. We will work from strength for balanced and verifiable reductions in nuclear and conventional weapons as well as a global ban on chemical weapons. We also want greater co-operation and trust between East and West: I am looking forward to visiting Moscow at the end of March.

We shall promote the prosperity of the United Kingdom and that of its Allies and the developing countries by working to sustain and improve the world open trading system. We shall work with others to promote non-inflationary economic growth and the liberalisation of world trade both at the Venice economic summit and in the Uruguay round of negotiations under the general agreement on tariffs and trade.

Within the European Community we shall work for sound financing and strict budgetary discipline, further improvements in the common agricultural policy, a single market for goods and services and other policies where we can achieve more by co-operation in the Community than on our own. We shall seek to ensure that Europe plays its full part in international affairs, by working to improve Europe's competitive position in world trade and to achieve closer co-operation between the Twelve over foreign policy.

We shall continue to work for an effective United Nations Organisation. We wish to see human rights and the rule of law upheld internationally. We shall press for an end to the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and Vietnamese aggression in Cambodia, so that both countries can regain their independence. With our European and Commonwealth partners we shall continue to promote peaceful dialogue in South Africa, as the most effective way of replacing the apartheid system by a form of government which commands the support of all South Africans and will ensure South Africa's future prosperity and stability. We shall work to promote peace in the Middle East and to lessen tensions in Central America. We shall continue to stand by the Falkland Islanders. We shall sustain our efforts to combat hunger, disease (particularly AIDS) and the scourges of international terrorism and drug trafficking.

European Community

Mr. Deakins asked the Prime Minister if she will publish a White Paper on the specific economic benefits accruing to the British people during United Kingdom membership of the European Economic Community.

The Prime Minister: No. Since November 1974 successive Governments have produced six-monthly White Papers on developments in the European Community.

10 Downing Street (Television Sets)

Mr. Deakins asked the Prime Minister, pursuant to her answer to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) on 31 January, *Official Report*, column 569, if all the televisions used at No. 10 Downing street are for Government purposes only.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) on 21 January 1987 at column 569.

Law Officers

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister if she will set up an inquiry into the role and responsibilities in Government of the Law Officers.

The Prime Minister: No.

European Investment Bank

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the activities and operation of the European Investment Bank; and if she will seek a decision from the Council on whether the investments of member states in this organisation are to be treated as a commercial investment or a vehicle for the promotion of public investment.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to raise this matter.

Engagements

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 19 February.

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 19 February.

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 19 February.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 19 February.

Mr. Leigh asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 19 February.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with Ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be visiting Yorkshire later today.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Perivale Hospital

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will now reply to letters from the hon. Member for Ealing, North to the Minister for Health dated 6 January and 13 January concerning Perivale hospital; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when he expects to answer the question due for answer on 6 February relating to replies to letters from the hon. Member for Ealing, North of 6 January and 13 January concerning Perivale hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I regret the delay in writing to my hon. Friend. I am urgently seeking a further report from the regional health authority.

Maternity Payments

Mr. Silkin asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Lewisham, Deptford,

claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Lewisham, Deptford, are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Lewisham, Deptford constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Greenwich Park, Lewisham and Peckham although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the three local offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Greenwich Park	1,246
Lewisham	1,597
Peckham	1,958

It is not possible to predict how many women in Lewisham, Deptford will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Concannon asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Mansfield constituency claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Mansfield constituency are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Mansfield constituency is covered by the Department's office at Mansfield although its boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The number of claims received for maternity grant in Mansfield local office during the calendar year 1986 was 2,424.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Mansfield constituency will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Benn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Chesterfield received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Chesterfield are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested. But in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,860 claims to maternity allowance were made at Chesterfield, the Department's office which covers the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Chesterfield will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Benn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Chesterfield claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Chesterfield are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Chesterfield constituency is covered by the Department's office at Chesterfield although its boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The number of claims received for maternity grant in Chesterfield local office during the calendar year 1986 was 2,931.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Chesterfield will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. John Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Aberavon constituency claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Aberavon constituency are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Aberavon constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Neath and Port Talbot although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the two local offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Neath	838
Port Talbot	651

It is not possible to predict how many women in the Aberavon constituency will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. John Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Aberavon constituency received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Aberavon constituency are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 401 claims to maternity allowance were made at Port Talbot and 538 claims at Neath, the Department's offices which cover the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Aberavon will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Falkirk, West constituency claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Falkirk, West constituency are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Falkirk, West constituency is covered by the Department's office at Falkirk although its boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The number of claims received for maternity grant in the Falkirk local office during the calendar year 1986 was 499.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Falkirk, West constituency will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Falkirk, West constituency received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Falkirk, West constituency are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,229 claims to maternity allowance were made at Falkirk, the Department's office which covers the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Falkirk, West will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. McKelvey asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Kilmarnock and Loudoun constituency claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Kilmarnock and Loudoun constituency are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Kilmarnock and Loudoun constituency is covered by the Department's office at Kilmarnock although its boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The number of claims received for maternity grant in Kilmarnock local office during the calendar year 1986 was 1,460.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Kilmarnock and Loudoun constituency will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. McKelvey asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Kilmarnock and Loudoun constituency received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women are expected to receive statutory maternity or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are avaiable, 920 claims to maternity allowance were made at Kilmarnock, the Department's office which covers the constituency although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Kilmarnock and Loudoun will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Ms. Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Birmingham, Ladywood received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Birmingham, Ladywood are expected to receive statutory maternity or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested. But in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are avaiable, the following numbers of claims to maternity allowance were made at the Department's offices which cover the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

	Number
Edgbaston	1,322
Handsworth	832
Ladywood	835

It is not possible to predict how many women in Birmingham, Ladywood will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in East Lothian received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in East Lothian are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested. But in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 927 claims to maternity allowance were made at Edinburgh (East), the Department's office which covers the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in East Lothian will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in East Lothian claimed maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in East Lothian are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The East Lothian constituency is covered by the Department's office at Edinburgh, East although its boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The number of claims received for maternity grant in Edinburgh, East local office during the calendar year 1986 was 1,398.

It is not possible to predict how many women in East Lothian will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Newham, South received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are

available; and how many women in Newham, South are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, the following number of claims to maternity allowance were made at the Department's offices which cover the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous:

	Number
Plaistow	999
Woodgrange Park	1,101
Canning Town	273

It is not possible to predict how many women in Newham, South will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Newham South claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Newham South are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Newham, South constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Canning Town, Plaistow and Woodgrange Park although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the three local offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Canning Town	612
Plaistow	1,613
Woodgrange Park	1,848

It is not possible to predict how many women in Newham, South will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in *(a)* Islington, South and Finsbury and *(b)* Cambridge received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in *(a)* Islington, South and Finsbury and *(b)* Cambridge are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, the following numbers of claims to maternity allowance were made at the Department's offices which cover the above constituencies although the boundaries are not conterminous:

(a) Islington South and Finsbury

	Number
Hoxton	695
Finsbury Park	1,209
Westminster	[1]

[1] Claims for these offices are dealt with at Aldershot Out-Station. A total of 2,999 claims were dealt with at that office but this total includes claims proper to other offices.

(b) Cambridge

	Number
Cambridge	2,390

It is not possible to predict how many women in Islington, South and Finsbury and in Cambridge will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Edinburgh, Leith claimed maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Edinburgh, Leith are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Edinburgh, Leith constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Edinburgh City and Edinburgh North although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the two local offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Edinburgh City	325
Edinburgh North	1,050

It is not possible to predict how many women in Edinburgh, Leith will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Edinburgh, Leith received maternity allowance in the past year for which figures are available; and how many women in Edinburgh, Leith are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 736 claims to maternity allowance were made at Edinburgh (North) and 839 claims at Edinburgh (City), the Department's offices which cover the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Edinburgh, Leith will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Carrick, Cumnock and

Doon Valley received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 272 claims to maternity allowance were made at Cumnock and 881 claims at Ayr, the Department's offices which cover the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested. The Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Ayr and Cumnock although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the two local offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Ayr	1,381
Cumnock	431

It is not possible to predict how many women in Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Ayr constituency claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Ayr constituency are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested. The Ayr constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Ayr and Kilmarnock although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the two local offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:—

	Number
Ayr	1,381
Kilmarnock	1,460

It is not possible to predict how many women in the Ayr constituency will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Ayr constituency received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Ayr constituency are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 920 claims to maternity allowance were made at Kilmarnock and 881 claims at Ayr, the Depatment's offices which cover the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous. It is not possible to predict how many women in the Ayr constituency will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Bury St. Edmunds constituency received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Bury St. Edmunds constituency are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,527 claims to maternity allowance were made at Bury St. Edmunds, the Department's office which covers the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous. It is not possible to predict how many women in the Bury St. Edmunds constituency will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Miss Maynard asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Sheffield, Brightside constituency claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Sheffield, Brightside constituency are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested. The Sheffield, Brightside constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Sheffield, North-East and Sheffield, North-West although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the two local offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Sheffield, North East	1,579
Sheffield, North West	1,933

It is not possible to predict how many women in Sheffield, Brightside constituency will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Miss Maynard asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (i) how many women in Sheffield, Brightside constituency received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available and (ii) how many women

in Sheffield, Brightside constituency are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 790 claims to maternity allowance were made at Sheffield, North-East and 1,142 claims at Sheffield, North-West, the Department's offices which cover the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous. It is not possible to predict how many women in the Sheffield, Brightside constituency will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Western Isles constituency claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in the Western Isles are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: The Western Isles constituency is covered by the Department's office at Stornoway. The number of claims received for maternity grant in Stornoway local office during the calendar year 1986 was 349. It is not possible to predict how many women in the Western Isles will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the Western Isles constituency received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in the Western Isles are expected to qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 430 claims to maternity allowance were made at Stornoway, the Department's office which covers the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in the Western Isles constituency will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Leyton claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Leyton are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Leyton constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Leytonstone and Walthamstow although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the two local offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Leytonstone	1,529
Walthamstow	1,901

It is not possible to predict how many women in Leyton will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claims for maternity grants have been made in Dundee in each of the past two years.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested as the Department's local offices in Dundee cover areas outside Dundee. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the two local offices during the 1985 and 1986 calendar years were as follows:

	1985	*1986*
Dundee East	1,488	1,940
Dundee West	1,126	1,091

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claims for maternity allowance have been made in Dundee in each of the past two years.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 12 February at column *352* in respect of the number of claims to maternity allowance in the 12 months ending April 1986.

In the year to April 1985, 1,060 claims were made at Dundee, East and 837 at Dundee, West, the Department's offices which cover Dundee, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

Local Office (Camberwell)

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether the Camberwell Department of Health and Social Security office at Blenheim Grove meets normal civil service requirements with regard to the space available to house all the staff allocated to the office.

Mr. Lyell: The staff complement of the Camberwell local office is 135 and the space requirement using agreed standards is 1,269 sq m. The staff areas at Blenheim Grove amount to 666 sq m. In addition, the office occupies space in another building at Red Cross Way, SE1 where the staff area is 850 sq m. The total space occupied in the two buildings is, therefore, in excess of agreed space standards.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps are being taken to locate larger premises in the area covered by the Blenheim Grove office for use as a local supplementary benefit office.

Mr. Lyell: The Property Services Agency has acquired the local Odeon cinema site for development where it plans to build two new local offices for the Department. The new offices will cover the area at present administered by the office at Blenheim Grove as well as areas from other neighbouring offices.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what consideration has been given to using 72 Rye Lane, Peckham, as a temporary overflow office from the Camberwell Department of Health and Social Security office at Blenheim Grove.

Mr. Lyell: Rye Lane was used as outhousing for Camberwell office for 18 months to June 1986. Further use

of these premises was not considered appropriate because of an inadequate ventilation system. The cost of improving the system would be uneconomical for a temporary occupation.

Ms Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what repair work has been carried out at the Department of Health and Social Security office in Blenheim Grove, Camberwell, since its closure on 18 August 1986:

Mr. Lyell: Following damage caused to the public caller area, the interview counters and protective screens have all been replaced. New seating has been installed. Security doors have been fitted in place of the existing internal doors adjacent to the caller section.

Ms Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what repair work will be carried out at the Department of Health and Social Security office in Blenheim Grove, Camberwell, by his Department over the next two years; and when the work will be carried out.

Mr. Lyell: No repair work is scheduled for the nest two years. Subject to the availability of funds, there are plans for major adaptations on the ground floor which will increase the public caller area and convert the staff area into an open plan office.

Ms Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many telephone lines are available for incoming calls at the Camberwell Department of Health and Social Security office in Blenheim Grove; and if he will publish details of the British Telecom survey presently being carried out into the demand for telephone lines at the office.

Mr. Lyell: The switchboard at the Blenheim Grove office is not open to receive incoming calls. Inquirers are advised by a prerecorded message to contact the Red Cross Way office where the majority of the Camberwell office staff are outhoused. At Red Cross Way there are eight lines available for incoming calls.

The survey that has been conducted by British Telecom is to assess the telephone service provided by the Red Cross Way office. The report is still awaited. When received, consideration will be given to placing a copy in the Library.

Organ Donors

Dr. Michael Clark asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what information he has received from the Lifeline Wales scheme about the expenditure involved in establishing its scheme for computerising organ donors;

(2) whether he will make a statement on the Lifeline Wales scheme which is partly funded by his Department for computerising organ donors and indicate whether he is considering extending it;

(3) whether he will consider a national computerised system for registering organ donors along the lines suggested by the Womens Gas Federation, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mrs. Currie: Details of the Lifeline Wales scheme are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, and it is his Department which is funding the project.

A national computer register is a possible way of increasing organ donation but we are not certain at the present time that the additional benefits would justify the considerable expense of establishing and maintaining it. We have asked to be kept informed of the effect of the Welsh scheme on the supply of donor organs in Wales and we will also be taking into account the effect of the local computer registers in Manchester and Glasgow.

Breast Cancer Screening

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to publish the Forrest report on breast cancer screening.

Mrs. Currie: The Forrest report on breast cancer screening has been sent to the printers and will be published shortly.

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the latest estimate of the cost of introducing a national breast screening service.

Mrs. Currie: The Forrest report on breast cancer screening includes an estimate of the cost of introducing a breast cancer screening service. However, it would be inappropriate for me to quote extracts from the report in advance of its publication.

Prescription Charges

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is his Department's policy regarding issuing reminders for renewal of pre-payment certificates for National Health Service prescription charges; and what effect the present policy has had on the effective rate of renewal;

(2) what is his Department's policy with regard to late renewal of pre-payment certificates for National Health Service prescription charges and for re-imbursement regarding prescriptions dispensed during any intervening period.

Mr. Newton: Family practitioner committees have been asked to issue reminder letters about 14 days before certificates expire. However, the responsibility for ensuring that an application is made on time rests with the applicant and prescription charges are payable for any period not covered by a valid certificate. Information distinguishing between renewals and other applications is not collected.

Severe Weather Payments

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many persons received exceptionally severe weather payments in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Greenock and Port Glasgow in each of the categories of those persons entitled to such payments; what was the amount of money paid to each category; and what was the average payment made.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of exceptionally cold weather payments made to persons in each of the categories is not available.

Statistics are being maintained on the total number of exceptionally cold weather payments made, the amount of those payments and the number refused, and will be published in due course.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give an estimate of the numbers of

persons in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Greenock and Port Glasgow in each of the categories of those persons entitled to claim exceptionally severe weather payments.

Mr. Major: The information requested is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Limited List Prescribing

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has yet reached a decision on the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on National Health Service drugs regarding the possible addition of mucodyne to the limited list of drugs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) on 21 January at column *635*.

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he last asked the Advisory Committee on the Limited List to re-examine adding to the list of permitted drugs *(a)* Frisium, *(b)* Actifed, *(c)* Phensedyl, *(d)* Dimotapp and *(e)* Triominic; and what recent representations he has received about these five medicines.

Mr. Newton: The Advisory Committee on National Health Service Drugs reviewed the position of Dimotapp in July 1985, Frisium in September 1985 and Actifed in January 1986. We accepted the advice of the committee that there should be no change in the status of these drugs under the selected list scheme. No representations have been received about Phensedyl and Triominic but recent, further, representations about Dimotapp are under consideration.

Claims (Stretford)

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average time taken for decisions on claims at Social Security offices serving the Stretford constituency; and if he will publish comparative figures for each year from 1979.

Mr. Lyell: Figures are not available for the period before the statistical year which ended in April 1984.

Three of the Department's local offices serve the Stretford constituency, Chorlton, Rusholme and Sale, but their boundaries ar not conterminous with the constituency. Details of the average number of days taken to deal with claims to the benefits listed below are as follows:

Benefit	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*[3]
(a) Chorlton				
Maternity	5 (See note[1])	20	11	11
Sickness/Invalidity (See note[2])	6	12	6	7
Supplementary	5	5	9	10
(b) Rusholme				
Maternity	8 (See note[1])	14	9	15
Sickness/Invalidity (See note[2])	10	11	9	14
Supplementary	10	8	11	10
(c) Sale				
Maternity	6 (See note[1])	19	16	12
Sickness/Invalidity (See note[2])	8	14	12	11
Supplementary	6	4	6	6

[1] Includes non-contributory maternity grant. The information given for other years relates to maternity allowance claims only.
[2] Separate figures not available.
[3] To 13 January.

Benefits

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the number and percentage of those of working age in receipt of supplementary benefit in the *(a)* west midlands region, *(b)* in the black country area of the west midlands and *(c)* the borough of Walsall in May 1979 and at present.

Mr. Lyell: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the number of persons in receipt of supplementary benefit in *(a)* the Barnsley area and *(b)* Barnsley, West area for the year 1986.

Mr. Lyell: Barnsley is covered by the Department's local offices at Barnsley, East and Barnsley, West, but their boundaries are not conterminous with those of the town of Barnsley. The total numbers of people receiving supplementary benefit from these offices and from Barnsley, West alone, on 10 December 1986 were:

	Number
Barnsley	19,387
Barnsley, West	8,284

Source: 100 per cent. count of cases in action.

Hospital (Eastbourne)

Mr. Gow asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects phase two of the district general hospital, Eastbourne to be completed and operational; and what is the estimated total cost of phase two.

Mrs. Currie: I understand from the South East Thames regional health authority that phase two of the district general hospital, Eastbourne is expected to be completed

on 31 December 1988 and operational in April 1990 at an estimated total cost (including fees and equipment) of £16 million.

GPs (Patient Lists)

Mr. Gow asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proposals he has to seek to improve the accuracy of the lists of patients of general practitioners.

Mr. Newton: Family practitioner committees are required to maintain up-to-date lists of patients for each doctor on their medical lists. The accuracy of this informatin is improving significantly as a result of using computers to maintain FPC records. A programme of computerisation is under way and is due to be completed by March 1988.

Psittacosis

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number of deaths in the last five years from psittacosis; if there are any plans to include psittacosis in the list of notifiable diseases; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Deaths recorded by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys as attributable to this disease were as follows:

	Number
1981	0
1982	1
1983	1
1984	0
1985	0
1986	[1]

[1] Not yet available (provisionally 2 in first 6 months).

There are no plans to make psittacosis a notifiable disease nationally.

Free Food for the Needy

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to permit the endorsement of pension books with records of receipts by pensioners of free food under the Free Food for the Needy scheme.

Mr. Major: I understand that some of the organisations distributing food under the European Community scheme sponsored by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food have been marking pension order books to show the receipt of food by pensioners and others. Although record-keeping by the food-distributing bodies is a matter for themselves, we cannot support the marking of pension books. The endorsement of pension books is not required for any social security purpose and may, in some circumstances, prejudice the encashment of these books.

Meningitis

Mr. Aspinwall asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps are being taken to discover the continuing high incidence of bacterial and viral meningitis in certain localities; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 16 February 1987, c. *510*]: Acute meningitis in its various forms is a notifiable disease within the terms of the Public Health (Control of Diseases) Act 1984. The incidence of the disease is therefore monitored continuously. In addition, the Department is supporting a research project at Stonehouse to measure the incidence of carriers in the population there.

Cervical Cancer

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Social Services to what factors he attributes the increase in the combined registrations for malignant neoplasm of cervix uteri and carcinoma-in-situ of cervix uteri among women under 35 years of age.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 18 February 1987]: The reasons underlying changes in the incidence of cervical cancer in any age group are not fully understood. The latest medical and epidemiological information and ideas are regularly reviewed by the expert and independent Committee on Gynaecological Cytology. The Government are deeply committed to reducing deaths from cervical cancer among women of all ages and have taken urgent steps to improve the effectiveness of the screening programme.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Personal Incomes

Mr. Forman asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* data from the most recent survey of personal incomes on *(a)* total income, *(b)* total deductions, *(c)* total income tax, *(d)* total tax units and *(e)* total tax units paying tax for each country in the United Kingdom and each standard region in England.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The latest available information is for 1984-85 and is given in the table. As with most published information from the survey of personal incomes, the information is confined to tax units with income above the pay-as-you-earn threshold (£2,000 in 1984-85). Coverage of the survey is incomplete below this level.

	Total income £ *million*	*Total deductions*[1] £ *million*	*Total income tax*[2] £ *million*	*No. of tax units Thousands*	*No. of tax-paying units Thousands*
United Kingdom:	191,000	1,210	37,300	21,900	20,500
England	163,000	1,100	32,100	18,600	17,400
Wales	7,650	49	1,380	961	875
Scotland	16,600	38	3,130	1,900	1,770
Northern Ireland	3,790	24	702	467	439
North	9,130	56	1,620	1,170	1,060

	Total income £ million	Total deductions[1] £ million	Total income tax[2] £ million	No. of tax units Thousands	No. of tax-paying units Thousands
Yorkshire and Humberside	14,500	63	2,640	1,750	1,620
North West	19,700	123	3,650	2,380	2,220
East Midlands	12,400	61	2,280	1,440	1,340
West Midlands	15,600	46	2,860	1,960	1,820
East Anglia	5,940	68	1,130	698	671
South East	68,300	566	14,500	7,050	6,710
South West	14,600	117	2,700	1,780	1,660

[1] Deductions do not include relief on mortgage interest given at source.
[2] Income tax liabilities have been calculated without deduction for reliefs given at source at basic rate, but after allowance for relief due in excess of basic rate.

Committee of Public Accounts (Recommendations)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will list those recommendations of the Committee of Public Accounts since 1983 affecting his Department which have been implemented.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer the hon. Member to the Treasury minutes published in response to the relevant PAC reports: Cmnd. 9178, 9325, 9368, 9452, 9755, 9859 and 9917. The Committee, on which the hon. Member serves, monitors departmental progress with accepted recommendations.

Privatised Industries (Value)

Sir Peter Hordern asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the value of privatised industries *(a)* at privatisation and *(b)* at privatisation uprated by the gross domestic product deflator.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The information for privatisation proceeds in each financial year and the figures adjusted to 1985-86 prices using the GDP deflator are as follows:

Year	Privatisation proceeds £ million	Privatisation proceeds (1985-86 prices) £ million
1979-80	370	597
1980-81	405	551
1981-82	493	611
1982-83	488	564
1983-84	1,142	1,262
1984-85	2,132	2,260
1985-86	2,702	2,702

The central estimate for the current year is £4·75 billion in cash terms, but it is too soon to know the exact outcome.

Industrial Buildings Allowance

Mr. Lawler asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer during the last year of operation, what was the cost of the industrial buildings allowance scheme for buildings of less than 1,000 and 1,500 square feet.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The small workshops allowance scheme expired on 26 March 1985. During the last two years of operation, the allowance was available only for workshops of up to 1,250 sq. ft. Detailed statistics are not available, but it is estimated that the cost of the full allowance in respect of 1984-85 was about £5 million.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer why he has been unable to include in the public expenditure White Paper manpower projections for local government, the National Health Service and nationalised industries; and if he will take steps to ensure that such forecasts can be included in next year's public expenditure White Paper.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave him on 11 February at column *233*.

The Government do not directly control manpower in local government, the National Health Service or nationalised industries and can provide projections of manpower only where they exercise direct responsibility.

Taxation

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the effect on the income of a family of four on average earnings of the changes in the level of income tax and value added tax, respectively, since 1979.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Figures for 1978-79 and 1986-87 are shown in the table.

	1978-79 £/week	1986-87 £/week
Average earnings	92·80	213·40
Income tax net of child benefit	13·32	27·36
VAT	2·42	10·22

The figures are for a family on male average earnings, with wife not working and with two children under 11. The level of average earnings in 1986-87 is illustrative and assumes 7·5 per cent. growth on 1985-86. Figures for income tax alone are not strictly comparable since 1978-79 figures are affected by child tax allowances. For information, income tax was £18·46 in 1978-79 and £41·50 in 1986-87. The estimates of VAT are derived from the 1985 family expenditure survey.

Public Sector Expenditure

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he is taking to ensure improved value for money in public sector expenditure.

Mr. MacGregor: In the annual review of public spending we look not only at the money spent but also at what is being achieved and how to get better value for the money. We use reviews and scrutinies to look in depth at particular areas; measures and targets for output and performance to set out in advance what a programme is

expected to achieve, by when and at what cost, and better financial management in departments for better choices in the day to day management of programmes.

Earnings (Reductions)

Mr. Meacher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the proportion of gross income paid in income tax, national insurance contributions and value added tax by a married man with a non-earning wife and two children at half, one, one and a half, two, three, five and 10 times national average earnings; and what were the comparable figures in 1979.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The available figures for 1978-79 and 1986-87 are in the table. VAT payments cannot reliably be estimated at 50 per cent. or above 150 per cent. of average earnings.

Tax and national insurance contribution as a percentage of gross earnings for a married man with a non-earning wife and two children

Multiple of average earnings	*1978-79*	*1986-87*
50 per cent.		
Income tax less child benefit	−4·1	−3·4
National insurance contribution	6·5	9·0
100 per cent.		
Income tax less child benefit	14·4	12·8
National insurance contribution	6·5	9·0
Value added tax	2·6	4·8
150 per cent.		
Income tax less child benefit	20·6	18·2
National insurance contribution	5·6	8·0
Value added tax	2·7	5·2
200 per cent.		
Income tax less child benefit	23·7	21·6
National insurance contribution	4·2	6·0
300 per cent.		
Income tax less child benefit	32·0	29·8
National insurance contribution	2·8	4·0
500 per cent.		
Income tax less child benefit	47·1	40·5
National insurance contribution	1·7	2·4
1,000 per cent.		
Income tax less child benefit	64·8	50·2
National insurance contribution	0·8	1·2

Note:

Average earnings are taken to be the average gross weekly earnings of full-time males on adult rates with pay unaffected by absence. The figure for 1986-87 is illustrative and assumes 7½ per cent. growth on 1985-86. The estimates of value added tax are derived from the 1985 Family Expenditure Survey. The figures for income tax are shown net of child benefit: figures for income tax alone would not be comparable since 1978-79 figures are affected by child tax allowances.

Imports

Mr. Meacher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the marginal propensity to import for each additional increment of consumer demand for each year since 1979.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

EC Rebate

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the corrected rebate for the European Economic Community payable in respect of 1986 contributions; and when he expects to receive it.

Mr. Brooke: The latest estimate of the United Kingdom's abatement in respect of 1986 of £1,338 million (2020 mecu) is published in table 3.3.1 of the "Public Expenditure" White Paper 1987-8 (Cm 56-II). We expect to receive 1,633 mecu (£1,080 million) in the main budget for 1987 and the balance no later than the main budget for 1988.

Note: figures quoted at PEWP rate of £1 = 1.51 ecus.

European Investment Bank

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer why he included contributions to the European Investment Bank within the amounts of the United Kingdom's contribution to the Community in the public expenditure Blue Paper; if this has been the traditional practice of Her Majesty's Government; if such contributions rank for calculation of United Kingdom abatement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: It is the established practice to include contributions to the European Investment Bank in the public expenditure White Paper under the heading "net payments to Community institutions" because the EIB is a Community organisation set up under the Treaty of Rome. Since the EIB's expenditure and revenue do not form part of the Community budget, our contributions to the EIB are not included in the White Paper figures for our net contribution to the Community budget. Nor do they rank for calculation of the United Kingdom abatement under the Fontainebleau agreement.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total sum which has been subscribed to the European Investment Bank by the United Kingdom since 1973; and what dividends have been received from this investment during those years.

Mr. Brooke: The subscribed capital of the European Investment Bank is 28,800 million ecus (at current exchange rates, about £21,429 million). The United Kingdom share of this is 5,509 million ecus (about £4,099 million). Only a small part of subscribed capital is actually paid in. Since 1973, United Kingdom payments have been £207.4 million.

Upon joining the EIB, the United Kingdom also paid a contribution of £20.1 million to the EIB reserves. Further, there is in progress at the moment a small redistribution of the reserves of the EIB resulting from a decision in 1985 that Italy should have the same subscribed capital as Germany, France and the United Kingdom; so far this has resulted in a rebate to the United Kingdom of some £4.4 million. The EIB does not pay dividends.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total sum which has been lent by the European investment bank since 1973; and what is the largest single loan offered for a project during the period.

Mr. Brooke: In the years 1973 to 1986, European Investment Bank own resources loans and guarantees totalled 44,016·5 million ecus. Using average £/ecu exchange rates for each of the years, this was approximately equivalent to £26,611 million. Of this total,

39,814·5 million ecus was for loans inside the Community, including loans in the United Kingdom totalling 7,957·0 million ecus (approximately equivalent to £4,842 million).

The EIB has lent for many large projects in the Community. Examples of large loans disbursed over a number of years include:

(i) 1,952 million ecus for the European Gas Network (at current exchange rates roughly £1,450 million.)
(ii) a billion ecus to the South of Scotland Electricity Board for development of its electricity network (at current exchange rates roughly £740 million).
(iii) a billion ecus to Electricite de France.

Maintenance Payments

Mr. Favell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will state the cost of the revenue forgone of allowing court maintenance payments to children against tax during the last fiscal year.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 February 1987, c. *544*]: I regret that the information requested is not available. However, the cost of taxing maintenance payments to both children and former spouses as the income of the recipient rather than of the payer is estimated to be about £100 million in 1986-87.

Government Trading Fund

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table updating the reply of 25 October 1984, columns 678-9, on the numbers of employees in Government trading funds; if he will additionally provide comparable information on the Royal dockyards, Ordnance Survey and the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority.

Mr. McGregor [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 February 1987, c. 545]: The information is as follows:

Civil Service Trading Funds (Staff in Post, 1 April)

	1985	*1986*
HMSO	3,463	3,378
The Crown Suppliers	1,934	1,938
Royal Mint	959	990
Royal Ordnance Factories	—	—

Royal Dockyards

Details of the total number of civilians serving in the Royal Dockyards at 1 April in the period 1970 to 1984 were provided to the hon. Member by my hon. Friend (Mr. John Lee) the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement in an Answer on 26 October 1984 (OR Vol. 65 cols. 739-40).

Comparable figures for 1 April 1985 and 1 April 1986 are as follows:

	1985	*1986*
Portsmouth	—	—
Devonport	13,344	12,509
Chatham	—	—
Rosyth	6,421	6,240
Gibraltar	—	—
Malta	—	—
TOTAL	19,765	18,749

UKAEA and Ordnance Survey

Date	*UKAEA*	*Ordnance Survey*
1 April 1970	29,832	4,701
1 April 1971	[1]19,802	4,655
1 April 1972	19,205	4,630
1 April 1973	[2]13,077	4,656
1 April 1974	12,719	4,533
1 April 1975	13,025	4,566
1 April 1976	13,580	4,444
1 April 1977	13,282	4,147
1 April 1978	13,347	3,775
1 April 1979	13,579	3,586
1 April 1980	13,919	3,433
1 April 1981	14,422	3,364
1 April 1982	14,350	3,143
1 April 1983	14,354	2,964
1 April 1984	14,008	2,814
1 April 1985	13,762	2,962
1 April 1986	13,916	2,981

[1] The following numbers of staff in brackets transferred on 1 April 1971 to British Nuclear Fuels (8,894), Amersham International (703) and the National Radiological Protection Board (28).

[2] On 1 April 1973 5,560 staff transferred to the Ministry of Defence.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Ulyana Germanyuk

Sir Peter Blaker asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Soviet authorities, under the Helsinki declaration of 1975, concerning the imprisonment in Kharkov of Ulyana Germanyuk.

Mr. Renton: We take every suitable opportunity to raise human rights issues with the Soviet authorities. I raised the plight of religious believers in my talks in Moscow in January. We shall continue to press for an end to the unjustifiable persecution of Soviet Christians, and for the release of those who are imprisoned.

Non-Self-governing Territories

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to seek to amend article 73 of the United Nations charter to provide for a right for self-determination for non-self-governing territories.

Mr. Eggar: No. Article 73 of the United Nations charter already provides that the interests of the inhabitants of non-self-governing territories are paramount, and for the development of their free political institutions. In addition, the United Kingdom and numerous other states are party to either the international covenant on civil and political rights or the international covenant on economic, social and cultural rights drawn up by the United Nations, each of which states in its article 1 that

"All peoples have the right of self-determination".

Article 1 further requires states administering non-self-governing territories to promote the realisation of the right of self-determination.

Palestine Refugees (Lebanon)

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking through international organisations to assist Palestinians in the refugee camps in the Lebanon.

Mr. Renton: Together with our European partners and other members of the Security Council we have urged that relief agencies should carry out their vital humanitarian work unhindered. We are already contributing to ICRC and UNRWA and are ready to consider urgently any further requests for emergency aid.

Hawk Aircraft

Mr. Terry Davis asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has taken any steps to ensure that Hawk aircraft supplied by the United Kingdom are not used by the Indonesian Government in East Timor.

Mr. Renton: The Hawk aircraft were supplied for Indonesia's legitimate training and defence needs. After delivery we do not monitor on a regular basis the use which a purchaser makes of such equipment. It would not be practicable to do so. However, we have no evidence to suggest that Hawk aircraft have been used in East Timor.

Diplomatic Immunity

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if, pursuant to his answer of 11 February, *Offical Report*, column *231*, he will list the country of origin of the 11 diplomats in respect of whom waivers have been requested;

(2) if he will list all the countries of origin of diplomats or their families, and offences alleged, in respect of which Her Majesty's Government have requested a waiver of diplomatic immunity in each year since 1982.

Mr. Eggar: It has not been our practice to identify countries of origin when giving statistics about reported criminal offences by diplomats.

Hong Kong

Mr. Lilley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the annual report on Hong Kong will be laid before Parliament.

Mr. Renton: I am laying the annual report on Hong Kong before Parliament today. It will be published on 20 February.

Overseas Students

Sir Anthony Kershaw asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards overseas students in the light of the document published by the Overseas Students Trust, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: On 9 June 1982 my predecessor welcomed the Overseas Students Trust's major report on overseas student policy. The Government now welcome this follow-up report as another constructive contribution to the development of policy in this important sector.

I note that the report fully supports the general lines of the Government's policy to welcome overseas students and to provide awards for a wide range of selected candidates. The report will now be carefully considered in the interdepartmental group on overseas student matters, and at the forthcoming round table meeting on overseas student affairs. This latter body involves interested individuals and organisations as well as Government Departments, and will be chaired by my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science.

Strategic Defence Initiative

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has made to the United States of America about the implications for continued United Kingdom participation in the strategic defence initiative of Her Majesty's Government's interpretation of those parts of the anti-ballistic missile treaty dealing with the development, testing and deployment of anti-ballistic missile systems or components; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) on 19 February at column 1054.

United Nations

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the total United Kingdom contribution to the United Nations and all its related agencies for the most recent 12 months for which figures are available, and for the preceding 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The total United Kingdom contributions to the United Nations and its agencies in 1986 was £132,760,885. The equivalent amount in 1985 was £155,219,130. The fall in value of the dollar in which many budgets are assessed is in large part responsible for the difference.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 20 February 1987

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Student Grants

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the numbers of students in receipt of a maximum grant, part grant and minimum grant, respectively, for each year since 1978-79 to the latest date for which figures are available, expressing these figures both in actual (absolute), and percentage terms.

Mr. Walden: The information is as follows:

All students with a mandatory or full value discretionary award[1]

England and Wales — *Academic years*

	1978-79		*1979-80*		*1980-81*		*1981-82*		*1982-83*	
	thousands	*per cent.*	*thousands*	*per cent.*	*thousands*	*per cent.*	*thousands*	*per cent.*	*thousands*	*per cent.*
Maximum award	132·2	36	144·0	39	151·9	40	159·2	40	152·4	37
Part award	212·0	57	197·0	53	196·9	52	200·7	50	216·1	52
Minimum award	25·1	7	28·4	8	30·6	8	39·4	10	47·5	11
Total numbers of students	369·3	100	369·4	100	379·4	100	399·3	100	416·0	100

[1] Up to and including 1982-83, information was collected jointly in respect of all mandatory and full value discretionary award holders; thereafter, in respect of mandatory award-holders alone.

All students with mandatory awards only[1]

England and Wales — *Academic years*

	1983-84		*1984-85*	
	thousands	*per cent.*	*thousands*	*per cent.*
Maximum award	137·5	36	134·8	35
Part award	198·4	51	181·6	47
Minimum award	48·7	13	71·0	18
Total number of students	384·6	100	387·4	100

[1] Up to and including 1982-83, information was collected jointly in respect of all mandatory and full value discretionary award holders; thereafter, in respect of mandatory award-holders alone.

Further Education

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many pupils remained in education after *(a)* 16 years, and *(b)* 17 years, but under 19 years, in each local education authority in England at the latest date for which figures are available; and what was the amount granted in discretionary awards by each local education authority in that year.

Mrs. Rumbold: The table provides expenditure figures on lesser value discretionary awards, but does not include expenditure in support of school pupils. Expenditure information is not collected by students' age, but practically all lesser value award holders will fall within the 16-18 age group. The student numbers are given for 16 and 17-year-olds in full-time education at school and in non-advanced further education. Figures for 17 and 18-year-olds together are not readily available.

Expenditure on lesser value discretionary awards and full-time student numbers by LEA: 1984-85

	Academic year 1984-85		
	Expenditure on Lesser Value Discretionary Awards (£'000)	*Persons in full-time education (schools and FE[1])*	
		16 year olds (thousands)	*17 year olds (thousands)*
Barking	114·5	0·7	0·4
Barnet	21·7	2·4	1·8
Bexley	34·8	1·6	1·1
Brent	0·0	1·8	1·4
Bromley	26·4	2·0	1·3
Croydon	169·7	2·0	1·3
Ealing	224·7	1·8	1·3
Enfield	165·0	1·9	1·3
Haringey	201·8	1·3	0·9
Harrow	15·9	1·6	1·1
Havering	187·5	1·6	1·0
Hillingdon	30·1	1·4	0·9
Hounslow	0·0	1·5	0·9
Kingston upon Thames	19·6	0·9	0·6
Merton	44·1	1·2	0·8
Newham	192·0	1·5	0·9
Redbridge	18·5	1·5	1·0
Richmond upon Thames	31·9	0·8	0·6
Sutton	64·5	1·3	0·9
Waltham Forest	193·0	1·4	0·9
Inner London	1,440·6	12·8	8·0
Birmingham	95·7	7·0	4·3
Coventry	172·1	2·1	1·5
Dudley	122·5	2·1	1·4
Sandwell	61·9	1·7	1·2
Solihull	3·2	1·6	1·3
Walsall	280·2	1·8	1·3

	Academic year 1984-85		
	Expenditure on Lesser Value Discretionary Awards (£'000)	Persons in full-time education (schools and FE[1])	
		16 year olds (thousands)	17 year olds (thousands)
Wolverhampton	2·4	1·7	1·1
Knowsley	955·9	1·0	0·6
Liverpool	1,218·2	3·2	2·1
St. Helens	236·1	1·3	0·9
Sefton	13·7	2·5	1·6
Wirral	181·8	2·3	1·7
Bolton	387·5	1·7	1·3
Bury	236·8	1·3	0·8
Manchester	516·9	2·7	2·0
Oldham	197·4	1·1	0·7
Rochdale	124·3	1·2	0·9
Salford	252·6	1·4	0·9
Stockport	249·7	2·0	1·5
Tameside	94·9	1·3	0·9
Trafford	159·2	1·4	01·2
Wigan	326·3	2·3	1·5
Barnsley	156·7	1·3	0·8
Doncaster	80·9	1·7	1·2
Rotherham	233·4	1·6	1·0
Sheffield	796·5	3·5	2·2
Bradford	107·9	2·7	1·8
Calderdale	50·3	1·2	0·9
Kirklees	443·1	2·7	1·8
Leeds	647·7	4·5	2·8
Wakefield	205·9	2·0	1·1
Gateshead	109·4	1·2	0·7
Newcastle upon Tyne	174·6	1·5	0·9
North Tyneside	283·2	1·3	7·7
South Tyneside	187·5	0·8	0·5
Sunderland	48·7	1·6	1·1
Isles of Scilly	24·0	0·0	0·0
Avon	726·2	5·7	3·9
Bedfordshire	119·5	3·5	2·4
Berkshire	185·1	5·3	3·4
Buckinghamshire	116·0	4·5	3·4
Cambridgeshire	2·4	3·9	2·6
Cheshire	0·8	6·9	5·0
Cleveland	297·6	4·1	2·7
Cornwall	488·6	3·2	2·2
Cumbria	584·5	3·1	1·9
Derbyshire	1,547·3	5·9	4·1
Devon	305·6	6·0	4·2
Dorset	250·2	3·6	2·5
Durham	331·2	3·4	2·2
East Sussex	1,004·8	4·1	2·9
Essex	2,092·3	9·8	6·4
Gloucestershire	556·4	3·2	2·3
Hampshire	709·3	10·4	7·1
Hereford and Worcester	52·9	4·2	3·1
Hertfordshire	625·4	7·9	5·6
Humberside	768·3	5·5	3·4
Isle of Wight	50·9	0·8	0·6
Kent	1,208·7	10·9	7·4
Lancashire	1,709·4	8·3	6·2
Leicestershire	284·2	6·2	4·2
Lincolnshire	165·8	3·6	2·6
Norfolk	649·9	4·2	2·7
North Yorkshire	827·2	4·9	3·6
Northamptonshire	45·6	3·6	2·4
Northumberland	444·0	2·0	1·2
Nottinghamshire	341·2	5·7	4·1
Oxfordshire	0·0	3·9	2·5
Salop	79·9	2·7	2·0
Somerset	298·9	2·9	1·8
Staffordshire	240·9	6·6	4·6
Suffolk	75·4	3·4	2·1
Surrey	133·0	7·3	5·2
Warwickshire	59·2	3·6	2·6
West Sussex	59·7	4·8	3·3
Wiltshire	238·6	3·6	2·4

[1]Including some sandwich students.

Training (Expenditure)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what discussions have taken place between officials of his Department and the Manpower Services Commission on increasing provision of adult training courses at colleges of further education in 1987-88 and beyond; what account has been taken in such discussions of the fees charged by colleges of further education in relation to fees at Manpower Services Commission skillcentres; what information is available to his Department on the comparative value for money offered by colleges of further education in providing such courses; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Officials from my Department and the Manpower Services Commission are currently engaged in discussions with the local authority associations for England and Wales about the level of fees to be charged for MSC funded adult training courses provided by colleges of further education in the 1987-88 academic year. The commissioning of provision by the MSC and the account it takes of the comparative costs of college courses and those provided by the commission's skills training agency are matters for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment.

Schools (Capital Expenditure)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Yeovil on 16 February, *Official Report*, column 443, concerning local education authorities' allocations of prescribed capital expenditure on schools for 1987-88, when the formula used in such allocations was last revised or updated; if he will place copies of the current formula in the Library; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The formula has been in use in broadly the same form since the 1981-82 allocations. It involves the distribution of resources in part pro rata to those elements of LEAs' planned schools expenditure which are not allowed for elsewhere in the allocations methodology; and in part pro rata to the incidence of substandard school accommodation in each authority's area.

Further and Higher Education (Capital Expenditure)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) further to his reply to the hon. Member for Yeovil on 16 February, *Official Report*, column 443, concerning local education authorities' allocations of prescribed capital expenditure on further

and higher education for 1987-88, if he will publish a table showing for each local education authority a breakdown of capital allocation into *(a)* committed expenditure, *(b)* expenditure on tertiary projects arising from statutory proposals to remove surplus places, *(c)* expenditure on provision of computers and technical equipment and *(d)* other expenditure; and if he will make a statement;

(2) further to his reply to the hon. Member for Yeovil on 16 February, *Official Report*, column 443, concerning local education authorities' allocations of prescribed capital expenditure on schools for 1987-88, if he will publish a table showing for each local education authority a breakdown of capital allocation into *(a)* committed expenditure, *(b)* expenditure on projects required to meet basic need, *(c)* expenditure required in connection with the removal of surplus school places, and *(d)* other expenditure; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: No. Local authorities receive block allocations in respect of prescribed capital expenditure which they are free to use in accordance with their own priorities.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what analyses are available to his Department of expenditure on *(a)* education support grants, *(b)* technical and vocational education initiative, *(c)* in-service training (INSET); if he will publish an analysis of expenditure on each such programme in each of the last three years showing (i) the amount of grant given for new projects; (ii) the proportion of total expenditure on such projects calculated to be provided by the grant; (iii) the amount of grant given for continuation of existing projects; (iv) the proportion of total expenditure on existing projects in that year calculated to be provided by the grant; (v) the total outturn expenditure on all grant-related projects, including expenditure from other sources; (vi) the overall proportion of such outturn expenditure provided by the grant; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold [*pursuant to her reply*, 18 February 1987]: The available information is given in the table. All the figures are based on the amount of grant paid out in each financial year.

England

	1984-85		*1985-86*		*1986-87*[1]	
	Grant	*Proportion of expenditure covered by grant*	*Grant*	*Proportion of expenditure covered by grant*	*Grant*	*Proportion of expenditure covered by grant*
	£ million	*Per cent.*	*£ million*	*Per cent.*	*£ million*	*Per cent.*
Education Support Grants (ESG)[2]						
New activities	nil	nil	10	70	38	70
Continuation of existing projects	nil	nil	nil	nil	7	70
Inservice Training Grants (INSET)						
New activities	5	90	10	90	21	90
Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI)[3]						
New activities	13	100	3	100	7	100
Continuation of existing projects	9	100	24	100	29	100
TVEI related In-service Training (TRIST)[3]						
New activities	nil	nil	5	100	15	100

[1] The figures are estimates of the amount of grant that will be paid during 1986-87.
[2] The split of 1986-87 grant into new and continuing categories is estimated on the basis of the total approved expenditure for the year.
[3] TVEI and TRIST are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment.

ENERGY

British Nuclear Fuels

Mr. Corrie asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about the financial support given to British Nuclear Fuels plc for centrifuge collaboration.

Mr. Goodlad: My Department has been considering with BNFL the terms of the centrifuge agreement reached between the Department of Trade and Industry and BNFL which was announced to the House on 24 July 1973 at columns 385-6. Under the terms of the agreement, the Government provided £47·8 million in financial support to BNFL for the collaboration with the Netherlands and West Germany on exploitation of the gas centrifuge process for enriching uranium. The agreement provided for the grant to be repaid out of profits earned from subsequent commercial exploitation of the centrifuge process and for the Department to take a continuing share of the profits for a further period. Such payments would be made annually, once profits materialised, until 2002-03. It has now been agreed that these payments should be commuted into a single lump sum. The amount agreed is £47·5 million; it will be paid shortly and brought to account as a Consolidated Fund extra receipt on class VI, vote 2.

Disused Offshore Platforms

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the recent report of the International Maritime Organisation working group on removal of disused offshore platforms.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I have today arranged for copies of the report to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Power Stations

Mr. Barron asked the Secretary of State for Energy what applications he has received from the Central Electricity Generating Board and the South of Scotland Electricity Board for coal-fired power stations in the next five years, showing the sites and capacities.

Mr. Lang: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. and learned Friend has received no such applications.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Ten-minute Rule Bills

Mr. McLoughlin asked the Lord Privy Seal how many ten-minute rule Bills have been promoted over the last 20 years; and how many of these have reached the statute book; and if he will publish a table showing the relevant numbers in each year.

Mr. Biffen: Following is the information:

Session	*Ten-minute rule motions moved*	*Ten-minute rule Bills introduced*	*Enacted*
1966-67	64	56	4
1967-68	42	38	3
1968-69	47	39	4
1969-70	30	22	1
1970-71	30	26	0
1971-72	44	42	0
1972-73	47	45	3
1973-74	12	10	0
1974	20	18	0
1974-75	61	56	0
1975-76	63	46	0
1976-77	46	38	0
1977-78	50	35	0
1978-79	22	20	0
1979-80	75	65	0
1980-81	50	35	1
1981-82	58	52	0
1982-83	35	31	1
1983-84	72	66	0
1984-85	56	43	2
1985-86	58	56	0
[1]1986-87	10	8	0

[1] To 16 February 1987.

TRANSPORT

Search and Rescue Helicopter Service

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) when he last discussed the question of locating a helicopter on the west coast of Scotland for search and rescue work with the United Kingdom Search and Rescue Committee; and what was the result of these discussions;

(2) what further progress he has made in setting a date for locating a helicopter on the west coast of Scotland for search and rescue work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: We have not discussed Search and Rescue helicopter coverage for north-west Scotland with the United Kingdom Search and Rescue Committee as a body but receive regular reports from its chairman.

Tendering action is in hand. The precise date on which a search and rescue helicopter will be provided for north-west Scotland will depend on consideration of the responses to invitations. It will, of course, be as soon as possible.

Weighbridges

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the locations of the five weighbridges in the west midlands; and how many days each has *(a)* been used and *(b)* not been available for use since 30 June 1986.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The five weighbridges provided in the west midland traffic area are located at A449 Warndon, M5 Quinton, A45 Dunchurch, A5 Wall and M6 Doxey. West midland traffic examiners have carried out 121 vehicle weight checks at these weighbridge sites since July 1986. A further 26 weigh checks have been held using other public or private weighbridges. All of the Department's weighbridges were in operation except for the A5 Wall site, which was out of operation for a total of 16 days in September and November, and the A45 Dunchurch site, which has been out of operation since mid-November and where remedial work is in hand.

Local authority trading standards staff and the police also use the Department's weighbridge sites but figures for how often the west midland sites have been used by these other enforcement agencies are not available.

Coaches (Speed Governors)

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to take action to require the fitting of speed governors to coaches.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Work on a British standard for speed limiters is almost complete. We expect to be able to consult interested parties on a regulation based on the standard within the next two months.

British Airways

Mr. Bill Walker asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will issue guidelines to the Civil Aviation Authority following the privatisation of British Airways, with a view to ensuring free and fair competition in British civil aviation.

Mr. Michael Spicer: It remains one of the main objectives of the Government's airline policy to ensure adequate safeguards against anti-competitive or predatory behaviour. At my right hon. Friend's request the CAA is currently considering what information it needs to monitor airlines' activities. He has no power, however, to issue guidelines to the CAA and the authority must in any case be bound by its duties under the Civil Aviation Act 1982. But as the 1984 White Paper "Airline Competition Policy" (Cmnd. 9366) made clear, the Government are satisfied that the authority's existing powers are adequate in this respect.

Vehicle Excise Duty

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total revenue received in respect of road fund licences in 1985-86 for both private and commercial vehicles.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Vehicle excise duty collected in the United Kingdom in 1985-86 on private and goods vehicles amounted to £2,384 million, of which £1,936 million related to private and light goods vehicles up to 1,525 kgs, and £448 million to goods vehicles above that weight.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the cost of collection of road fund licences for private and commercial vehicles in 1985-86.

Mr. Michael Spicer: A separate figure for the cost of collection of vehicle excise duty is not available. The combined cost of collecting VED and registering vehicles in the United Kingdom in 1985-86 was £94 million.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate the level of evasion of road fund licences in 1985-86 as a percentage of vehicles on the road.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The latest estimates of VED evasion in Great Britain are based on a survey undertaken in June 1984. Some 5 per cent. of the vehicles then in use on the roads were estimated to be unlicensed. The gross loss of revenue from evasion was assessed at about 4 per cent., equivalent to some £99 million in 1985-86 excluding recoveries from enforcement. No recent Northern Ireland estimates are available.

NORTHERN IRELAND

European Regional Development Fund

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what grants have been allocated to Northern Ireland from the European regional development fund during each year since its inception; how many of these allocations have been decommitted each year; and for what reasons.

Mr. Viggers The number and value of commitments to Northern Ireland from the European regional development fund and of decommitments during each year since the Fund's inception are contained in the table below. Commitments on industry projects have been decommitted either in full or in part because of failure to achieve job creation targets, failure to complete an investment as envisaged when commitment was sought or total failure of the company. Decommitments on infrastructure projects generally arise through overestimates of expenditure and consequent over-commitment or failure to proceed with projects as originally envisaged.

	Commitments		*Decommitments*	
Year	*Number*	£	£	*Number*
1975	16	7,751,305	454,351	4
1976	80	7,204,676	816,233	20
1977	40	8,152,304	2,890,294	18
1978	26	14,255,915	453,153	6
1979	16	27,746,900	9,165,755	3
1980	46	19,225,118	4,719,071	9
1981	60	27,922,662	3,065,094	4
1982	85	23,448,877	420,000	2
1983	141	21,907,804	76,500	1
1984	111	20,067,556	420,475	4
1985	150	23,191,294	228,633	5
1986	219	46,541,557	—	—
Totals	990	247,415,968	22,709,559	76

EMPLOYMENT

Petroleum Products and Explosive Substances (Licence Fees)

Mr. Beith asked the Paymaster General (1) if he will list the fees charged for licences to store petroleum products; if he will indicate the proportion of those fees which relate to the time of the police or fire service; and if he will publish the work sheets upon which that portion of the fee has been calculated;

(2) if he will list the fees charged under the Explosives Acts; if he will indicate the proportion of those fees which relate to police time; and if he will publish the work sheets which form the basis for the charge made in respect of the time of the police.

Mr. Trippier: The tables set out the fees charged for licences under the Explosives Act and The Petroleum (Consolidation) Act. The fees are intended to cover the full economic costs of administering applications for, and issue of, licences. It is not possible to identify separately an element for police or fire service time.

Fees payable for licences issued under the provisions of the Explosives Act 1875

	£
Fees payable to Health and Safety Executive	
Original approval of premises in which acetylene is to be manufactured or kept	235
Amendment of an approval of premises in which acetylene is to be manufactured or kept	37
Approval of apparatus in which acetylene is to be manufactured or kept	14
Licence for importation of compressed acetylene	14
Comparison of a porus substance with a sample porous substance	14
Approval of an acetylene cylinder design	36
Original approval of premises in which acetylene is compressed	235
Amendment of an approval of premises in which acetylene is compressed	37
Authorisation of an explosive to be manufactured for general sale or to be imported for general sale, with or without a licence	12
Grant of an original special packing authority under Rule 12 of the Packing of Explosive for Conveyance Rules 1949	50
Amendment to a special packing authority as above	14
Grant of an ammonium nitrate mixture licence under Article 3 of the Ammonium Nitrate Mixtures Exemption Order 1967	18
Test work in connection with: an application for a licence to be granted under or in pursuance of Section 40(9) of the Explosives Act 1875 for the importation of explosives which are not at the time of application authorised to be manufactured for general sale or imported for general sale	25 per man hour
Test work in connection with: an application for approval of apparatus in which acetylene is to be manufactured or kept as above	25 per man hour
Test work in connection with: an application for comparison of a porus substance with a sample porous substance	25 per man hour
Test work in connection with: an application for authorisation of an explosive to be manufactured for general sale or to be imported for general sale, with or without a licence	25 per man hour
Factory licence	470
Additional fee for each building or other place in which explosives are to be made or kept	26
Factory amending licence	85
Additional fee for each building or other place to be specified in the amending licence and in which explosives are to be made or kept	6

	£
Replacement of factory licence or factory amending licence if lost	12·50
Magazine licence	345
Additional fee for each building or other place in which explosives are to be made or kept	26
Magazine amending licence	31
Additional fee for each building or other place to be specified in the amending licence and in which explosives are to be made or kept	6
Replacement of magazine licence or magazine amending licence if lost	12·50
Licence for importation of explosives	26·50
Licence for the importation of explosives which are not to be distributed in Great Britain but imported for transhipment only	26·50
Replacement of either of the above importation licences if lost	13
The issue of a new licence replacing the original and incorporating an amendment	9
Fees payable to Local Authorities	
A store licence	36
Renewal of a store licence	36
Registration and renewal of premises for the keeping of explosives with a local authority	6

Fees payable for licences issued under the provisions of the Petroleum (Consolidation) Act 1928

	Amount
A licence to keep a quantity—	
Not exceeding 2,500 litres	£20 per annum
Exceeding 2,500 litres, not exceeding 50,000 litres	£30 per annum
Exceeding 50,000 litres	£59 per annum
Transfer of a licence	£5 each

Community Programme

Dr. Godman asked the Paymaster General if, pursuant to his answer of 16 February, *Official Report*, column 427, he will publish details of the numbers and position of those involved, their offences and the sentences of the nine convicted to date.

Mr. Lee: The information requested is provided in the table:

	Number of people involved	*Position*	*Offences (described in lay terms)*	*Sentence (described in lay terms)*
1.	1	Sponsor	Deception (6 charges)	9 months' imprisonment on each count to run concurrently
2.	1	Participant	Theft by deception	120 hours' Community Service; ordered to pay £341 compensation
3.	1	Book keeper	Embezzlement	18 months' suspended sentence
4.	1	Finance manager	Theft; false accounting; forgery	4 months' imprisonment
5.	1	Manager	Theft; receipt of stolen items (2 charges)	9 months' suspended sentence; restitution order for £150 (materials costs); ordered to pay £250 towards court costs
6.	1	Participant	Deception	100 hours' Community Service; ordered to pay £100 compensation
7.	1	Participant	Deception (3 charges)	150 hours' Community Service on each count to run concurrently; ordered to pay £650 compensation
8.	1	Participant	Theft	Fined £50; bound over for 1 year
9.	1	MSC staff	Theft (5 charges)	2 years' imprisonment

Note

The details of offences and sentences are provided from information held centrally by the Manpower Services Commission and may not agree in precise terms with court records.

Dr. Godman asked the Paymaster General if he will place a copy of the report of the Manpower Services Commission inquiry into certain community programme projects in the west of Scotland in the Library.

Mr. Lee: The Manpower Services Commission's report of the inquiry is an internal document which includes information on the conduct of individual members of its staff.

Dr. Godman asked the Paymaster General if the Strathclyde police were involved in the Manpower Services Commission inquiry into certain community programme projects in the west of Scotland.

Mr. Lee: The police have not been involved in the Manpower Services Commission inquiry.

Manpower Services Commission (Induction Training)

Dr. Godman asked the Paymaster General if appointees to Manpower Services Commission area manpower boards receive induction training when taking up their appointments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Yes. Training for area manpower board members is an ongoing process and is arranged locally by the board secretary in order to tailor the training to meet particular needs. Training includes:

Provision of information documents (such as the AMB guide, which contains detailed guidance on the work of boards, briefing packs and booklets), presentations and briefing sessions; and visits to local MSC schemes.

Community Schemes and YTS

Mr. Winnick asked the Paymaster General if he will give the total number of those on all kinds of community

schemes and YTS in *(a)* the west midlands region *(b)* the black country area of the west midlands and *(c)* the Walsall travel-to-work area.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 February 1987]: The most recent figures for December show that the total numbers of people on the community programme, community industry and the voluntary projects programme were as follows:

	West Midlands	*Black[1] Country*	*Walsall[2] Wolverhampton*
Community Programme	27,152	8,231	4,502
Voluntary Projects Programme	1,224	232	97
Community Industry	278	—	—
TOTAL	28,654	8,463	4,599
In January the numbers on YTS were	44,942	13,804	2,864

[1] The black country figures include Dudley, Sandwell, Wolverhampton and Walsall.

[2] It is not possible to give figures for the Walsall travel-to-work area. The figures given are for Walsall and Wolverhampton.

WALES

Sheep

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has on *(a)* the average size of sheep flocks in Wales and *(b)* comparable sheep flocks in the rest of the European Economic Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The information is as follows:

(a) The average size of sheep flocks[1] in Wales in recent years was as follows:

	Size
1983	526
1984	540
1985	541
1986	[2]554

Source: June agricultural census, main holdings only.

(b) The average size of sheep flocks[1] in the countries in the European Economic Community in 1983, the latest year for which data are available, are as follows:

	Size
Belgium	15
Denmark	14
France	66
Greece	37
Ireland	92
Italy	38
Luxembourg	13
Netherlands	38
United Kingdom	397
West Germany	25
Average of the 10 countries	89

Source: EEC Farm Structure Survey published in "Farm Structure 1983: Main Results".

[1] A flock is the number of sheep on a farm. Flocks include all sheep and lambs.

[2] Provisional.

Parrot Corporation

Mr. Abse asked the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the total cost to public funds of each current job at Parrot factory in Cwmbran new town; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Welsh Office financial assistance payable to the project and the accumulated value of the associated rent concession provided by the Welsh Development Agency amounts to about £6,900 per person currently employed by the company at Cwmbran. The Welsh Development Agency has also made a commercial investment in the company of £1·658 million, on which it expects to make a return.

Roads (Deeside)

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer on Monday 16 February, *Official Report*, column *451*, if he will specify in each of the three cases mentioned the improvements that would have to be made to the roads on the eastern side of the River Dee if, in each case, the crossing was carrying traffic at capacity.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: In the case where additional capacity can be provided by widening the A494 trunk road where it crosses the River Dee, the trunk road on the eastern side would have to be improved by adding a third lane in each direction. With construction of a local link or an outer link, the trunk road on the eastern side of the River Dee would not need improvement.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer on Monday 16 February, *Official Report*, column *451*, if he will estimate the daily volume of traffic which he expects to cross the River Dee in the Queensferry area in *(a)* five, *(b)* 10 and *(c)* 15 years' time.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The forecast annual average daily volumes of traffic crossing the two River Dee bridges in the Queensferry area in 1992, 1997 and 2002 are:

	1992	*1997*	*2002*
A494 trunk road bridge	44,000	51,000	58,000
Old B road	13,000	14,000	15,000

GPs (Patient Lists)

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 16 February, *Official Report*, column *451*, what are the reasons for the higher average figure of patients on general practitioners' lists in Rhyl compared with Clwyd; and whether he proposes to take any action to reduce the figure.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The size of general medical practitioners' lists relate directly to the number of doctors available in the practice area. Relative to population there are fewer doctors in Rhyl than in the rest of Clwyd. General medical practitioners are independent business men contracted to the National Health Service. The control of the distribution of general medical practitioners in England and Wales is the responsibility of the medical practices committee — a body independent of Government. This control is exercised negatively, i.e. the medical practices committee cannot direct doctors to any particular area but it can tell them where they may not

practise. There is no mechanism available to Health Ministers to intervene. I am advised that, in respect of the Rhyl practice area, the medical practices committee would routinely approve applications for properly qualified doctors to be included in the medical list of Clwyd family practitioner committee.

NHS Staff

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the total of job losses by category of worker since 1979 in the National Health Service by region and district.

Mr. Mark Robinson [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 February 1987, c. *83-6*]: I am afraid that, due to a clerical error, some figures given in my reply to the hon. Gentleman's recent question about job losses in the NHS in Wales since 1979 were incorrect. The figures concerned relate to nursing and midwifery staff in Dyfed (including Pembrokeshire), with consequential errors in the total figures for those authorities and for Wales. The correct figures are shown in the following table.

National Health Service staff in post in Wales on 30 September (WTE)

	Clwyd	*Dyfed including Pembs.*	*Gwent*	*Gwynedd*	*Mid Glam.*	*Powys*	*South Glam.*	*West Glam.*	*WHCSA*	*Wales*
Medical and Dental[1]										
September 1979	246	216	318	133	343	34	604	288	—	2,181
September 1985	286	264	340	164	384	35	675	317	—	2,465
Percentage variation[1]	+16·3	+22·2	+6·9	+23·3	+11·9	+2·9	+11·7	+10·1	—	+13·0
Nurse and Midwifery[2]										
September 1979	2,991	2,350	3,663	1,710	4,438	963	4,211	2,705	—	23,031
September 1986	3,442	2,668	4,082	1,904	4,858	1,035	4,309	3,211	—	25,488
Percentage variation	+15·1	+13·5	+11·4	+11·3	+9·0	+7·5	+2·3	+18·7	—	+10·7
Professional and Technical										
September 1979	377	334	508	210	559	74	1,123	436	—	3,621
September 1986	535	448	684	367	686	117	1,341	590	3	4,771
Percentage variation	+41·9	+34·1	+34·6	+74·8	+22·7	+58·1	+19·4	+35·3	—	+31·8
Works and Maintenance										
September 1979	212	195	303	106	402	92	387	197	163	2,051
September 1986	221	198	300	161	404	91	400	271	166	2,212
Percentage variation	+4·2	+1·5	−1·0	+51·9	+0·5	−1·1	+3·4	+37·6	+1·8	+7·8
Administrative and Clerical[3]										
September 1979	636	603	846	472	995	169	1,410	651	439	6,221
September 1986	779	683	947	560	1,067	171	1,424	798	495	6,924
Percentage variation	+22·5	+13·3	+11·9	+18·6	+7·2	+1·2	+1·0	+22·6	+12·8	+11·3
Ambulance										
September 1979	167	164	230	161	245	69	166	134	—	1,336
September 1986	187	187	256	185	283	114	193	157	—	1,562
Percentage variation	+12·0	+14·0	+11·3	+14·9	+15·5	+65·2	+16·3	+17·2	—	+16·9
Ancillary										
September 1979	1,324	1,239	2,013	796	2,253	421	2,370	1 444	19	11,879
September 1986	1,221	999	1,562	812	1,978	372	1,859	1,395	12	10,210
Percentage variation	−7·8	−19·4	−22·4	+2·0	−12·2	−11·6	−21·6	−3·4	−36·8	−14·1
Total[1 2 3]										
September 1979	5,953	5,101	7,881	3,588	9,235	1,822	10,271	5,855	621	50,320
September 1986	6,671	5,447	8,171	4,153	9,640	1,935	10,201	6,739	676	53,632
Percentage variation	+12·1	+6·8	+3·7	+15·7	+4·4	+6·2	−0·7	+15·1	+8·9	+6·6

[1] Medical and dental figures for September 1986 not yet available.
[2] Adjusted to allow for reduction in nurses' working hours in 1980.
[3] Includes FPC staff.

ENVIRONMENT

Nuclear Waste

Sir Trevor Skeet asked the Secretary of State for the Environment at what locations in the United Kingdom low-level waste is currently being stored; and what are the tonnages in each case.

Mr. Waldegrave: Quantities of low-level nuclear waste arising in the United Kingdom are set out by installation in the UKAEA report to United Kingdom NIREX and the Department of the Environment—"The 1985 United Kingdom Radioactive Waste Inventory" (Reference DOE/RW/86/087). A copy has been placed in the Library of the House. The report for 1986 should be available in about two months. Minor users of radioactive substances, such as hospitals, may hold very small quantities of low-level waste pending disposal by authorised means.

Sir Trevor Skeet asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what tonnage of nuclear waste is currently held at Bradwell; and for what period it has been deposited.

Mr. Waldegrave: Details of the stocks of nuclear waste held at Bradwell nuclear power station were published in the UKAEA report to UK NIREX and the Department of the Environment (DOE/RW/86/087) "The 1985 United Kingdom Radioactive Waste Inventory" a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House. Low-level waste is routinely disposed of at Drigg; other items in the inventory have accumulated at Bradwell during the life of the power station.

Urban and City Development

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list every parliamentary constituency which includes areas which will continue to receive urban programme assistance and inner city initiative support in the next financial year.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested follows. The urban programme authorities listed are those invited to submit inner area programmes for 1987-88. Constituencies with inner city initiative task forces are indicated.

Urban programme authority with constituencies

LONDON
Brent
Brent East
Brent North
Brent South
Greenwich
Greenwich
Hackney
Hackney North and Stoke Newington
Hackney South and Shoreditch
Hammersmith and Fulham
Hammersmith
Fulham
Haringey
Hornsey and Wood Green
Tottenham
Islington
Islington North
Islington South and Finsbury
Lambeth
Norwood
Streatham
Vauxhall
Lewisham
Deptford
Lewisham East
Lewisham West
Newham
Newham North East
Newham North West
Newham South
Southwark
Southwark and Bermondsey
Peckham[1]
Tower Hamlets
Bethnal Green and Stepney
Bow and Poplar
Wandsworth
Battersea
Putney
Tooting
Kensington and Chelsea
Kensington[1]
Chelsea

EAST MIDLANDS
Leicester
Leicester East
Leicester South[1]
Leicester West
Nottingham
Nottingham East
Nottingham North
Nottingham South
Derby
Derby North
Derby South

MERSEYSIDE
Knowsley
Knowsley North
Knowsley South
Liverpool
Liverpool Broadgreen
Liverpool Garston
Liverpool Mossley Hill
Liverpool Riverside
Liverpool Walton
Liverpool West Derby
St. Helen's
St. Helen's North
St. Helen's South
Sefton
Bootle
Crosby
Southport
Wirral
Wirral South
Wirral West
Halton
Halton

NORTH WEST
Blackburn
Blackburn
Bolton
Bolton North East
Bolton South East
Bolton West
Burnley
Burnley
Manchester
Manchester Blackley
Manchester Central[1]
Manchester Gorton
Manchester Withington
Manchester Wythenshawe
Stretford[1]
Oldham
Oldham Central and Royston
Oldham West
Rochdale
Rochdale
Heywood and Middleton
Salford
Salford East
Worsley
Eccles
Wigan
Wigan
Preston
Preston

NORTH EAST
Gateshead
Gateshead East
Blaydon
Tyne Bridge
Hartlepool
Hartlepool
Langbaurgh
Langbaurgh
Middlesbrough
Middlesbrough[1]
Newcastle on Tyne
Newcastle Central

Newcastle East
Newcastle North
North Tyneside
Tynemouth
Wallsend
South Tyneside
South Shields
Jarrow
Sunderland
Sunderland North
Sunderland South
Stockton
Stockton North
Stockton South

SOUTH WEST
Bristol
Bristol East[1]
Bristol North West
Bristol South
Bristol West[1]
Plymouth
Plymouth Devonport
Plymouth Drake
Plymouth Sutton

WEST MIDLANDS
Birmingham
Birmingham Edgbaston
Birmingham Erdington
Birmingham Hall Green
Birmingham Hodge Hill
Birmingham Ladywood[1]
Birmingham Northfield
Birmingham perry Barr[1] Birmingham Selly Oak
Birmingham Small Heath[1]
Birmingham Sparkbrook
Birmingham Yardley
Coventry
Coventry North East
Coventry North West
Coventry South East
Coventry South West
Sandwell
Warley East
Warley West
West Bromwich East
West Bromwich West
Walsall
Walsall North
Walsall South
Wolverhampton
Wolverhampton North East
Wolverhampton South East
Wolverhampton South West
Dudley
Dudley East
Dudley West
The Wrekin
Wrekin

YORKS AND HUMBERSIDE
Barnsley
Barnsley Central
Barnsley East
Barnsley West and Penistone
Bradford
Bradford North
Bradford South
Bradford West
Doncaster
Doncaster Central
Doncaster North
Kingston upon Hull
Kingston upon Hull East
Kingston upon Hull North
Kingston upon Hull West
Leeds
Leeds Central[1]
Leeds East[1]
Leeds Morley and South
Leeds North East[1]
Leeds North West
Leeds West
Rotherham
Rotherham
Sheffield
Sheffield Attercliffe
Sheffield Brightside
Sheffield Central
Sheffield Hallam
Sheffield Heeley
Sheffield Hillsborough
Kirklees
Batley and Spen
Colne Valley
Dewsbury
Huddersfield

[1] Inner City Initiative Task Forces operate in all or part of these constituency areas.

Green Belt

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has had any recent discussions with local authorities in Hertfordshire regarding the preservation of the green belt; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: My right hon. Friend has had no recent discussion with Hertfordshire authorities concerning the green belt. Our policy to protect the green belt is unchanged.

Bed and Breakfast Accommodation

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people are living in bed and breakfast accommodation at local authority expense.

Mr. Tracey: At 30 September 1986, 6,480 households were in bed and breakfast accommodation, having been placed there by local authorities in fulfilment of their duties under part III of the Housing Act 1985. No information is available on how many of these households were having their accommodation charges met in the whole or part by the local authorities concerned.

Homelessness

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many homeless people there are in (i) England, (ii) Wales, (iii) Scotland and (iv) Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tracey: Information on Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland is a matter for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State concerned. In England, in the 12 months ending 30 September 1986, local authorities accepted responsibility for 101,280 formerly homeless households under part III of the Housing Act 1985, and found them accommodation.

Inner City Projects

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the projects currently supported by his Department under the inner city programme; which are sponsored by the Council for Community Relations in Lambeth; and if he will give details of the monitoring which has taken place in these projects over the last two years.

Mr. Tracey: The projects approved by this Department for funding in the 1986-87 Lambeth inner area programme are listed below.

This list includes the following projects which are sponsored by the Council for Community Relations in Lambeth:—

Abeng Community Centre
Abeng Youth Club
Brixton Overnight Accommodation and Counselling Service
Bushey Residential and Holiday Centre
CCRL Offices
Chinese Community Project
Family Support Service
Gresham Supplementary Education Scheme
Ifeoma Hostel
Newskills Training Scheme
Self-Employed Business Enterprise Project
Springboard South Training Scheme

Detailed monitoring of inner area programme projects is the responsibility of the London borough of Lambeth within its standard conditions of grant procedures.

Abeng Centre/Gresham Youth Project
Abeng Youth Club
Admin Support for Lambeth Inner City Unit
Afro Caribbean Cultural Centre
Afro-Caribbean Education Resource Project
Ahfiwe School
Allen Edwards & Walnut Tree Walk Schools
Allen Edwards Oasis Wildlife Garden
Angell Day Care Centre
Angell Town TA: Fairfax House
Asha: Asian Girls Hostel
Asian Community Action Group
Asian Community Action Group—Boys Worker
Asian Community Health Worker
Asian Sheltered Residential Accommodation
Asra: 26 Kempshott Road
Assistance to Borough Training Workshop
Bengeworth Road—New Road
Black Business-Lambeth-Association
Black Businesses Advice and Assistance
Blackfriars Settlement-Sheltered Workshop
BLK Ethnic Minority Business Register
BNCA—Training & Job Placement Scheme
BNCA Office Skills Centre Renovation
BNCA Social Action Centre
BNCA West Indian Senior Citizens Day Centre
Brixton Action Youthoutreach
Brixton Cares for Kids
Brixton Circle Club-day Care
Brixton College—Multi Skills Workshop
Brixton Domino and Social Club
Brixton Music Development
Brixton Sheltered Street Scheme
Brixton Summer Festival
Brixton Victims Support Scheme
Bushey Residential Holiday Project
Business Advisor
Business Support and Training Officer
Byfhaa Employment Project
Byfhaa Manager
Carnegie Library Electric Chair Lift
Cave Employment Project
Cave Literacy Club
Cave-Conversion of Premises
CCRL Abeng Community Centre
CCRL BOACS Hostel
CCRL Bushey Residential and Holiday Centre
CCRL Newskills
CCRL Offices
CCRL Springboard South
CCRL—Gresham Supplementary Education Scheme
CCRL/Family Support Unit
Chestnut Lodge Detached Youth Worker for Girls
Chinese Community Project
Christchurch School
Christmas Lights
Clapham and Battersea AEI Computer and Woodwork
Clapham and Larkhallunder 55 Organisation
Clapham Black Parents Group
Clapham Park East Tenants Association
Clapham Senior Citizens Association
Clapham-Battersea Adult Education Institute
Clapham-Battersea AEI ESL for Unemployed
Combined Heat and Power in Lambeth
Community Activities Club/Help 71 Community House
Community Care Centre
Community Care Evaluation
Community Care Scheme Centre 70
Community Development Worker
Community Printing and Information Centre
Community Pschiatricnurse
Community Workshop
Consortium Furnishing Enterprise
Contraceptive Training Programme
Corpus Christi RC Primary School
Development Officer — Health Services for Ethnic Minorities
Development of the North Lambeth Intermediate Centre
Dexter Road and Larkhall Park 10'Clock Clubs
Dick Sheppard School
Directory of Training Schemes in Lambeth
Dunraven School—Layout
Ebenezer Youth Club
Educational Sites Improvement Package
Effra Nursery School
Electric Avenue—Canopy
Employment of 2 Workers for Community House
Entryphones for 55-70 Elliott Road
Environmental Improvements for the Disabled
Environmental Improvements in Industrial Areas
Environmental Improvements Package
Ethelred Estate Community Youth Club
Family Friends Centre
Feasibility Fund Pool
First Generation Organisation
Gresham Supplementary Education Scheme
Handicapped Adventure Playground Association
Help 71 Community Worker
Henry Fawcett Primary School
Holiday Play Grants
Ifeoma Hostel—Black Single Parents
Interpreter/Translator Service
Inner Urban Areas Act Pool—Grants to Small Businesses
Job Creation Fund: Mutual Aid
Job Creation Fund
Joint Screening Unit for Means Tested Benefit
Kennington Park Synthetic Pitch
Knitting Training & Development Centre
L'Arche Work Programme
Lambeth AEI—Strandcentre
Lambeth AEI Community Catering Project
Lambeth Arts Council
Lambeth Asian Day Centre
Lambeth Business Advisory Service
Lambeth CDA—Development Worker
Lambeth Chinese Community Project
Lambeth Co-op Development Agency
Lambeth Dial a Ride Scheme
Lambeth Education Opportunities
Lambeth Employment Action Centre
Lambeth Employment Training Project
Lambeth Fashion Centre
Lambeth Federation of Housing Co-ops
Lambeth Girls Project
Lambeth I.C.U.—Computer Equipment
Lambeth Industries School
Lambeth Pensioners Non-Smoking Club
Lambeth Refugees from Vietnam Project
Lambeth Safety Centre
Lambeth Society for Mentally Handicapped Children
Lambeth Sports Council
Lambeth Women's Aid Outreach Worker
Lambeth Womens Aid Second Stage Housing
Lansdowne Road Tenants Room
Larkhall Community Flat
Larkhall Park Changing Facilities etc.
Larkhall Park Courland Grove Car Parking

Latin American Childrens Project
Libraries Local History to the Black Community
Library Material for Black Community
LICCG Community Transport Scheme
LICCG Coordinator
LICCG Employment Project Handbook
LICCG Holiday Projects
LICCG Multi Service Centre
Lilford Road Play Group Community Day Care Centre
Lady Margaret Hall Settlement—Employment Worker
LMHS—Lambeth Tiles
LMHS—Single Parents Employment Project
London City Mission
Mahatma Bandhi Ind Estate—Toilets
Market Facilities Brixton Station Road
Mawbey Brough Health Centre—Computer
Medical Room, Bondway Shelter
Mental Handicap Register, Computer
Menton Court Security to Old People's Dwellings
Milkwood Road Traffic Management Scheme
Mostyn 1 Parent Family Association
Muhammad Ali Sports Development Association
Music Workshop
National Elfrida Rathbone Society
Nelson Row Community Centre
New Black Families Unit
North Lambeth Day Centre
Oasis Children Venture Compliance of Health & Safety Regulations
Oasis Children Venture Mini Bus
Oasis Children's Venture
Oasis Children's Venture Karting Project
Oasis Karts and Tools
Old Library Youth Unemployment Project
Old Loughborough Estate
Open Access Training (Brixton College)
Oval House
Oval House Development Phase 2
Oval Options
Pathway Employment Service
Patmore Youth Club—General Improvements
Paxton Primary School
Pensioner Activities
Poynders Gardens Estate Community Flat
Primary Health Care Implementation
Principal Business Adviser Post
Programme monitoring implementation officer
Project Fullemploy Lambeth
Queen Mother Moore school—supplementary education
Railton community centre admin assistant
Railton community centre equipment
Railton community centre holiday project
Railton community centre minibus
Railton inters house
Railton road community health clinic
Railway arch youth club
Rasta international—St. Agnes place
Rathbone centre Lambeth Elfrida Rathbone
Rathbone day project
Reprint of Lambeth business directory
Refurbishment of vacant sites pool
Roots and shoots
Roots and shoots training scheme
Self employed business enterprise project
Sheltered placement scheme
Sickle cell information centre
South London family service unit: Social worker
Small firms training grants
Small grant community chest scheme
South London family service unit
South London innovation centre
Special emergency health needs
Streatham and Tooting AEI education resource and learning centre
St. Anne's Catholic settlement youth club
St. John's Barnado project
St. Mary's RC primary school—feasibility
St. Mary's RC primary school—Nursery class
St. Matthew's group
St. Matthew's youth club
St. Matthew's est TA community hall
St. Matthew's meeting place
St. Stephen's school
St. Thomas youth centre—minibus
Stockwell good neighbours
Stockwell health project
Stockwell park estate youth and community centre
Streatham & Tooting AEI Catering & Management Skills
Streatham Opportunity GRP Permanent CTRE
Summer Holiday Projects
SW London College: Ethnic Minority Business Education & Information Technology CE

Teacher for Therapeutic Nursery
Thessaly Road Playspace
Thorlands Community Centre

Ujamaa Centre
Ujima Housing Association—Development Worker
United Church Welfare & Workers Association Development of Vacant Sites for Industrial Purposes

Vassal Detached Youth Project
Vauxhall City Farm
Vauxhall City Farm Additional Workers
Vauxhall Primary School
Vietnamese Lion Dance Troupe
Vine House Co-Op: Access to Community Garden

Waterloo Action Centre—Roof Repairs
Weir Hospital Site
West Indian Parents Action Group
Wheatsheaf Hall
Wheelchair Access to Halls
Willington Road Youth Club/Play Centre
Windmill Gateway Club Minibus
Women's Electrics and Electronics Workshop
Women's Motor Mechanics Training Project
Wyck Gardens Housing Co-op Ltd

Young Families Resource Project
Youth Service Employment Initiatives

Zuriya African Arts and Theatre Project

409 Pre Court Diversion Project
57 Loughborough Park

Black Civil Servants

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many black civil servants are employed by his Department at principal level or above in work involving black ethnic minorities.

Mr. Ridley: My Department does not keep records in a form which allows this type of information to be obtained.

Ministry of Defence, Scotland (Construction Work)

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the value of any construction work undertaken either by the Ministry of Defence or the Property Services Agency on behalf of the Ministry of Defence in Scotland in 1984, 1985 and 1986; and what is the projected expenditure for 1987.

Mr. Chope: I shall answer this question shortly.

Property Services Agency (Tendering)

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the Property Services Agency will be able to tender for *(a)* maintenance work and *(b)* new work for museums and galleries, after the new arrangements for it come into force after April 1988.

Mr. Chope [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 February 1987]: No, because the Property Services Agency is not a trading organisation.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Senior Registrars (Upgrading)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what estimate he has of the additional cost of upgrading 500 currently employed senior registrars to consultant grade, assuming no accompanying increase in junior staff and no overtime payments for the new consultants.

Mr. Newton: The average salary cost of a whole-time equivalent senior registrar is estimated to be some £21,000 at 1984-85 prices, and of a consultant some £32,000. The long-run net salary cost of replacing a senior registrar post by a consultant will therefore be about £11,000 (in the short term it will be rather smaller because newly appointed consultants will start at or near the bottom of the incremental scale). These costs include the employer's contribution to superannuation and national insurance, but exclude wider effects such as the possible effect of increased throughput.

The Government do not envisage that the changes in the hospital medical staffing proposed in "Achieving a Balance" will require as many as 500 senior registrar posts to be converted to consultant.

"Achieving a Balance" includes a number of other proposals for stimulating the rate of consultant expansion, including a pump priming scheme for 100 new consultant posts in general medicine and related specialties and in general surgery/traumatic and orthopaedic surgery. As my right hon. Friend announced on 5 February, funds have already been set aside for this.

Personal Social Services (Capital Allowance)

Mr. Rowe asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many representations he has received since his most recent authorisation of the level of capital allowance for personal social services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tony Newton: Four local authorities have made representations about the level of 1987-88 capital expenditure allocations for the personal social services which were notified to authorities on 22 January 1987. The Government believe that restraint in public spending is essential in the national economic interest. The objective is to make and keep to plans for available expenditure. There has to be a limit, therefore, on the total available for local authority spending. It is for local authorities themselves to determine their actual levels of capital spending on particular service blocks, including personal social services, within their overall expenditure limit based on allocations, capital receipts and other sources of spending power.

Cancer Diagnosis (Delays)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to collect centrally the figures for delays between a general practitioner recommending a patient to see a specialist for cancer diagnosis and the date on which the patient is actually seen by a consultant; at what level of the National Health Service these figures are currently kept; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: We are implementing the recommendation of the Körner steering group that there should be research to identify the most relevant and easily administered measure of the time patients in all specialties wait between referral by a general practitioner and an outpatient appointment. Data on outpatient waiting times are collected by individual district and regional health authorities but the form of the information varies. We would expect consultants and Health Service managers to regard referrals for the diagnosis of cancer as high priorities and to monitor them closely to prevent unacceptable delays.

Maternity Payments

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Bury St. Edmunds constituency claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Bury St. Edmunds constituency are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Bury St. Edmunds constituency is covered by the Department's office at Bury St. Edmunds although its boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The number of claims received for maternity grant in Bury St. Edmunds local office during the calendar year 1986 was 2,260.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Bury St. Edmunds constituency will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Ms. Clare Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Birmingham, Ladywood claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Birmingham, Ladywood are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Birmingham, Ladywood constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Edgbaston, Handsworth and Ladywood, although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the three local offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Edgbaston	811
Handsworth	2,049
Ladywood	1,618

It is not possible to predict how many women in Birmingham, Ladywood will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in *(a)* Islington South and Finsbury and *(b)* Cambridge claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how

many women in (*a*) Islington South and Finsbury and (*b*) Cambridge are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the precise form requested. But in the 12 months ending 31 December 1986 the following numbers of claims to maternity grant were made at the Department's offices which cover the above constituencies, although the boundaries are not conterminous:

	Number
(a) Islington South and Finsbury	
Hoxton	321
Finsbury Park	1,318
Westminster	[1]

[1] Claims for this office are dealt with at Aldershot Out-Station. A total of 3,085 claims were dealt with at that office but this total includes claims proper to other offices.

	Number
(b) Cambridge	
Cambridge	3,899

It is not possible to predict how many women in (*a*) Islington South and Finsbury and (*b*) Cambridge will qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Leytoh received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Leyton are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,321 claims to maternity allowance were made at Walthamstow and 1,048 claims at Leytonstone, the Department's offices which cover the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Leyton will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Middlesbrough received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Middlesbrough are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested. But in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,299 claims to maternity allowance were made at Middlesbrough, the Department's office which covers the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Middlesbrough will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the constituency of Brent, East received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Brent East are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 489 claims to maternity allowance were made at Cricklewood, 1,363 claims at Neasden and 967 claims at Harlesden, the Department's offices which cover the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Brent, East will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the constituency of Brent, East claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Brent, East are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Brent, East constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Cricklewood, Harlesden and Neasden although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the three local offices during the calender year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Cricklewood	633
Harlesden	1,911
Neasden	1,143

It is not possible to predict how many women in Brent, East will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Glasgow, Central claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Glasgow, Central are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the precise form requested, but in the 12 months ending 31 December 1986 the following number of claims to maternity grant were made at the Department's local offices which cover the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous:

	Number
Glasgow (Rutherglen)	1,082
Glasgow (Southside)	1,430
Glasgow (City)	485
Glasgow (Lauriston)	1,542
Glasgow (Springburn)	927
Glasgow (Parkhead)	903
Glasgow (Craigton)	876

It is not possible to predict how many women in Glasgow, Central will qualify for a maternity payment from the Social Fund after April 1987.

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Glasgow, Central received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Glasgow, Central are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the precise form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, the following numbers of claims to maternity allowance were made at the Department's offices which cover the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous:

	Number
Glasgow (Rutherglen)	746
Glasgow (Southside)	902
Glasgow (City)	261
Glasgow (Laurieston)	1,405
Glasgow (Springburn)	744
Glasgow (Parkhead)	900
Glasgow (Craigton)	522

It is not possible to predict how many women in Glasgow, Central will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowances from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Robert C. Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, North constituency claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, North constituency are expected to qualify for a maternity payment form the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise from requested.

The Newcastle-upon-Tyne, North constituency is covered by the Department's office at Newcastle St. James, although its boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The number of claims received for maternity grant in that local office during the calendar year 1986 was 691.

It is not possible to predict how many women in the Newcastle-upon-Tyne, North constituency will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Robert C. Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, North constituency received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, North constituency are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 992 claims to maternity allowance were made at Newcastle St. James, the Department's office which covers the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, North will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Dr. Mark Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the City of Durham constituency received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in the City of Durham constituency are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 616 claims to maternity allowance were made at Durham, the Department's office which covers the Durham City constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Durham City will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Dr. Mark Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the City of Durham constituency claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in the City of Durham constituency are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The City of Durham constituency is covered by the Department's office at Durham, although its boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The number of claims received for maternity grant in the Durham local office during the calendar year 1986 was 854.

It is not possible to predict how many women in the City of Durham constituency will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Robin Cook asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Livingston constituency claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Livingston constituency are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Livingston constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Bathgate and Edinburgh, West, although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The number of claims received for maternity grant in each of the two local offices during the calendar year 1986 was as follows:

	Number
Bathgate	2,091
Edinburgh	1,821

It is not possible to predict how many women in the Livingston constituency will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Robin Cook asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Livingston constituency received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Livingston constituency are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,434 claims to maternity allowance were made at Edinburgh (West) and 2,109 claims at Bathgate, the Department's offices which cover the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Livingston will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mr. Robin Cook asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Basildon claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Basildon are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Newton: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Basildon constituency is covered by the Department's office at Basildon, although its boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The number of claims received for maternity grant in the Basildon local office during the calendar year 1986 was 3,702.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Basildon will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Mr. Robin Cook asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Basildon received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Basildon are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 3,060 claims to maternity allowance were made at Basildon, the Department's office which covers the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Basildon will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Peckham claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Peckham are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested. The Peckham constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Kennington Park and Peckham, although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the two local offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Kennington Park	731
Peckham	1,958

It is not possible to predict how many women in Peckham will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Dulwich claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Dulwich are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested. The Dulwich constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Brixton, Crystal Palace and Peckham, although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the three local offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Brixton	1,375
Crystal Palace	459
Peckham	1,958

It is not possible to predict how many women in Peckham will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Dulwich received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Dulwich are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested. But in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,431 claims to maternity allowance were made at Peckham, 1,030 claims at Brixton and 1,301 claims at Crystal Palace, the Department's offices which cover the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Dulwich will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Peckham received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Peckham are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,431 claims to maternity allowance were made at Peckham and 410 claims at Kennington Park, the Department's offices which cover the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Peckham will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987.

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Greenwich claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available: and how many women in Greenwich are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Greenwich constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Greenwich Park and Woolwich, although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grant in each of the two local offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Greenwich Park	1,246
Woolwich	2,482

It is not possible to predict how many women in Greenwich will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Greenwich received the maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are availalble: and how many women in Greenwich are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 855 claims to maternity allowance were made at Greenwich Park and 1,624 claims at Woolwich, the Department's offices which cover the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Greenwich will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mrs. Golding asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Newcastle under Lyme received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Newcastle under Lyme are expected to receive statutory maternity pay or allowance after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested, but in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,265 claims to maternity allowance were made at Newcastle and 1,640 claims at Stoke, North, the Department's offices which cover the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

It is not possible to predict how many women in Newcastle-under-Lyme will qualify for statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance from April 1987. However, it is estimated that in total some 230,000 women will qualify for statutory maternity pay and 84,000 for maternity allowance in 1987-88.

Mrs. Golding asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Newcastle under Lyme claimed maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available; and how many women in Newcastle under Lyme are expected to qualify for a maternity payment from the social fund after April 1987.

Mr. Major: Information on the number of claimants to maternity grant is not available in the precise form requested.

The Newcastle-under-Lyme constituency is covered by the Department's offices at Newcastle (Staffs) and Stoke, North, although their boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency. The numbers of claims received for maternity grants in each of the two local offices during the calendar year 1986 were as follows:

	Number
Newcastle (Staffs)	1,572
Stoke North	2,605

It is not possible to predict how many women in Newcastle-under-Lyme will qualify for maternity payments from the social fund from April 1987.

Local Office (Oval)

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, when he intends to reply to outstanding parliamentary questions from the hon. Member for Norwood in relation to the conduct of the Oval social security office.

Mr. Lyell: I have written to the hon. Member today.

Mr. A. T. L. Khurt (Correspondence)

Sir Hugh Rossi asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green may expect to receive a reply to his letter of 25 September 1986 and subsequent reminders on behalf of Mr. A. T. L. Khurt, regarding student finance and housing benefit.

Mr. Lyell: I wrote to my hon. Friend yesterday.

Casualty Officers

Mr. Hayes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to investigate high charges to casualty officers by private agencies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I assume that my hon. Friend has in mind the charges made by agencies to health authorities for the supply of temporary medical staff. We have at present no plans to investigate such charges, but have advised authorities that in agreeing terms with agencies they should have regard to the rates of remuneration payable to directly employed staff. Several authorities are taking

steps to improve arrangements for the provision of temporary medical staff, and we shall keep the position under review in consultation with them.

Hepatitis Vaccine

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the reply of 8 December, *Official Report*, column 69, if he will publish, as a matter of urgency, the revised guidance on hepatitis B vaccine proposed by the joint committee on vaccination and immunisation.

Mrs. Currie: The issues raised in considering the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation proposals have not yet been finally resolved. I hope that an announcement will be made very shortly.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Middlesex Crown Court

Mr. Lawrence asked the Attorney-General when he now expects the Middlesex Crown court in Parliament square to be re-commencing its operations.

The Solicitor-General: The extensive programme of work on this court is now due to be completed by the early summer of 1988. It is expected that it will re-open as a Crown court centre by the end of the summer.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Michael Delaney

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to when he expects police inquiries into the death of Michael Delaney at Wapping on Saturday 10 January to be completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner that the police investigation is nearly completed.

AIDS

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to require an inquest to be held on people who have died as a result of contracting AIDS; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No; but coroners are required under the Coroners Act 1887 as amended by the Coroners (Amendment) Act 1926 to inquire into all cases reported to them of violent or unnatural deaths; or sudden deaths the causes of which are unknown.

Liquor Licences

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the fees charged for licences for the sale of intoxicating liquor under the Licensing Acts; if he will isolate the part of that fee which relates to the time taken by police on making inquiries, reporting and being represented at court; and if he will publish the work sheets showing how the proportion of the fee relating to police time was calculated.

Mr. Waddington: The current fee of £12·50 for the grant of a liquor licence includes no specific element for the cost of police time. The fees for authorisations granted under the Licensing Act 1964 are being reviewed to reflect more accurately the full costs involved and police time will be one of the factors taken into account.

Economic League

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to what information has been given by the Economic League to *(a)* police forces and *(b)* other agencies of the state for which he is responsible in the past two years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have no such information.

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from chief constables as to the practices of their forces in respect of the handling of information on named individuals from the Economic League; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The police receive information from many different sources. Whether such information is retained and how it is evaluated and used is, subject to the law, a matter for individual chief officers of police. If the hon. Member has specific evidence of misuse of information, we will take it up with the chief officer concerned.

Mr. R. J. Garcia (Visa Application)

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the result of the visa application made by Mr. R. J. Garcia which was referred to his Department on 8 August 1986, after being processed by the British embassy in Manila.

Mr. Waddington: We regret the delay which has occurred in this case, due to the papers having been overlooked in the Immigration Department. A reply was sent to the British embassy in Manila today instructing that Mr. Garcia's application should be refused. Mr. Garcia will have a right of appeal against this decision, exerciseable from abroad.

Prison Medical Service (Report)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the Government intend to reply to the third report from the Social Services Committee of Session 1985-86 on the prison medical service.

Mr. Mellor: The Government reply to the Social Services Committee report on the prison medical service is about to be sent for printing after which it will be issued directly as a Command Paper.

Road Traffic Offences

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will assess the feasibility of collecting information in a more detailed form than at present concerning prosecutions in the Metropolis for offences against the Road Traffic Acts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Collection of more detailed information would involve disproportionate cost. The police make individual returns to the Home Office on

some 2 million motoring offences dealt with in court proceedings each year. These returns already include information on the age and sex of the alleged offender, the court where the proceedings are conducted, the date of appearance, any court remands and the disposal. More detailed information may not be readily available to those submitting the returns and so is liable to be inaccurate.

Wapping (Inquiry)

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the Metropolitan police inquiry on the Wapping disturbances to be completed; and whether he will place a copy in the Library.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to the replies I gave to questions from the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) on 11 February at column *217*. It is too soon to say when Chief Superintendent Wyrko's investigation will be completed.

DEFENCE

Open Government Document 87/01

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he decided to publish defence open government document 87/01.

Mr. Stanley: Work on updating material published in defence open government documents 80/23 and 82/1 began in the summer of 1986. It was envisaged last autumn that this would be likely to be published in the form of a third open government document. The final decision to do so was taken on 20 January 1987.

Ulster Defence Regiment

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the present organisation and operations of the Ulster Defence Regiment.

Mr. Stanley: The Ulster Defence Regiment continues to make an indispensable contribution to Army operations in support of the RUC in Northern Ireland and currently provides first line support in 85 per cent. of the Province. Improvements in organisation and training continue to be made, in order to enable the regiment to maintain the high standards of operational performance necessary to meet its commitments. These include the implementation of the training improvements referred to in my reply to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) on 19 December 1985 at columns *245-46*.

United States (Discussions)

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met the United States Secretary for Defence; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Younger: The United States Defence Secretary and I last met together on 17 February in Washington, when a range of issues of mutual defence interest was discussed.

Surface Fleet

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the role of the EH101 in the surface fleet and, in particular, to the type 23 frigate and the AOR; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: The EH101 is intended to become the Royal Navy's principal anti-submarine warfare helicopter. It is planned that it will operate from type 22 and type 23 frigates, as a replacement for the Lynx. When it is deployed in the type 23 some of the maintenance will be carried out in the auxiliary oiler replenishment since we judge that this will be particularly effective in conserving skilled manpower and spares during high intensity operations. Later the EH101 is planned to replace the Sea King as the ASW helicopter operated from Invincible-class carriers.

Helicopters

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Defence what deliveries of new helicopters are planned between 1989 and 1991; what plans he has to increase deliveries of helicopters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: On present plans we are expecting eight Sea King helicopters to be delivered by 1990. The future defence requirement for support helicopters is under consideration.

HM Forces (Leave Periods)

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether any members of Her Majesty's forces on duty in the Persian gulf are taking leave periods in Kenya.

Mr. Stanley: Her Majesty's Ships from the Gulf patrol make periodic visits to Kenya to carry out routine maintenance. Whilst there, ships' companies normally take a few days' rest and recreation.

Committee of Public Accounts (Recommendations)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will list the recommendations of the Committee of Public Accounts since 1983 affecting his Department which have been implemented.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the Treasury Minutes published in response to the relevant PAC Reports (Cmnd. 8995, 9178, 9368, 9452, 9464, 9546, 9638, 9696, 9776, 9808, 9859 and 9917). The Committee on which the hon. Member serves monitors departmental progress with accepted recommendations.

Missile Systems

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received in response to his publication of Trident and the alternatives, and in particular on the relative merits of the Tomahawk missile system and the Trident system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: My Department has received no representations specifically on this matter since the publication of defence open government document No. 87/01 "Trident and the Alternatives" on 30 January. As I said in the debate on the Royal Navy on 2 February at column 708 a United Kingdom minimum deterrent based on either sea-launched or air-launched cruise missiles would be likely to be about double the cost of Trident.

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will declassify information relating to the number of warheads for Trident D5.

Mr. Stanley: No. I cannot add to what is said in paragraph 2 of defence open government document No. 87/01 "Trident and the Alternatives", a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is his most recent estimate of total expenditure at present prices for the Polaris rocket motor system.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: £373 million at 1986-87 prices and £1 = $1·50.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what was the forecast in-service date at the time of first approval for the Trident nuclear missile;

(2) what is the present forecast in-service date for the introduction of the Trident.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The United Kingdom Trident II D5 project remains on programme to enter service in the mid 1990s as originally announced by the then Secretary of State for Defence on 11 March 1982.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what was the forecast in-service date at the time of first approval for the Polaris rocket motor system;

(2) what is the present forecast in-service date for the introduction of the Polaris rocket motor system.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The deployment of new Polaris rocket motors commenced on time in September 1986.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Defence what was the estimated cost of Trident at the time the original approval for work was given.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The original estimate of United Kingdom Trident II D5 costs was £7,500 million at September 1981 prices and £1 = $1·78.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Defence what was the extended cost of the Polaris rocket motor system at the time the original approval for work was given.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: £392 million at 1982-83 prices and £1 = $1·52.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the level of expenditure to 31 March 1986 in terms of outturn prices for Trident.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: £634 million.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the level of expenditure to 31 March 1986 in terms of outturn prices for the Polaris rocket motor system.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: £279 million.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Defence what was the estimated cost of Trident at the time the original approval for work was given updated to present day prices.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: £10,769 million at 1986-87 prices and £1 = $1.50.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Defence what was the estimated cost of the Polaris rocket motor system at the time the original approval for work was given, updated to present day prices.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: £549 million at 1986-87 prices and £1 = $1.50.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the level of expenditure to 31 March 1986 at present prices for Trident.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: £708 million.

Civil Servants (Scotland)

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many Ministry of Defence civil servants currently employed in Scotland were recruited locally.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information required on local recruitment of Ministry of Defence civilians in Scotland is not held centrally, and could only be made available at disproportionate cost.

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the number of *(a)* male and *(b)* female civil servants employed by the Ministry of Defence in Scotland.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The numbers of male and female full-time equivalent civilian staff employed by the Ministry of Defence in Scotland at 1 January 1987, excluding casual staff, were 14,953 males and 3,177 females.

Companies (Scotland)

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the companies or subsidiaries of companies based in Scotland, which are currently engaged in defence contracts or sub-contracts.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I will answer shortly.

Military Establishments (Scotland)

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the approximate value of goods locally purchased by military establishments located in Scotland in the last year.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The approximate value of goods locally purchased by Ministry of Defence establishments located in Scotland in 1985-86 the latest period for which figures are available, was £8·8 million. A further £1·5 million was spent on local contracts for the provision of services.

Civilian Employees (Scotland)

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many civilians are currently employed by the Ministry of Defence in Scotland.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The number of full-time equivalent civilian staff excluding casual staff employed by the Ministry of Defence in Scotland at 1 January 1987 was 18,130.

Service Personnel (Scotland)

Mr. O'Neill asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many service personnel are currently employed in Scotland.

Mr. Freeman: The number of United Kingdom service personnel deployed in Scotland on 1 January 1987 was 20,846. This figure includes RN/RM personnel serving on ships whose home port is in Scotland and which were in home waters on 1 January 1987.

IDEA '87 Exhibition (Ankara)

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for Defence what assistance is being given to the British arms manufacturers who are taking part in the IDEA '87 arms exhibition in Ankara, Turkey in April.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We are providing a range of advice and assistance to those United Kingdom companies attending, in view of the IDEA'87 exhibition's potential for promoting United Kingdom defence exports in near and middle eastern markets. As with many other such exhibitions worldwide, this will include joint venture assistance from the British Overseas Trade Board which will be provided to those companies attending through the United Kingdom Defence Manufacturers' Association.

Tornado Programme (Costs)

Mr. Wilkinson asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the estimates of the total cost of the Tornado programme up to the delivery of the last aircraft at constant 1987 prices.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The total estimated cost to the United Kingdom of the Tornado programme is £10,180 million at estimated September 1987 economic conditions.

General Sir Frank Kitson

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what action he intends to take against General Sir Frank Kitson under section 12 of Queen's Regulations.

Mr. Freeman: I shall reply shortly.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

ABM Treaty

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether his Department has received any representations from United States' officials regarding interpretation of the anti-ballistic missile treaty.

Mr. Renton: We have discussed the question of treaty interpretation with the United States as part of the regular bilateral consultations on arms control issues over a number of months. We look forward to continuing exchanges with the United States on this as on other arms control issues.

Visas

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the extent to which visa-issuing offices of his Department in eastern Europe are sufficiently resourced to enable them to deal with all applications in the coming year in a speedy and orderly manner.

Mr. Eggar: Her Majesty's embassies in the countries concerned are consulted as a matter of course. As a result, seasonal reinforcements are provided where required to ensure a speedy and efficient service.

Disarmament

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what, pursuant to the answer of 9 December, *Official Report*, columns *117-18*, was the outcome, in respect of arms control negotiations directed towards the goal of removing all intermediate range nuclear missiles from continental Europe, of the North Atlantic Council meeting of 11 to 12 December.

Mr. Renton: I refer the hon. Member to paragraph 5 of the North Atlantic Council communiqué of 11-12 December 1986, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House.

Middle East

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which European Economic Community states did not vote against UNGA resolution 41/162A on the middle east; and what information he has as to the reasons each gave for not doing so.

Mr. Renton: Greece voted in favour of United Nations General Assembly Resolution 41/162A, giving as the reason her support for the principles expressed in the resolution. Spain maintained her abstention from the previous year.

Western European Union

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to make a regular report to Parliament on the activities of the Western European Union.

Mr. Eggar: I refer my hon. Friend to the answers I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn, Hatfield (Mr. Murphy) on 26 February at column *595* and 8 May 1986 at column *227*, and to my statement of Government policy towards WEU in the Adjournment debate on 13 February 1987 at column 632. The next report to Parliament on WEU activities will be made after the spring meeting of Foreign and Defence Ministers in Luxembourg on 27-28 April.

Volumes	*Columns*
92	595
97	227
110	632

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to review the composition of the permanent council of the Western European Union.

Mr. Eggar: None.

Mr. C. Bennet (Detention)

Sir Patrick Wall asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what protests were made about the illegal detention of Mr. C. Bennet in Zambia; and how often he was visited by consular officials.

Mr. Eggar: Mr. Bennet was detained on 13 December 1986. He was unfortunate enough to have been the innocent travelling companion of a man who has since pleaded guilty to having explosives and a timing device in his vehicle.

His arrest was in accordance with Zambian law. It would not therefore have been appropriate for a protest

claiming illegal arrest to have been made. Mr. Bennet was visited on 19, 23 and 30 December by a consular official. He was released on 2 January.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

United States Aircraft Industry (Subsidies)

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will place in the *Official Report* any information available to him on the extent of federal and state subsidies in the United States of America to indigenous airframe and aero-engine manufacturers.

Mr. Pattie: As I stated in my reply of 3 February to the hon. Member for Eccles (Mr. Carter-Jones) at column *560*, the American aerospace industry continues to derive benefit from a wide range of Government support. Considerable information on such support is available, and the Airbus partner Governments have produced a summary position paper on this and related issues. In view of its length, I have asked for a copy of this position paper to be placed in the Library of the House.

ERDF (Grants)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what grants have been allocated to each of the English regions from the European regional development fund during each year since its inception; how many of these allocations have been de-committed each year; and for what reasons.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The following table gives the available information. Decommitment — which may be of the entire sum allocated or part of it — occurs when the project in question is not completed as specified in the relevant Commission decisions.

European regional development fund: Commitments and Decommitments in England by region

£ million

	North	*Yorkshire and Humberside*	*East Midlands*	*South West*	*West Midlands*	*North West*	*Total England*
1975							
Commitments	9·61	1·33	0·15	1·04	0·02	4·07	16·22
Total amount of decommitments	n/a						
1976							
Commitments	28·12	3·12	0·58	1·10	0·01	10·21	43·14
Total amount of decommitments	n/a						
1977							
Commitments	30·1	4·02	0·52	0·72	—	8·64	44·00
Total amount of decommitments	n/a						
1978							
Commitments	18·69	4·24	0·31	1·21	—	19·95	44·40
Total amount of decommitments	n/a						
1979							
Commitments	26·21	7·51	1·06	7·97	0·04	15·26	58·05
Total amount of decommitments	n/a						
1980							
Commitments	24·28	16·76	0·64	1·64	0·28	18·32	61·92
Total amount of decommitments	n/a						
1981							
Commitments	37·96	10·3	4·84	6·54	—	14·10	73·74
Total amount of decommitments	0·61	0·36	0·01	0·01	—	0·13	1·12
1982							
Commitments	58·43	19·6	1·38	7·18	—	27·78	114·37
Total amount of decommitments	0·02	0·03	—	Neg	—	0·21	0·26
1983							
Commitments	57·41	27·43	7·40	19·82	6·70	73·52	192·28
Total amount off decommitments	3·08	0·67	0·12	0·18	—	1·74	5·79
1984							
Commitments	39·17	51·82	4·37	28·64	18·06	57·64	199·70
Total amount of decommitments	1·32	0·47	0·01	0·005	—	15·71	17·52
1985							
Commitments	25·13	21·4	17·76	10·44	46·25	74·43	195·41
Total amount of decommitments	0·13	0·18	0·12	0·11	—	2·0	2·54
1986							
Commitments	42·72	43·89	2·41	24·73	44·06	29·77	187·58
Total amount of decommitments	n/a						

Notes:

(1) For years 1982 and earlier commitments have been converted from European units of account or European currency units into sterling at the average exchange rate for the year.

(2) Decommitments for the years 1981-85 are shown in the year that they were requested. In most cases this would not be the same year as that of the original commitments.

(3) Data includes both full and partial decommitments.

Extraterritoriality

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list in the *Official Report* each occasion on which he has made an order or given directions under the protection of the Trading Interests Act 1980; if he will specify in each case the section or sections of the act under which the order was made or the

directions were given, the person or persons to whom they applied, and their purpose and their effect; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

THE ARTS

British Theatre Association (Library)

Mr. Freud asked the Minister for the Arts what support his Department gives to the library of the British Theatre Association; if he was invited to attend the official opening of the library by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother on Tuesday 17 February; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: No direct support is provided from my Department, but the British Theatre Association library has received a grant of £4,685 this year through Greater London Arts Association which was matched pound for pound by the London boroughs grants scheme; this contribution represents full replacement of the previous GLC funding.

I was invited to attend the opening of the library in its new premises but, unfortunately, could not be present due to parliamentary commitments.

NATIONAL FINANCE

EC Budget

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer which European Economic Community states supported the Commission's proposals on the 1987 budget at the European Economic Community Budget Council on 16 January.

Mr. Brooke: I regret that details of the internal proceedings of Council meetings are confidential. I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 27 January at column *283* reporting the outcome of the 16 January Budget Council.

Own Resources

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the ratio decidendi of the EEC Court of Justice in ruling on 18 December 1986 that requests by the European Economic Community Commission for advance payment of non-value added tax own resources impose an obligation on member states to comply with them.

Mr. Brooke: The ratio decidendi was that the decision of 21 April 1970 and Regulation 2891/77 conferred autonomy on the Commission with regard to the management of own resources. Consequently the exercise by the Commission of their power in Article 10(2) of Regulation 2891/77 to request advance payments of own resources was not dependent on the agreement of the various member states, who were therefore under an obligation to comply with the Commission's request.

Diesel Fuel Oil (Taxes)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total received by petroleum revenue tax and tax on diesel fuel oil used in private and commercial vehicles in 1985-86.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

European Commission

Mr. Forth asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the European Commission's latest cash position and the implications for the United Kingdom.

Mr. Brooke: The European Commission estimates that its spending obligations this month will again exceed available revenues under the provisional twelfths system.

The Commission has therefore requested member states to advance from March into February the payment of our own resources other than VAT in accordance with Article 10(2) of Council Regulation 2891/77: a similar advance was made last month, which I announced to the House on 20 January (*Official Report*, c. 467). The Government consider that this request is justified and will accordingly make today an advance payment of some £142 million from the Consolidated Fund, under Section 2(3) of the European Communities Act, 1972. The payment of levies and duties on 20 March will be reduced by the amount of the advance.

The Commission has informed us that it expects in addition to have to overdraw its accounts with member states this month in accordance with article 12(2) of Council Regulation 2891/77. The amount involved for the United Kingdom is expected to be of the order of £36 million. Subject to confirmation that use of this facility is needed as well as the article 10(2) advance, the Government propose to meet this obligation, too, from the Consolidated Fund in accordance with section 2(3) of the European Communities Act, 1972. Repayment of any drawing under this facility will be made by deduction from our March own resources payments. Neither of these facilities will involve increasing the total amounts which the Community is authorised to spend during 1987. There will therefore be no net additions to public expenditure.

CIVIL SERVICE

Ethnic Recruitment

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Minister for the Civil Service what has been the percentage increase in recruitment of *(a)* blacks and *(b)* Asians to the Civil Service over the most recent period for which figures are available.

Mr. Luce: The collection of data about the ethnic origin of applicants and recruits to the Civil Service began only in 1986. It is not yet possible therefore to say whether there has been an increase in recruitment from the ethnic minorities.

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Minister for the Civil Service if he will institute an urgent project for setting specific recruitment targets in the Civil Service for blacks and Asians.

Mr. Luce: Recruitment to the Civil Service is conducted on the basis of fair and open competition and selection on

merit. The Government would welcome an increase in applications from suitably qualified people from the ethnic minorities and a number of steps are being taken to encourage this, including strengthening schools liaison, use of the ethnic press and outreach work to make more direct contacts with minority communities. The results of ethnic monitoring will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of these measures and to assess the fairness of selection procedures between candidates. The Government will be considering in the light of monitoring experience what other specific actions would add significantly to the effectiveness of its equal opportunity policy.

The Manpower Services Commission has adopted, an action plan to encourage the recruitment of ethnic minority staff. The plan involves the use of statistics of the working population in the locality as one target against which managers can measure their success in recruiting suitably qualified staff from the ethnic minorities. These targets are not fixed quotas, which are unlawful, but they do provide a measure of progress and a focus for identifying where outreach to particular communities is needed. The Manpower Services Commission's experience will be evaluated to see what impact this initiative is having.

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Minister for the Civil Service if he will list the measures used for monitoring the recruitment of blacks and Asians to the Civil Service.

Mr. Luce: Since February 1986 the Civil Service Commission has been asking candidates for executive officer who sit the written qualifying test to complete a questionnaire on their ethnic origin. The information provided by candidates is being used to evaluate the success of the Civil Service in attracting ethnic minority candidates and to assess the fairness of the selection process. In September 1986 monitoring was extended to the other schemes for recruitment run by the Civil Service Commission, an ethnic origin questionnaire being issued with each application form. In the latter part of 1986 pilot schemes of monitoring departmental recruitment over a three month period were caried out. Arrangements for a comprehensive programme of monitoring departmental recruitment are under discussion.

SCOTLAND

Disabled People (Tayside)

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish information for Tayside region for each year since 1982 showing the number of disabled people receiving help with: telephone installations, telphone attachments, telephone rental, television supply, television licence, radio supply, other personal aids, assistance with holidays and places for the mentally ill at day centres.

Mr. John MacKay: Local authority statistical returns of persons in need who have been provided with assistance do not distinguish disabled persons from others.

The available information for all persons assisted in Tayside region is as follows:

	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	[1]*1986*
(a) Persons assisted					
Telephone installation	33	46	23	18	22
Telephone attachments[3]	—	—	—	—	23
Telephone rental	205	179	218	190	199
Television supply	0	0	0	0	0
Television licence	0	0	0	0	0
Radio supply	0	0	0	0	0
Other personal aids	1,789	2,129	3,776	4,125	4,219
Assistance with holidays	290	275	0	0	0
(b) Places provided					
Places for the mentally ill at Day centres[2]	30	60	0	0	60

[1] Provisional.
[2] Day centres are classified according to the main group attending.
[3] Information not collected before 1986.

ERDF (Grants)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will specify what grants have been allocated to Scotland from the European regional development fund during each year since its inception; how many of these allocations have been de-committed each year, and for what reasons.

Mr. Lang: Total European regional development fund awards and the decommitments by year for Scotland are set out in the table below. Decommitments are the result of projects or investments not proceeding, or not on the scale originally envisaged.

Year	*Awards £ million*	*Decommitments £ million*
1975	9·8	—
1976	14·6	—
1977	14·7	0·8
1978	24·8	—
1979	37·9	0·8
1980	27·9	1·2
1981	70·7	1·7
1982	71·6	2·3
1983	83·5	3·0
1984	103·2	4·9
1985	69·4	7·0
1986	83·9	5·2
TOTAL	612·0	26·9

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Food Additives

Mr. Warren asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the food additives which are permitted in the United Kingdom but are not permitted in other member states of the European Economic Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: There are EC directives covering the use of the four major classes of additives, namely preservatives, antioxidants, emulsifiers and colours. Member states must permit the use of the additives listed in these directives although they may impose conditions of use upon them. All other additives may be permitted at member states' discretion. Because such matters as consumer requirements, manufacturing practice and historical usage vary between member states, the pattern of approval of additives for use in food and conditions for such use is very complex between the 12 members states. It is therefore not possible to produce a comprehensive list in the way that my hon. Friend has requested but if he would care to write to me indicating those food additives or groups of food additives in which he is particularly interested I will endeavour to give him a detailed reply.

Farm Buildings

Mr. Heddle asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received regarding alternative use for redundant farm buildings.

Mr. Donald Thompson: It is often suggested to us that redundant farm buildings could be converted to non-agricultural uses as part of a diversified farm business. Grants are already available in the less favoured areas under the agricultural improvement scheme to assist in the conversion of farm buildings for craft and tourism activities and as my right hon. Friend the Minister announced in the House on 9 February we shall shortly be extending this to cover a wider range of diversification uses. In addition the development commission offers grants in its rural development areas for the conversion of redundant rural (including farm) buildings to light industrial and other uses.

Plants and Seeds

Mr. John Carlisle asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the future of plant variety testing and seed certification in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Gummer: The present arrangements for plant variety testing and seed certification have been in existence for many years and I believe it is now time to take a fresh look at these systems. Accordingly my right hon. Friends and I have asked a small team of officials to conduct a comprehensive review using the following terms of reference:

(i) to review the operation of the plant variety test and trials systems for Plant Breeders' Rights and the National List in the United Kingdom and their relationship with the non-statutory Recommended list systems;

(ii) to review the operation of seed certification in the United Kingdom;

(iii) to examine the legal, technical and financial requirements of these systems;

(iv) to examine the possibilities for rationalising these and associated systems to meet the future needs of government, industry and consumers efficiently and cost effectively; and to make recommendations.

The review team will start work straight away with the aim of producing a report by the end of this year.

PRIME MINISTER

Agricultural Policy

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Prime Minister when she next plans to meet the president of the National Farmers Union to discuss Her Majesty's Government's policy towards agriculture.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to do so.

INDEX TO THE

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 110**

SESSION 1986-87

9th February–20th February 1987

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Mr Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speakers rulings and statements.

Other contributions by Mr Speaker and his deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

Opposition Day Debates, Estimates Day Debates and Standing Order No. 10 applications are listed under those respective headings and under subject headings too.

The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Com = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

Column numbers followed by the letter W refer to Written Questions. These appear at the end of each daily part or volume with their own sequence of column numbers printed in italics.

A1 379w
Road accidents 379w

A1-M1 link 43w, 253w
Public inquiries 253w

A4 411w

A22 736w
Road works 736w

A34 411w
Newbury 411w
Road construction 411w

A36 155w
Disclosure of information 155w
Road construction 155w

A38 45w
Road safety barriers 45-6w

Aberavon
Maternity benefits 810w

Aberdeen
Common Good Fund 266w
Local government expenditure 266w
Natural radioactivity 645
Single homeless 611-2w
Unemployment 266w

Aberdeen University
AIDS 297

ABM Treaty 765, 832w, 873w, 896-7
Strategic defence initiative 764-6, 832w, 896-9, 1054
USA 873w, 898-9

Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc (Scotland) Bill 1986/87
Debates etc
Allocation of time motion (11.02.87) 320-68

Abortion 153w, 195w, 718w
Foreign patients 362-3w
Minors 147
NHS 497-500w
Parents' rights 147
Private health services 497-500w
Young people 719w

Abse, Mr Leo
Questions
Parrot Corporation, Factories 846w

Absent voting
Students 374w

Access to buildings
Doctors' surgeries 455w
Handicapped 279-80w

Access to countryside
North Yorkshire Moors National Park 116w

Access to Personal Files Bill 1986/87
Debates etc
2R (20.02.87) 1165-223

Accident & emergency departments 139w
Computers in National Health Service 139w

Accidents
Compensation 450
Northern Ireland 450

Accountants
Civil service 671-2w
Government departments 605-10w, 613w, 616w, 624-5w, 628-9w, 634-5w, 637w, 641-2w, 656w, 665-6w, 697w, 714-8w, 723-5w,
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 676-7w
Ministry of Defence 681-3w
Treasury 672-4w

Accounting
Property repayment services 668w
Property Services Agency 668w

Acid rain
Pollution control 112w

Acquittals
Deportation 372w

Action for Community Employment
Government grants 446-7

Action for Jobs 768w
Job centres 768w
Portsmouth 768w

Acute beds 501-2w, 505w
Blackburn Hyndburn & Ribble Valley health authority 505w

Adams, Mr Allen
Questions
Community charge, Strathclyde Regional Council 265-6w
Employment opportunities, Low pay 454-5

Adjournment debates
Speaker's rulings & statements (09.02.87) 139, (11.02.87) 437, (16.02.87) 742-50, (17.02.87) 778-80

Adjudication officers 392w

Adley, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Access to Personal Files Bill, 2R (20.02.87) 1176
British Railways Bill, 2R (16.02.87) 713-5
Motor Cycle Noise Bill, Money res (16.02.87) 706, 719
Settle-Carlisle railway (11.02.87) 438
Questions
Buses, Speed governors 840w
Cash limits, Cabinet office 405w
Common sheep meat regime 1042
Energy conservation, Weather 649
Fisheries, Dorset 677w
Nuclear power stations, Leukaemia 646
Pensioners, Social security recipients 192-3w
Pensions, Inflation 456
Severn barrage, Research 643
South Africa, Arms control 535w
Town & country planning, Industrial planning 113w

Administrative delays
Crown Prosecution Service 407w
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices 153w, 361w
Diagnosis 857-8w
Dunblane bypass 188w
Entry clearances 772w
Exceptional needs payments 196w, 225w
Family income supplements 200w
House of Commons questions 329w
Immigration appeals 641w
Invalid care allowances 596w
Members' correspondence 374w, 459w, 808w
Mobility allowance 191w
Severe disablement allowance 191w
Severe weather payments 193-4w
Suckler cow premiums 269w
Supplementary benefits 196w, 270w, 361w
Visas 696w
Written questions 239w

Administrative delays
Members' correspondence 140w

Adult education
Departmental coordination 223w
Fees & charges 836w
Further education colleges 836w
Highlands of Scotland 298-9
Job training scheme 535w
Literacy 222-3w, 569w
Numeracy 569w
Scotland 299
Unemployed 571-2w

Adur District Council 670w
Rate support grants 417w, 670w

Advertising
Hospitals 200w
Restart programme 769w
Severe weather payments 138w

Advertising Standards Authority
Time sharing 315-6w

Advisory Committee on NHS Drugs 821-2w

Advisory Committee on Pesticides 604w
Business expenses 604w
Pay 604w

Advisory services
Haemophilia 283w

Aerospace industry
Government assistance to industry 875-6w
Helicopters 438-9w
USA 875-6w

Affiliation
Genetics 232w

Afghanistan 690w
Foreign policy 536w
Human rights 158
Refugees 228w
Torture 399w, 536w
USSR 227-8w

Africa
Overseas aid 408w

Age
Cervical cancer 718-20w
Family doctors 502-4w
Mobility allowance 282w

Age addition
Old persons pensions 521w

Age participation rates 576-8w, 653-6w, 742-4w
Further education 576-8w
Higher education 742-4w
Nursery education 653-6w
Nursery schools 656w
Universities 742-4w

Agricultural Development & Advisory Service 227w, 678w
Income 483w, 678w
Land drainage 483w, 678w

Agricultural improvement scheme 482-3w, 677-8w, 779w
Land drainage 483w
Land use 779w

Agricultural land
Dairy farming 676w
Environment protection 1047-8
Expenditure 601w
Forestry 165-6w, 301, 779w
Land use 10, (09.02.87) 70-80, 287w, 338-40w, 481w, 601w, 778-9w
Ministerial statements (09.02.87) 70-80
Planning permission 168-9, 418w, 1048
Property development 161-6, 169, 418w
Rates & rating 1045-6
Scottish Office 166-7
Taxation 779w
Town & country planning 388w
Tree planting 301-2

Agricultural policy 788w
National Union of Farmers 882w

Agricultural production
Berries & fruit 791w
Common agricultural policy 676w, 767-8
Food 408w
Horticulture 785-6w
Prices 782w
Scotland 307

Agricultural products
Marketing 788w
Pesticides 790-1w
Prices 782w, 790w
Production quotas 288w, 486w

Agricultural research
Pesticides 483w, 679w

Agricultural subsidies
Beef & veal 781-2w, 785w
Dairy farming 604w, 785w
Expenditure 286w

Agricultural support systems 1046
EC countries 786w

Agricultural surpluses
Set-aside schemes 786w

Agriculture
Conservation 1047-8
EC budget 542-3w
Labour Party 1044
National Farmers' Union of Scotland 262-3w
Pesticides 787w
Rural areas 38-40w
Scotland 262-3w
Wales 8-10, 295-6w, 750-63w

Agriculture Improvement Scheme 1985
Questions
677-8w

AIDS 129-30w, 191-2w, 283w, 296, 323w, 325-6w, 328w, 362w, 372-3w, 397w, 417w, 512-3w, 546w, 597-8w, 680-1w, 710-1w, 751-2, 867w, 870w
Aberdeen University 297
Armed forces 680-1w, 870w
Austria 328w
Blood tests 129w
Community care 150, 191-2w
Contraceptives 710-1w
Death 192w
Death registration 867w
Departmental leaflets 191w
Disposable syringes 297-8
Drug abuse 512w
EC countries 129w
Ethnic minorities 129-30w
Expenditure 512w, 597-8w
Government grants 512w
Haemophilia 283w, 512-3w
Health education 129-30w, 191w, 296, 397w, 546w, 751-3
Infectious diseases 512w
Joint financing 512w
Local authorities 417w
Medical research 297, 362w, 512w
Medical treatments 512w
Mental patients 325-6w
NHS finance 597-8w
Notifiable diseases 512w
Nurses 512w
Preventive medicine 191w
Prison medical services 373w
Prisoners 325-6w, 372w
Research finance 512w
Scotland 296-8
Terrence Higgins Trust 512w
Testing 512w
West Midlands 283w
World Health Organisation 362w

AIDS (Control) Bill 1986/87
Debates etc
Money res* (10.02.87) 286

Aids for handicapped
Local government expenditure 130-1w
Tayside 880w
Wheelchairs 197w

"Air Defence Systems" 101-2w

Air fares
EC action 623w

Air force
Aircrew 489w

Air force flying
Armed forces officers 305w
Early retirement 304-5w
Hare, Squadron Leader 304w

Air pollution 112w
Photochemical pollutants 670w
Radioactivity 415w
Trees 234-5w

Air pollution control
Fossil fuelled power stations 213w

Air travel
Visas 643-4w

Airbuses
Government assistance to industry 747w

Aircrew
Air force 489w
Armed forces officers 305w
Armed forces strength 305w, 489w
Early retirement 305w
Navy 489w

Airlines
Beirut Airport 686-7w
Deportation 323w
Trade competitiveness 840w

Airports
Fees & charges 625w
Security 537-8w

ALARM
Guided weapons 490w

Albania
Diplomatic relations 907-8
Gold 907-8

Alcoholic drinks
Consumer expenditure 106w
Licensing 867-8w

Alcoholic drinks duties
Tax yields 674-6w

Alcoholism
Prisoners 614w

Alexander, Mr Richard
Debates etc
Radioactive waste disposal (09.02.87) 59-61
Questions
Labour Party, Nottinghamshire 458

Al-Fayed Investment Holdings 747w

Al-Ghazzi, Abdul 416-7w

Aliens
Chile 690w

Alternative energy
EC action 648
Energy research 648

Alton, Mr David
Debates etc
Business statement (19.02.87) 1076
Early day motions, Leader of the Opposition (19.02.87) 1084
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement 445
Calderstone School, Liverpool, Property transfer 369w
Courts, Northern Ireland 452-3
Government assistance to industry, North West region 626w
Hong Kong, Ministers' visits abroad 692w
Hypothermia, Elderly 193w
"Keeping the Peace" 105w
Local education authorities, Capital investment 761
Northern Ireland Office, Orders & regulations 546w
Rates & rating, Prosecutions 75w
Republic of Ireland, Electronic surveillance 328w
Sizewell B, Costs 10w
Students, Taxation 743w
VAT, Retail trade 541-2w
Youth services, Northern Ireland 546-7w

Altrincham
Hospital beds 284w
Hospitals 284w

Alyn & Deeside
Maternity benefits 274-5w

Ambulance services
Greater London 361w
Nuclear power stations 318-9w, 326-7w
Whitley councils 399w

Amendments & new clauses
Speaker's rulings & statements (19.02.87) 1086, 1123

Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Questions
ABM Treaty, Strategic defence initiative 766

Amess, Mr David
Questions
Abortion 195w
Belize, Military aid 698w
Special educational needs, Essex 568w

Ammunition
Bofors guns 681w

Analgesics
Children 600-1w
Drug labelling 600-1w
Drug side effects 600w
Reye's syndrome 598-9w

Ancient monuments
Town & country planning 421w

Ancram, Mr Michael, Parliamentary Under-Secretary Scottish Office
Debates etc
Housing, Scotland (11.02.87) 409-18, 421, 427-30
Rate Rebates & Rate Support Grant Scotland Orders (18.02.87) 1007-13, 1015, 1026-8
Questions
Archaeology, Scotland 796w
Common Good Fund, Aberdeen 266w
Community charge, Scotland 388w
Community charge, Strathclyde Regional Council 265-6w
Crofting, Community charge 263w
Crofting, Rating revaluations 188w
Dog wardens, Scotland 798w
Dornoch road bridge, Construction costs 612w
Dunblane bypass, Administrative delays 188w
Edinburgh castle 260w
Homelessness, Scotland 63w
Housing completions, Scotland 187w
Insulation grants, Loft insulation 387w
Local government finance, Convention of Scottish Local Authorities 265w
Nuclear accidents, USSR 387w
"Paying for Local Government Consultation Paper", Scotland 613-4w
Radioactivity, Members' correspondence 796w
Rate support grants, Local authorities in Scotland 189-90w
Road traffic, Ayr 612w
Road traffic, Dornoch road bridge 612w
Road works, Fife 612w
Roads, Scotland 185-6w
Severe weather payments, Scotland 303-4
Single homeless, Aberdeen 611-2w
Sports centres, Rates & rating 266w
Urban programme, Scotland 611w

Anderson, Mr Donald
Debates etc
Housing (10.02.87) 176, 185
Housing (Houses in Multiple Occupation) Bill, 2R (13.02.87) 610-6, 628-9
Questions
Hong Kong, Elections 895
Maternity benefits, Swansea 351w, 353-4w
Multiple Occupation, Wales 2
NHS charges, Foreign patients 711-4w
NHS charges, Wales 750w
Railway network, Wales 18
South Africa, Diplomatic relations 689w
Visas, Nigeria 537w

Anglo-Irish Agreement 77w, 303w, 328w, 331-3w, 444-6, 450-1
Referenda 446, 450-1
Republic of Ireland 77w, 331w
Terrorism 303w
Ulster Unionists 444-5

Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference 328w, 331w

Angola
Arms exports 697w
Human rights 462-3w
Mbunambana, Ceila 462-3w

South Africa 688w

Animal cruelty
Pest control 113w

Animal diseases
Bees 41w

Animal feed
Food poisoning 336-7w, 484w, 679w
Horses 484w, 679-80w
Radioactivity 1052

Animal Husbandry 790w

Animal Procedures Committee 174w
Public appointments 174w

Animal welfare 790w
Expenditure 677w
Pest control 113w
Puppies 320-1w

Animals (Scotland) Bill (HL) 1986/87
Debates etc
2R* (20.02.87) 1230

Annual report
Historic Buildings Council for Wales 300w

Annual reports 831w
Hong Kong 831w

Antidumping
EC action 523w
Import duties 523w

Apartheid
Demonstrations 113w

Appeals
Unemployment benefits 392w

Apprentices
Strathclyde 187w

Archaeology
Forensic science 770w
Scotland 796w
Wales 297-8w

Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Questions
Action for Community Employment, Government grants 447
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Referenda 446
Educational finance, Northern Ireland Universities Research Working Party 453

Area manpower boards 768w, 844w
Training 844w

Area museum councils 383w, 480w
Arts finance 480w
Government grants 383w

Areas of outstanding natural beauty
Suffolk 602-3w

Armed conflict 229w, 688w

Armed forces
AIDS 680-1w, 870w
Careers development 654
Nurses 107-10w

Armed forces casualties
Negligence (13.02.87) 567-609

Armed forces civilians
RAF Binbrook 777w
Scotland 872w

Armed forces dependants
Boarding Schools 684w
Education 293w
West Germany 293w

Armed forces deployment
Belize 698w, 905-6
Boddam Island 365w
Construction 291-3w
Kenya 870w
Northern Ireland 451
Rapier missiles 564w
Scotland 872w
USA 291-3w

Armed forces education allowances 684w

Armed forces housing
Empty housing 683w
Gibraltar 778w
Local authorities 683-4w
Mobile homes 778w

Armed forces officers
Air force flying 305w
Aircrew 305w

Armed forces pensions 107-8w
Lump sum payments 305-6w

Armed forces punishment
Hooliganism 365w

Armed forces strength 180w
Aircrew 305w, 489w
Army in Northern Ireland 493w
Ulster Defence Regiment 493w

Armed forces training
El Salvador 229w
RAF Mount Batten 491-2w

Armoured fighting vehicles
Industrial production 304w
NATO 184w
Technical assistance 304w
Warsaw pact 184w

Arms control 899-900
Chemical weapons 692-3w, 901
Conventional weapons 693w
International conferences 692-3w
South Africa 535w
USA 455

Arms control treaties 873-4w, 899-900
Chemical weapons 900
Nuclear test ban 696w
Strategic defence initiative 901-2
Theatre nuclear weapons 900-1
USSR 906-7

Arms embargoes
South Africa 688w

Arms exports
Angola 697w
Employment opportunities 684w
Iran 693w
UNITA 697w

Arms imports
South Africa 626w

Arms trade
Export promotion 873w
Indonesia 831w
Iran 160

Army
Intimidation 365w
Sir John Moores barracks 365w
Suicide 365w

Army in Northern Ireland
Armed forces strength 493w

Arnold, Mr Tom
Questions
Prosecutions, Town Police Clauses Act 1847 639w
Victim support schemes, Government grants 639w

Arrests
Racial conflict 215w

Art works 477w
British Rail 60-1w
Liability 480w
Museums & galleries 480w
Objects in lieu of tax 735w

Arthritis
Lancashire 199w
Medical treatments 199w

Artificial Limb & Appliance Centres Review 197w

Artillery
Defence procurement 489w

Arts 478w
Association of Metropolitan Authorities 168w
Charitable donations 475w
Community development 480w
Economic regions 168w
Economic situation 476w, 478w
Employment 475-6w
Employment opportunities 651
Greater London 168w
Local authorities 476w
Marketing 475w
Merseyside 476w
North West region 475w
Scotland 478w

Arts centres
Regional arts 477w

Arts Council 474w

Arts finance
Area museum councils 480w
Arts sponsorship 479w
Museums & galleries 480w
Public libraries 653-4
Regional arts associations 232w
Sherman Theatre, Cardiff 168w, 651-2
Tourism 651
Wales 670w

Arts sponsorship
Arts finance 479w
Tobacco industry 3, 478w

Asbestosis
Crewe 587w
Death 587w

Ashby, Mr David
Questions
British Coal Corporation Enterprise, Employment opportunities 468w
Police, Ministerial responsibility 618-22w

Ashdown, Mr Paddy
Questions
Adult education, Further education colleges 836w
Adult education, Literacy 222-3w
Class sizes, Primary education 12-24w
Education support grants, Expenditure 838w
Educational finance 658w
Educational finance, Teachers 658w
Further education, Capital investment 836-7w
HM Inspectorate of Schools, Departmental publications 219w
Literacy 584-5w
Local education authorities, Capital investment 443-4w, 836w
Natural radioactivity, Housing problems 548w
Nuclear Installations Inspectorate 472w
Radon gas, Cornwall 115-6w
Radon gas, Housing problems 115w, 414-6w
Radon gas, Pregnancy 115w
Radon gas, Somerset 114-5w
Radon gas, Truro 741-2w
School buildings, Capital investment 444w, 567w
School buildings, Primary education 29w
School buildings, Secondary education 27-9w
Secondary education, Educational standards 309w
Secondary education, Selective schools 754-5
Social security claims, Literacy 279w
Training, Literacy 254w
Unemployment, Literacy 254w, 768-9w
University Grants Council 445w

Ashfield
Restart programme 609w

Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Debates etc
Business statement (19.02.87) 1077
Crown Proceedings (Armed Forces) Bill, 2R (13.02.87) 574-7, 595, 603
Handicapped (17.02.87) 801-5
Questions
Analgesics, Children 600-1w
Business statement 463
Mental health community care 195w

Myalgic encephalomyelitis 278-9w
Occupational deafness, Industrial disablement benefits 148-9
Pressurised water reactors, Nuclear safety 213-4w
Reye's syndrome, Committee on the Safety of Medicines 598-9w
Reye's syndrome, Drug research 599-600w
Reye's syndrome, Young people 599w

Ashton, Mr Joseph
Questions
British Coal Corporation, Public sector housing sales 213w, 246w

Asians
Civil service recruitment 878-9w

Aspinwall, Mr Jack
Questions
AIDS, Haemophilia 513w
Meningitis 510w, 824w
Meningitis, Avon 510-1w
Meningitis, Death 511-2w
Meningitis, Gloucestershire 511w
Meningitis, Vaccination 512w, 601w

Assaults on police
Northern Ireland 732-3w
Royal Ulster Constabulary 464w, 732-3w

Association of Chief Police Officers 216-7w

Association of County Councils 480w, 653-4

Association of Directors of Social Services 538-9w
Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975 538-9w

Association of Metropolitan Authorities 168w, 476w
Arts 168w

Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel 385w
Whitley councils 385w

Association of Victims of Myalgic Encephalomyelitis 278-9w

Atkins, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.02.87) 522
Rover Group (19.02.87) 1063
Questions
Arthritis, Lancashire 199w
Educational standards, Lancashire 570-1w
Further education, North West region 758
GCE A level, English education 369w
Navy, Drug abuse 306w
Regional aid 526-7w

Atkinson, Mr David
Questions
Diabetes, Disposable syringes 271w
Dorset Institute of Higher Education 572w
European Security Conference 903
General Certificate of Secondary Education, Teaching aids 224w
National Marriage Guidance Council, Government grants 321w
Prime Minister visits abroad, USSR 159w

Atkinson, Mr Norman
Questions
Brain drain, Higher education 568w
Cyprus, Peace negotiations 695-6w
Manufacturing industries, Redundancy 457-8

Atmospheric Effects Review Group 112w

Atomic Weapons Research Establishment
Cancer hazards 505-6w

Attendance allowance
Kidney patients 131w
Members' correspondence 140w
Social security recipients 130w, 281-2w, 398w
Wales 508w

Attorney-General
National security 1w, 155w, 407-8w

Auctioneers
Licensing 326w

Audit
Companies (10.02.87) 171

Audit committees (19.02.87) 1085-149

Audit (Northern Ireland) Order 1987
Debates etc
(17.02.87) 782

Austria
AIDS 328w
British residents abroad 328w

Automation
Screening 399w

Availability for work 530-2w

Average earnings 177-8w
Married men 181-2w
Private sector employment 533w
Public sector employment 533w
Single people 181w

Avon
Meningitis 510-1w

Ayr
Maternity benefits 815-6w
Procurators fiscal 259w
Road construction 612w
Road traffic 612w

Ayr road route 612w

Badgers
Bovine tuberculosis 338w

Bagier, Mr Gordon A T
Questions
Maternity benefits, Sunderland 272w, 344w

Bail 560w
Magistrates courts 560w
Northern Ireland 406w
Prisoners on remand 559w
Terrorism 431-2w

Bail hostels 322w

Bain & Company 623w
Prime Minister visits abroad 623w

Baker, Rt Hon Kenneth, Secretary of State for Education & Science
Questions
Education, Local education authorities 761
Pupil-teacher ratios 753
Pupil-teacher ratios, Essex 753
Pupil-teacher ratios, Pay 753-4
Schools, Education (No 2) Act 1986 760-1
Secondary education, Selective schools 754-5
Selective schools 572w
Teachers, Pay 568w, 573w
University Grants Committee, University finance 172w

Baker, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc
Agricultural land, Land use (09.02.87) 77
Questions
Arms control treaties 899-900
Cereals, Prices 782w
EC budget, Judgments 37w
Schools, Education (No 2) Act 1986 760

Baking industry
Screening 533-4w

Balance of payments 422-3w

Balance of trade 164-6w
Defence equipment 776w
Manufactured goods 422-3w

Baldry, Mr Tony
Debates etc
Rover Group (19.02.87) 1072
Questions
Secondary education, Selective schools 755

Bangladesh
Ethnic minorities 370w

Bank loans
Farmers 66-7w

Bank of England
Self-regulatory system 545w

Banking Bill 1986/87
Debates etc
Rep & 3R (19.02.87) 1085-149

Banking supervision (19.02.87) 1085-149

Banks (19.02.87) 1085-149
Financial services 437w

Banks, Mr Robert
Questions
Business statement 466
Czechoslovakia, Foreign policy 690w

Banks, Mr Tony
Debates etc
Business statement (19.02.87) 1082
Housing (10.02.87) 228, 238-9, 244-5
Local Government (Empty Council Houses) Bill, 1R (17.02.87) 785-7
Oral question time point of order (16.02.87) 658
Questions
Armed forces punishment, Hooliganism 365w
Arts, Economic situation 478w
BBC external services 231w
BBC external services, Broadcasting finance 230-1w
Bombs, Transport 367w
Company cars, Motoring 183w
County Hall, Demolition 419w
Dept of the Environment, Departmental correspondence 380w
Dept of the Environment, Local government services 381-2w
Greater London Council, Cultural heritage 418-9w
Heating allowances, Brighton 284w
Immigration controls, Genetics 232w
Local government, Dept of Transport 412w
Local government, Home Office 435w
Local government functions, Dept of Transport 411-2w
Local government functions, Home Office 435w
Local government functions, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 483w
Local government functions, Office of Arts & Libraries 480-1w
Local government reform, Civil service manpower 420w
Local government reform, Greater London Council 239w
Local government reform, Local government staff 419-20w
Maternity benefits, Newham 276-7w
Metropolitan Police, Civil proceedings 218w
Metropolitan Police, Criminal investigation 561-2w
Montgomery, Simon, Disciplinary proceedings 392w
News International, Police records 217-8w
News International, Public order policing 216w
Opinion surveys, Dept of the Environment 247w
Perez, Fernando, Kidnapping 231-2w, 234w
Photographs, Police records 217w
Police firearms, Police patrolling 218w
Police patrolling, Helicopters 218w
Police right of search, BBC 8w
Premium bonds, Prize money 424-5w
Prize money, Premium bonds 233w
Racial conflict, Newham 215w
Ramasamy, Rajendrau, Members' correspondence 374w
Rate support grants, Slough 382w
Social security recipients, Slough 398w
Supplementary benefits, Brighton 270w
Tax allowances, Direct taxation 182-3w
Travelling expenses, Public expenditure 234w
Unemployment, Slough 390w
Written questions, Administrative delays 239w

BAOR
Electrical industry (12.02.87) 559-66

Bar End 44w

Barclays Bank 687w
South Africa 687w

Barking & Dagenham
Maternity benefits 701w

Barnsley
British Coal Corporation 467-8w
Maternity benefits 146w, 152w, 205-6w, 360-1w
Supplementary benefits 821-2w
Unemployment 768w

Barristers
Industrial tribunals 764w

Barron, Mr Kevin
Debates etc
Housing (10.02.87) 213
Questions
Business statement 464
Coal fired power stations, Central Electricity Generating Board 838-9w
Electricity distribution 635w
Housing, British Coal Corporation 552w
Library Association 475w
Power stations 635-6w
Power stations, Planning permission 635w
Sizewell B, Nuclear safety 469w

Barry, Peter 331w

Basildon
Maternity benefits 863w

Basingstoke District Hospital 200w
Hospital waiting lists 200w

Bathing
Exceptional circumstances additions 210w

Batiste, Mr Spencer
Debates etc
Local Government Bill, Scope of Bill (18.02.87) 921

BBC
Ministerial correspondence 794-5w
Police raids 457w
Police right of search 8-9w, 230w, 260w, 268w, 322w, 435w, 445-7w, 606w, 771w, 795-6w
Police rights of search 259-60w
Procurator fiscal 772w
Public appointments 456-7
Search warrants 307-10, 546w, 617-8w

BBC external services 231w
Broadcasting finance 230-1w
Government grants 12w
Poland 895-6

BBC External Services Review 231w

Beaumont-Dark, Mr Anthony
Debates etc
Rover Group (19.02.87) 1069
Questions
Adult education, Literacy 569w
Brain drain, Higher education 756
Deportation, Tamils 911-2
Transplant surgery 128-9w

Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Debates etc
Social Fund (Maternity & Funeral Expenses) Bill, Rem stages (09.02.87) 81-3, 91, 100-1, 103-6
Social Security (Payments on account) Regulations 1987 (17.02.87) 880-3, 885
Women (17.02.87) 861-4
Questions
Arts, Employment 476w
Board & lodging charges, Young people 146
Housing benefits, Rents 194w
Maternity benefits, Derby 359-60w
Maternity benefits, Rossendale 517w

Bed & breakfast accommodation
Local government expenditure 667w, 852w

Bedford bypass 736w

Beef & veal
Agricultural subsidies 781-2w, 785w
Common Farm prices 481w
EC external trade 481w
Exports 41-2w, 481w, 485w
Food surpluses 287w
Intervention prices 287-8w
Intervention stocks 287-8w, 485w
Livestock 1052
Prices 269w, 781w

Beef premiums 287-8w

Beer
Food additives 166w

Bees
Animal diseases 41w
Import controls 41w

Beirut Airport 686-7w
Airlines 686-7w

Beith, Mr A J
Questions
A1, Road accidents 379w
Agricultural land, Rates & rating 1045
Alcoholic drinks, Licensing 867-8w
Business statement 462-3
Diabetes, Disposable syringes 397w
Food surpluses, Butter 482w, 784w
House of Commons, Equality Exchange 604w
Nuclear power stations, Emergency planning 303w
Nuclear power stations, Nuclear safety 317-8w
Oil storage, Licensing 841-3w
Shares, Share ownership 384w, 425w
USSR, Human rights 903
USSR, Official engagements 690-1w

Belfast
Nursery education 446-7

Belize
Armed forces deployment 698w, 905-6
Military aid 698w

Bell, Mr Stuart
Questions
Maternity benefits, Middlesbrough 859w
Police brutality, Northern Ireland 225w
Prison population, Northern Ireland 448
Republic of Ireland, Anglo-Irish Agreement 331w
Unemployment, Northern Ireland 442-3

Bell Committee see BBC External Services Review

Bellingham, Mr Henry
Questions
Cereals, Prices 781w
Manufacturing industries, Industrial production 764
Public expenditure, Northern Ireland 449

Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Debates etc
Parliamentary privilege (10.02.87) 262, (11.02.87) 311
Questions
Coal fired power stations, South Africa 642
Maternity benefits, Chesterfield 809-10w
News International, Police equipment 373w
News International, Riot control weapons 373-4w
Pressurised water reactors, USA 644

Bennet, C 874-5w
Police attention 874-5w
Zambia 874-5w

Bennett, Mr Andrew F
Debates etc
Access to Personal Files Bill, 2R (20.02.87) 1170, 1211-2, 1214-5
Education (Nutrition Requirements) Bill, 2R (20.02.87) 1228-9
Questions
Class sizes, Local education authorities 644-54w
Day care of children, Local authorities 659-61w
Day nurseries, Local authorities 710w
Further education, EC countries 576-8w
Further education, Pupils 833-6w
Higher education, Age participation rates 742-4w
Maternity benefits, Stockport 353w, 395w
Mature students, Student numbers 582w
Nursery education, Age participation rates 653-6w
Nursery schools, Age participation rates 656w
Open University, Instalment credit 580w
Open University, Student numbers 579-80w
Open University, Summer schools 579-80w
Student grants 833-4w
Student grants, Cost of living 759-60
Student grants, Expenditure 744w
Student grants, Parental contributions 566-7w
Universities, Student numbers 576w, 581-2w
University finance, University Grants Committee 744w
University teachers, Manpower 580-1w

Berkshire
Environmentally sensitive areas 335w, 602-3w

Bermingham, Mr Gerald
Debates etc
Police right of search, BBC (16.02.87) 745-6
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 (Continuance) Order 1987 (10.02.87) 265-6, 271
Questions
Bail 560w
Bail, Magistrates' courts 560w
Maternity benefits, St Helens 208-9w
Prisoners, Mental illness 436w
Prisoners on remand 559w
Prisoners on remand, Bail 559w
Prisoners on remand, Probation & aftercare 560-1w
Prisoners, Psychiatry 436w
Road tax, Cars 840w
Road tax, Tax collection 841w
Road tax, Tax evasion 841w
Secure community home schools 598w
Student grants 758
Tax yields, Petroleum revenue tax 878w
Youth custody, Prisons 560-1w

Berries & fruit
Agricultural production 791w

Best, Mr Keith
Questions
Afghanistan, Torture 399w
Falkland Islands, Fisheries 11w
Guided weapons 101w
Guided weapons, Defence procurement 304w
Health education, Wales 3
Helicopters, Defence procurement 870w
Hercules aircraft, Communications 365w
Laird (Anglesey), Defence equipment 565w
Laird (Anglesey), Patents 525w
Merchant ships, Design 291w
Military aircraft 101-2w
Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin, Government grants 636w
National employer liaison committee 564w
NHS, Wales 82w
Rapier missiles, Armed forced deployment 564w
Remotely piloted vehicles 101w
Strategic defence initiative, ABM Treaty 832w
University College of North Wales, University Grants Committee 574-5w
University Grants Committee, University finance 575w
Warships, Defence 869-70w
Welsh language 80w
Welsh language, Government grants 6-7

Bexley London Borough Council Bill 1985/86
Debates etc
2R* (12.02.87) 441

Bidwell, Sydney
Questions
Museums & galleries, Fees & charges 442w
South Africa, Censorship 687w
Tamils, Political refugees 770

Biffen, Rt Hon John, *Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons*
Debates etc
Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc (Scotland) Bill, Allocation of time motion (11.02.87) 320-5
Business statement (19.02.87) 1074-82
Questions
Business statement 461-70
House of Commons accommodation 16-7
House of Commons accommodation, Bridge Street area 17
House of Commons galleries, Security 15-6
Members' pensions 474w
Norman Shaw building, Reprography 473w
Opposition parties, Finance 60w
Parliamentary Contributory Pension Fund 328w
Parliamentary papers, Norman Shaw building 473w, 604w
Recycling, House of Commons 17-8
Recycling, House of Commons accommodation 18
Table Office, Computer applications 59-60w
Ten minute rule Bills, Legislation 839w

Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Questions
Abortion, Minors 147
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Terrorism 303w
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Ulster Unionists 445
Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference 328w
Deportation, Tamils 910-1
Family planning clinics, Minors 209w
Gaelic Athletic Association, Discrimination 725w
Magistrates, Northern Ireland 2w
Neighbourhood Energy Action, Essex 466-7w
Political parties, Northern Ireland 331-2w
South Africa, Foreign policy 689w
Ulster Defence Regiment 869w
West Hatch School, Ministers' domestic visits 23-4w

Bilateral aid
Honduras 172-3w
Nicaragua 172w

Billing
Catering 436w
Electricity tariffs 468w
Gas tariffs 468w
Judgments 436w

Biology
Nature Conservancy Council 550-1w

Birchwood Project (Warrington) 157w

Birkbeck college 567w
University finance 567w

Birkenhead
Schools 12w

Birmingham
Derelict land grants 238w, 739-40w
Exceptional needs payments 154w
Industrial tribunals 408w, 764w
Loft insulation 740w
Maternity benefits 275w, 812w, 858w
Social security appeals 154w
Unemployment benefits 392w

Bishop Challoner School 12w
Marian School 12w

Biwa, Eric 460w

Black Country 766-8w, 844-5w
Employment schemes 769w
Unemployment 766-7w

Blackburn
Royal ordnance factories 491w

Blackburn Hyndburn & Ribble Valley Health Authority
Acute beds 505w
Blaenau Gwent 703w
Maternity benefits 703w

Blair, Mr Tony
Debates etc
Rover Group (19.02.87) 1070
Questions
Arts, Employment 476w
Maternity benefits, Sedgefield 349w
Severe weather payments, Advertising 138w
Severe weather payments, Northern region 138w
Small businesses, Budget 36w

Blairgowrie
Travel-to-work areas 295-6

Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Questions
Germanyuk, Ulyana, USSR 830w
Hong, Kong, China 895

Blood
Imports 510w, 512w

Blood donors
Gloucester (09.02.87) 19
Hepatitis 129w
Prisoners 269w
Standing Order No 20 applications (09.02.87) 19

Blood products laboratory
Construction 510w

Blood tests
AIDS 129w

Board & lodging charges 196w, 361-2w, 499-500w, 709w
Burnley 709w
Pendle 709w
Residential care 361-2w, 499-500w
Social security benefits rules 146, 196w
Weather 196w
Young people 146

Board of Banking Supervision (19.02.87) 1085-149

Boarding schools
Armed forces dependants 684w
Local education authorities 223-4w
State education 657w
Statistics 657-8w

Boddam Island 365w
Armed forces deployment 365w

Body, Sir Richard
Questions
Advisory Committee on Pesticides, Pay 604w

Body searches 8w, 465w
Maghaberry Prison 465w

Boeing
Early warning systems 106w, 685w

Bofors gun 488-9w, 681w
Ammunition 681w
Defence contracts 488-9w
Warships 488w

Bogle, Stephen 639-40w

Bolton
Breast cancer (17.02.87) 888-92

Bolton Abbey 34w
Capital transfer tax 34w

Bombings
Fazeli, Bijan 432w
Kensington & Chelsea 432w
Tanker ships 229w

Bombs
Nuclear weapons 367w
Transport 367w

Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Debates etc
Electrical industry, BAOR (12.02.87) 559-61, 564
Women (17.02.87) 847-50
Questions
Maternity benefits, Sandwell 342w, 351w

Bootle
Maternity benefits 149w

Bottomley, Mr Peter, *Under-Secretary of State for Transport*
Debates etc
British Railways Bill, 2R (16.02.87) 712-3
Motor Cycle Noise Bill, Money res (16.02.87) 721-2
Questions
A1, Road accidents 379w
A1-M1 link 43w
A1-M1 link, Public inquiries 253w
A22, Road works 736w
A34, Newbury 411w
A36, Road construction 155w
A38, Road safety barriers 45-6w
Bedford bypass 736w
Buses, Speed governors 840w
Car ownership, South east region 47w
Highway code 736-7w
Humber bridge, Finance 409w
Level crossings, Hampden Park 736w
Local government, Dept of Transport 412w
Local government functions, Dept of Transport 411-2w
Lorries, Overloading offences 44w
Lorries, Transport of hazardous materials 310-1w
Lorry drivers, Motorway service areas 410w
Lorry drivers, Roads 411w
Lorry parks 410w
M3, Road construction 44w
M25, Road construction 409w
M42, Traffic noise 249w
M63, Road construction 624w
Motorway service areas 43-4w
Motorways, Housing compensation 248-9w
Motorways, Road closures 155-6w
Motorways, Warning signs 43w
Orange badge scheme 249-52w
Orange badge scheme, Greater London 249w
Prometheus project, Motor vehicles 735-6w
Public service vehicles, Motor vehicle testing 43w
Road markings, France 247-8w
Road safety education, Pre-school education 155w
Road safety, Government grants to local authorities 252w
Road safety, Research finance 410w
Roads, South East region 47w
Safety belts, Children 45w
Severn bridge, Repairs & maintenance 378w
Tutbury bypass, Road construction 378w
Weighing machines, West Midlands 44-5w, 840w

Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Debates etc
Access to Personal Files Bill, 2R (20.02.87) 1176-7
Crown Proceedings (Armed Forces) Bill, 2R (13.02.87) 577-80
Questions
Consultants, Merit awards 144-5
Energy efficiency 646
Environmentally sensitive, Government grants 789w
Further education, Student counselling 169w
Further education, Young people 763
Government grants to local authorities 662w
Prison population, Northern Ireland 447-8
Public expenditure, Cost effectiveness 826-7w
Science & technology research, Research finance 370-1w

Teachers, Pensions 573-4w

Boughton, Trafford 487w

Bourj el Barajneh 409w

Bovine tuberculosis
Badgers 338w

Bowden, Mr Andrew
Questions
Prime Minister official engagements 160w

Bowden, Mr Gerald
Debates etc
Access to Personal Files Bill, 2R (20.02.87) 1194-6
Questions
Arts finance, Arts sponsorship 479w
Civil defence, Chemical weapons 173w
Civil service, Productivity 655
Emergency services, Chemical weapons 146-7
Sheltered housing, Social security recipients 201w

Boyes, Mr Roland
Debates etc
Oral question time point of order (16.02.87) 660
Questions
Arms control, Chemical weapons 692-3w
Arms trade, Export promotion 873w
Business statement 463-4
Local education authorities, Capital investment 569w
Maternity benefits, Houghton 144-5w, 150w

Boyson, Dr Rhodes, Minister of State for the Environment
Questions
Local government finance, Rates & rating 159w

Bradford
Childbirth 361w
Educational finance 572w
Maternity benefits 591w, 705w
Vitamins 593w
Welfare milk 593w
Women 390w

Bradford Health Authority 597w
Hospital closures 597w

Bradwell power station 634w
Radioactive waste disposal 849w

Brain drain 456
Higher education 568-9w, 755-7
University finance 756
USA 755-6

Brandon-Bravo, Mr Martin M
Questions
British Airways, Privatisation 626w
University finance, University Grants Committee 306-8w

Bransdale Moor 116w

Bray, Dr Jeremy
Questions
Electronic Data Systems, Training 454
South Africa, Coal 687w

Brazil
Debts 893
Economic situation 893
Export credit guarantees 893-4
Interest rates 893
Overseas trade 893-4

Breast cancer
Bolton (17.02.87) 888-92
Screening 820w, (17.02.87) 888-92

Breast Cancer Screening Working Party (17.02.87) 888-92

Brent
Maternity benefits 707w, 860w

Bridge Street area
House of Common accommodation 17

Bridges
River Dee 846w

Brighton
Heating allowances 284w
Supplementary benefits 270w

Brighton Marine Palace & Pier Bill (HL) 1985/86
Debates etc
Rep* (10.02.87) 143
3R* (17.02.87) 751

Brinton, Mr Tim
Debates etc
Broadcasting Bill (HL), 2R (16.02.87) 673-5, 677

British Airports Authority
Shares 311w

British Airways
Deportation 323w, 374w
Privatisation 48w, 626w

British Coal
Capital investment 650

British Coal Corporation 213w, 240w, 319w, 466w, 469w, 552w, 650
Barnsley 467-8w
Housing 552w
Manpower 319w
Productivity 469w
Property transfer 552w
Public sector housing sales 213w, 240w

British Coal Corporation Enterprise 467-8w, 649-50
Employment opportunities 467-8w, 649-50

British dependent territories
European Convention on Human Rights 689w
Human rights 689w

British Diabetic Association 271w

British embassies
Export promotion 696w

British Film Institute 478w

British Gas Corporation
Privatisation 319w

British Library
Construction 383w
Construction costs 383w

British National Space Centre 439-40w

British Nuclear Fuels Ltd
Research finance 837w

British Rail
Art works 60-1w
Exhibitions 60-1w
Profitability 378w
Railway timetables 46w

British Rail Engineering 46w, 265w
Crewe 46w
Rolling stock 46w
Springburn 265w

British Railways Bill 1986/87
Debates etc
2R order read (12.02.87) 441
2R (16.02.87) 707-18

British residents abroad
Austria 328w
Iran 160
Lebanon 459w, 686w

British Reye's Syndrome Surveillance Scheme 599-600w

British Shipbuilders
External financing limits 524w
Manpower 315w, 441-2w

Brtish Steel Corporation
Manpower 315w, 441-2w

British Telecom
Management 189w
Scotland 189w

British Theatre Association 877w
Libraries 877w

British Tourist Authority 533w
Expo 88 533w

Brixton Prison 639-40w

Broadcasting (16.02.87) 662-705
Ministerial responsibility 435w

Broadcasting Bill (HL) 1986/87
Debates etc
2R (16.02.87) 662-705

Broadcasting finance
BBC external services 230-1w

Brook Advisory Centre 720w
Government grants to voluntary organisations 720w

Brooke, Mr Peter, Minister of State at the Treasury
Questions
Accountants, Treasury 672-4w
Alcoholic drinks duties, Tax yields 674-6w
Cash limits, Central Office of Information 330w
Charitable donations, Civil servants 427w
Data networks, Computers in government departments 33w, 644w
Data networks, Treasury 33-4w
EC budget 877w
EC budget, Exchange rates 30-4w
EC budget, Expenditure 542-3w, 672w
EC budget, Judgments 37w
EC budget, UK repayments 827-8w
EC budget contributions 33-4w, 672w
EC Finance Council, Export credit 543-4w
European Investment Bank, EC grants & loans 828w
European Investment Bank, UK contributions 828w
Food surpluses, UK contributions to EC budget 422w
Own resources 878w
Own resources, European Court of Justice 877w
Pay, Charitable donations 545w
Procurement, Government departments 233w
Small businesses, Budget 36w
Tax payers, Tax rates & bands 36-7w
Tobacco duties 676w
Tobacco duties, EC countries 179-80w
Tobacco duties, Personal income 422w
VAT, Mail order selling 37w, 423-4w
VAT, Retail trade 423-4w, 541-2w
VAT, Small businesses 37w

Brown, Mr Gordon
Debates etc
Dockyard Services Orders 1986 (09.02.87) 124-6, 131
Questions
British Coal Corporation, Manpower 319w
British Shipbuilders, Manpower 315w, 441-2w
Community programme, Scotland 764-5w
London docklands, Expenditure 127-8w
Maternity benefits, Dunfermline 592-3w
Public sector, Finance 545w
Severe weather payments, Supplementary benefits 341w
Trading funds 544-5w
Trading funds, Civil service manpower 545w, 829-30w
Urban development corporations, Expenditure 127w

Brown, Mr Hugh
Questions
Food surpluses, Charities 1049
Prison accommodation, Scotland 293-4

Brown, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Broadcasting Bill (HL), 2R (16.02.87) 686-9, 698
Public expenditure (18.02.87) 927
Radioactive waste disposal (09.02.87) 27-36, 45, 54, 67-8

Standing Order No 20 applications (11.02.87) 316
Women (17.02.87) 831
Questions
Bed & breakfast accommodation, Local government expenditure 667w
British Coal Corporation, Productivity 469w
Homelessness 852w
Local government expenditure, Bed & breakfast accommodation 852w
USSR, Foreign policy 691w

Brown, Mr Robert C
Questions
Maternity benefits, Newcastle upon Tyne 861-2w
New earnings survey, Disclosure of information 428w
New earnings survey, Gas supply industry 428w

Brown, Mr Ron
Questions
Albania, Diplomatic relations 907-8
Granton gas works 263w
Maternity benefits, Edinburgh 814w
Prostitution, Nationalisation 297

Browne, Mr John
Debates etc
Access to Personal Files Bill, 2R (20.02.87) 1187-91
Questions
Land use, Rural areas 164-5
Small businesses, Government assistance to industry 56-60w

Broxburn
Factory closures 267w
Golden Wonder 267w

Bruce, Mr Malcolm
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.02.87) 482, 504-8, 553
Petroleum Bill, Rep & 3R (11.02.87) 392-3, 406
Questions
Agricultural land, Forestry 165-6w
Common Good Fund, Aberdeen 266w
PICKUP, Scotland 299
Single homeless, Aberdeen 611-2w
Urban programme, Scotland 611w

Bruinvels, Mr Peter
Debates etc
Business statement (19.02.87) 1078
Early day motions, Leader of the Opposition (19.02.87) 1083
Questions
AIDS, Ethnic minorities 129-30w
AIDS, Nurses 512w
Business statement 467-8
Diplomatic immunity, Driving offences 831w
Diplomatic immunity, Members' correspondence 400w
Diplomatic service, Diplomatic immunity 231w
Educational finance, Northern Ireland 453
Energy conservation, Managers 471w
Flats, Council housing 417w
Football, Membership cards 117w
Grammar schools 569w
House of Commons galleries, Security 15-6
Ingley, James, Extradition 2w
Ministers of religion, Business expenses 13-4
Opposition parties, Finance 60w
Prime Minister official engagements 160w, 303w, 523w, 808w
Rape, Parole 7w
Rape, Prison sentences 7w, 766
Youth training scheme, Leicester 163w

Buchan, Mr Norman
Debates etc
Broadcasting Bill (HL), 2R (16.02.87) 665, 675, 699, 701-2
Questions
Southern African Development Coordination Conference 694-5w

Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick, *Minister of State for Energy*
Debates etc
Petroleum Bill, Rep & 3R (11.02.87) 371-3, 381-6, 388-9, 396-8, 402-5
Questions
Alternative energy, EC action 648
British Gas Corporation, Privatisation 319w
Coal fired power stations, Coal mining 642
Coal fired power stations, Construction 640-2, 648
Coal fired power stations, Electricity consumption 641
Coal fired power stations, South Africa 642
Confederation of British Industry 467w
Diesel fuel, Standards specifications 317w
Electricity generation, Costs 468w
Energy consumption 472w
Fossil fuelled power stations 640
Gas tariffs, Billing 468w
Layfield, Frank, Ministers' correspondence 646
Natural radioactivity, Aberdeen 645
North Sea oil, Manpower 650
Nuclear power stations, Leukaemia 646
Nuclear power stations, Nuclear safety 641
Offshore fixed platforms 838w
Power stations, Construction 647-8
Sizewell B, Public participation in planning 645-6
"Sizewell B Public Inquiry Report" 645

Budgen, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc
Public expenditure (18.02.87) 955, 961, 966-9

Budget
Small businesses 36w

Building alterations
Handicapped 240-1w
Housing & handicapped 240-1w

"Building Businesses Not Barriers White Paper" 423w

Building industry
Industrial health & safety 162w
Northern Ireland 442, 449, 452
Tax evasion 448-9, 452
Wales 765-6

Building land
Derelict land 167
Greenbelt 166

Building regulations
Glass 311-2w

Building repairs
Educational finance 444w
Exceptional needs payments 520w
Fire services 215w
Middlesex Crown Court 867w
Radon gas 115-6w
Saltby School 444w
School buildings 569w

Building societies
Consumer Credit Act 1974 440w
Financial services 437w
Loans 440w

Burglary
Clerkenwell Road 371w
Detection rates 434w
Glass 5w
Greater London 434w

Burnley
Board & lodging charges 709w
Housing investment programmes 664-5w
Maternity benefits 353w, 516-7w
Social security recipients 269-70w

Burnley Borough Council 664-5w

Burnley Pendle & Rossendale Health Authority (09.02.87) 69
Hospital closures (09.02.87) 69

Burt, Mr Alistair
Questions
British embassies, Export promotion 696w
Food surpluses, Charities 783w, 1049

Bury St Edmunds
Maternity benefits 816w, 858w

Bus lanes 174w
Parking offences 174w

Bus services
Competition 624w
North West region 378w

Buses
Speed governors 840w

Business education
Educational finance 456

Business expenses
Advisory Committee on Pesticides 604w
Ministers of religion 13-4

Business statement 461-70, (19.02.87) 1074-82

Butcher, Mr John, *Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry*
Questions
Hearing aids, Licensing 3w
Imports, Channel tunnel 626w
Management consultants, Dept of Trade & Industry 628-9w
Postal deliveries, Rural areas 747w
Public Accounts Committee, Dept of Trade & Industry 523w
Radiophones, Licensing 2-3w
Regional development grants, Wales 213-4w
Satellites, International Telecommunications Union 368w, 441-2w, 686w
Skynet 4, Satellites 686w

Butter
EC external trade 789w
Food surpluses 482w, 601-2w, 784w
Pensioners 482w
USSR 789w

Butterfill, Mr John
Debates etc
Banking Bill, Rep & 3R (19.02.87) 1104-5
Questions
Spectacles, Handicapped 718w
Spectacles, Optical charges 718w

By election writs
Truro (17.02.87) 751

Bypasses
Mold (16.02.87) 734-41

Cabinet office
Cash limits 405w

Caborn, Mr Richard
Questions
Arts, Employment opportunities 651
Board & lodging charges, Social security benefits rules 196w
Maternity benefits, Faversham 345-6w, 517w
Maternity benefits, Leicestershire 345w, 517w
Maternity benefits, Sheffield 347w, 588-9w
Namibia, UN Security Council 535w
UK companies abroad, South Africa 4w

Caerphilly
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices 140-1w
Maternity benefits 146-7w

Caithness
Tree planting 541w

Calder Valley 699-700w
Maternity benefits 699-700w

Calderstones School, Liverpool
Property transfer 369w

Callaghan, Rt Hon James
Debates etc
Agricultural land (09.02.87) 26

Callaghan, Mr Jim
Questions
Arts centres, Regional arts 477w
Brazil, Economic situation 893

Calling of Members
Speaker's rulings & statements (17.02.87) 772, (18.02.87) 910, 923, (20.02.87) 1222

Camberwell
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices 818-9w

Cambridge
Maternity benefits 813-4w, 858-9w

Camp David 160w
Strategic Defence Initiative 160w

Campbell, Duncan 1w

Campbell, Mr Ian
Questions
Maternity benefits, Dumbarton 707-8w
Torness power station 261w

Campbell-Savours, Mr D N
Debates etc
Adjournment debates (17.02.87) 779
Broadcasting Bill (HL), 2R (16.02.87) 665
Business statement (19.02.87) 1082
Comptroller & Auditor General (09.02.87) 20-2
Early day motions, Leader of the Opposition (19.02.87) 1084
Employment schemes (12.02.87) 489-90
Oral question time intervention (17.02.87) 755-6
Points of order (12.02.87) 474
Rover Group (19.02.87) 1067
Settle-Carlisle railway (11.02.87) 439
Questions
Accidents, Northern Ireland 450
Animal feed, Radioactivity 1052
Attorney-General, National security 1w
Bank of England, Self-regulatory systems 545w
Business statement 469
Cooper, Frank, Telephone calls 294w
Defence expenditure 293-4w
Defence expenditure, National Audit Office 294w, 490w
Defence expenditure, Satellites 304w
Defence procurement, Disclosure of information 105w
Deportation, Tamils 913
Electricity generation, Costs 468w
House of Commons galleries, Security 16
Kinnock, Neil, Early day motions 1056
Kitson, Frank, National security 606w
Marconi, Company investigations 684-5w
Maternity benefits, Workington 277-8w
National security, Cooper, Frank 294w
National security, Magazine press 1w
Plutonium, Nuclear fuel reprocessing 316w
Polaris, Costs 871w
Polaris, Defence expenditure 871w
Polaris, Defence procurement 871w
Public Accounts Committee, Dept of Education & Science 583w
Public Accounts Committee, Dept of Employment 532w
Public Accounts Committee, Dept of Energy 634w
Public Accounts Committee, Dept of the Environment 662-3w
Public Accounts Committee, Dept of Trade & Industry 523w
Public Accounts Committee, Dept of Transport 623w
Public Accounts Committee, Foreign & Commonwealth office 536w
Public Accounts Committee, Home Office 557w
Public Accounts Committee, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 603w
Public Accounts Committee, Ministry of Defence 870w
Public Accounts Committee, Overseas Development Administration 528w
Public Accounts Committee, Treasury 825w
Public libraries, Arts finance 653-4
Satellites, Defence expenditure 778w
Satellites, International Telecommunications Union 106w, 686w
Satellites, Ministry of Defence 491w
Satellites, National Audit Office 367w
Sizewell B 639-40, 643-4
Skynet 4, Satellites 686w
Student numbers, Tuition fees 757
Takeovers, House of Fraser 747w
Trident, Costs 871w
Trident, Defence expenditure 871-2w
Trident, Defence procurement 871w

Canary Wharf 111w
Land acquisition 382w
Planning permission 111w

Canavan, Mr Dennis
Debates etc
1R (18.02.87) 925-6
Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc (Scotland) Bill, Allocation of time motion (11.02.87) 323, 325
People's Right to Fuel Bill, 1R (18.02.87) 925-6
Standing Order No 20 applications (11.02.87) 314
Questions
Arms control treaties, USSR 906-7
Duke of Argyll, Poaching 257w
Guinness, Company investigations 627w
Maternity benefits, Falkirk 810-1w
Mental health services, Scotland 61w
News International, Public order policing 436w
Republic of Ireland 331w
Student grants 565w
Whisky, Scotland 393w

Cancer
Diagnosis 857-8w
Nuclear power stations 721-2w

Cancer hazards
Atomic Weapons Research Establishment 505-6w
Coal fired power stations 644
Committee on the Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment 505-6w
Death 506-8w
Nuclear power stations 506-8w, 646, 1055, 1057-8

Capacitors
Polychlorinated biphenyl 421w

Capital investment 437-8w
British Coal 650
Coal mining 650
Community health services 502w
Educational finance 79w
Falkland Islands 694w
Further education 836-7w
Government grants to local authorities 307-8w
Higher education 836-7w
Hospitals 502w
Local education authorities 307-8w, 443-4w, 569w, 761-2, 836w
NHS 449-50w, 456-7w
North East London Polytechnic 169w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 470-1w
Personal social services 857w
Power stations 10w
Prison accommodation 294
Roads 185-6w
Rolls-Royce Aeroengines 438w
School buildings 444w, 567w
Sizewell B 9w

Capital transfer tax
Bolton Abbey 34w
Countryside 34-6w

Car hire
Licensing 310w

Car ownership
North West region 47w
South East region 47w

Car parks
Wandsworth Prison 173w

Caravan sites
Local authorities 241-2w

Caravan Sites Act 1968
Questions
241-2w

Cardiff
House renovation grants 79-80w

Careers development 654
Armed forces 654
Civil service personnel management 654

Carlile, Mr Alex
Debates etc
Hospitals, Machynlleth (16.02.87) 723-9
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 (Continuance) Order 1987 (10.02.87) 279-80
Questions
Bail hostels 322w
Hospitals, Machynlleth 81-2w
Poland, Foreign policy 697w
Prison overcrowding, Remand centres 322-3w
Voting rights, Students 374w

Carlisle, Mr John
Questions
Seeds, Testing 882w

Carlisle, Mr Kenneth
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.02.87) 514-7
Questions
Agricultural land, Land use 779w
City technology colleges, Lincoln 571w
Land use, Rural areas 165
Power stations, Construction 647-8

Carlisle, Rt Hon Mark
Questions
Tamils, Political refugees 771

Carrick
Maternity benefits 814-5w

Cars
Imports 633w
Ownership 310w
Pricing 633w
Road tax 840w

Carter-Jones, Mr Lewis
Debates etc
Handicapped (17.02.87) 798, 812, 819-20
Questions
Cervical cancer, Screening 285-6w
Education Act 1981, Research 170-1w
Handicapped, Day centres 280-1w
Handicapped, Doctors' surgeries 279-80w
Handicapped, Public appointments 280w
Housing & handicapped, House renovation grants 313-4w
London University, Education Act 1981 656-7w
Maternity benefits, Eccles 591-2w
Mental health community care 150
Mobility allowance, Age 282w
Orange badge scheme 249-52w
Orange badge scheme, Greater London 249w
Road safety, Government grants to local authorities 252w
Wheelchair housing, Housing construction 313w
Wheelchair housing, Right to buy 312w
Wheelchairs 282w

Cartwright, Mr John
Debates etc
Crown Proceedings (Armed Forces) Bill, 2R (13.02.87) 580-2, 607
Questions
ABM Treaty, Strategic defence initiative 765
Armed forces, AIDS 680-1w
Armed forces deployment, Kenya 870w
Army, Sir John Moores barracks 365w
Hai, Nguyen Von, Visas 772w
Listed buildings, Park Vista 113w
London Docklands Development Corporation, Public appointments 312w

Navy, Drug abuse 777w
Public libraries, Censorship 670-1w
Public libraries, Political impartiality 479w
Warships, Iceland 185w

Cash, Mr William
Debates etc
Access to Personal Files Bill, 2R (20.02.87) 1172, 1177, 1179, 1185, 1212, 1220-2
Adjournment debates (17.02.87) 779
Agricultural land, Land use (09.02.87) 74
Banking Bill, Rep & 3R (10.02.87) 1088-92, 1120-2, 1134-6, 1147-8
Police right of search, BBC (16.02.87) 745-6, 748
Questions
Agricultural improvement scheme, Land use 779w
Offences against children, Video recordings 1056
Rural areas, Agriculture 38-40w

Cash limits 458w
Cabinet office 405w
Central Office of Information 330w
Government departments 79w, 105w, 330w, 405w
Inland Revenue 233-4w
Ministry of Defence 105w
Northern Ireland Office 79w

Catering
Billing 436w

Caterpillar Tractors 262w, 606w
Factory closures 262w, 304, 306

Cattle
EC action 269w

Cazenove 525w
Guinness 525w

Censorship
Falkland Islands 159-60
Public libraries 670-1w
South Africa 687w

Central America
EC Foreign Affairs Council 694w
Ministers' visits abroad 689w
Peace negotiations 694w, 904-5
USA 690w

Central Electricity Generating Board
Coal 469w
Coal fired power stations 838-9w
Disclosure of information 470w

Central Office of Information
Cash limits 330w

Cereals
Common farm prices 481w
Farms 779-80w
Food surpluses 779-80w
Prices 781-2w
Production quotas 750w, 780w
Wales 750w

Cerebral palsy
Children 140w

Certification
Seeds 882w

Cervical cancer 824w
Age 718-20w
Scotland 63-4w
Screening 63-4w, 285-6w, 399w

Chairman of Committee of the Whole House
Debates etc
Scope of debate (09.02.87) 93-4

Chalker, Mrs Lynda, Minister of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs
Questions
Angola, Mbunambana, Ceila 462-3w
Arms exports, UNITA 697w
BBC external services, Government grants 12w
British embassies, Export promotion 696w
Cyprus 11-2w
EC Foreign Affairs Council 698w
EC internal relations, EC action 695w
EC Presidency 164w
El Salvador, Human rights 229w
Falkland Islands, Fisheries 11w
Gambia, Foreign relations 908
Gambia, Overseas aid 908
Habib, Philip, Official engagements 230w
Honduras, Bilateral aid 172-3w
Namibia, Church of England 400w
Namibia, Economic sanctions 692w
Namibia, Foreign policy 401w, 460w
Namibia, Human rights 401w
Namibia, Newspaper press 460w
Namibia, Political parties 400w
Namibia, Politics & government 460w
Namibia, Refugees 459-60w
Namibia, SWAPO 459-60w
Namibia, UN Security Council 535w
Namibia, USA 401w
Nicaragua, Bilateral aid 172w
Siberian gas pipeline 698w
South Africa, Angola 688w
South Africa, Arms control 535w
South Africa, Arms embargoes 688w
South Africa, Censorship 687w
South Africa, Coal 687w
South Africa, Diplomatic service 688w
South Africa, Economic sanctions 232w, 687w
South Africa, Foreign policy 688-9w
South Africa, Political prisoners 687-8w
South Africa, UK companies abroad 687w
Southern African Development Coordination Conference 694-5w
SWAPO, Diplomatic relations 401w
SWAPO, Official engagements 403w
SWAPO, Refugees 401-4w
Turkey, Human rights 11w
Turkey, trials 11w

Chancellor of Duchy of Lancaster
Speaker's rulings & statements (17.02.87) 775

Chancellors School 309w

Change of use 481w, 881-2w
Farm buildings 164-5, 481w
Farms 881-2w

Channel tunnel
Exports 626w
Imports 626w
Investment 1058

Channel Tunnel Bill Select Committee 379w

Channon, Rt Hon Paul, Secretary of State for Trade & Industry
Debates etc
Rover Group, Ministerial statements (19.02.87) 1059-73
Questions
Export controls, USA 749-50w

Chapman, Mr Sydney
Questions
Arms control, International conferences 692w
Church Commissioners, Inner city areas 12
Civil servants' secondment 655-6
EC Finance Council, Export credit 543-4w
Educational finance, Capital investment 79w
Exchange rates, Taxation 543w
Forestry, Scotland 262w
Nuclear power, Electricity generation 643
Student numbers, Higher education 570w

Charitable donations 475w, 545w
Arts 475w
Civil servants 422w, 545w
Pay 422w, 545w

Charities
Food surpluses 287w, 325w, 333-5w, 783-4w, 1048-51
Intervention stocks 287w, 325w, 333-4w

Chatham Dockyard 564-5w
Radioactive waste disposal 564-5w

Chemical weapons
Arms control 692-3w, 901
Arms control treaties 900
Civil defence 173w
Emergency services 146-7
Medical treatments 146-7, 197w

Cherished number plates 252w

Chest medicine 226-7w
Hospital consultants 226-7w

Chesterfield
Maternity benefits 809-10w

Child destruction
Criminal investigation 8w
Prosecutions 1w

Child Resistant Packaging (Safety) Regulations 1986
Questions
4w

Child safety
Household bleach 4w

Childbirth
Bradford 361w
Ethnic minorities 212w

Children
Analgesics 600-1w
Cerebral palsy 140w
Deeds of covenant 183w
Nutrition & health 137-8w
Play 111w
Safety belts 45w

Children & Young Persons Act 1933
Questions
598w

Chile
Aliens 690w
Refugees 690w

China
Hong Kong 895

Chiropodists
Manpower 796w
Scotland 796w

Chiropody 61w

Chope, Mr Christopher, Under-Secretary of State for the Environment
Debates etc
Electrical industry, BAOR (12.02.87) 561-6
Questions
Contracts for services 856-7w
County Hall, Demolition 419w
Crown Suppliers, Privatisation 667w
Crown Suppliers, Procurement 667w
Dept of the Environment, Departmental correspondence 380w
Dept of the Environment, Local government services 381-2w
Dept of the Environment, Procurement 667w
Direct labour departments, Profitability 669w
District Works Offices, Westminster, Consultants 669w
EC grants & loans, Northern region 663-4w
Farm buildings, Rates & rating 481w
Government grants to local authorities, Flooding 116w
Greater London Council, Cultural heritage 418-9w
Lancaster House, Conferences 314w
Le Pen, Jean-Marie, Lancaster House 125-6w
Local authorities, AIDS 417w
Local government finance, Grant recycling 117-24w
Local government reform, Civil service manpower 420w
Local government reform, Greater London Council 239w
Local government reform, Local government staff 419-20w
Parish councils, Elections 549w
Property repayment services 667-8w
Property repayment services, Accounting 668w

Property repayment services, Civil service manpower 668w
Property Services Agency, Civil service dispersal 664w
Property Services Agency, Government contracts 668w
Property Services Agency, Ministry of Defence 856w
Rate support grants, Adur District Council 417w, 670w
Rate support grants, Leeds City Council 157w
Rate support grants, Slough 382w
Rates & rating, East Sussex 740w
Rates & rating, Inner London boroughs 126w
Written questions, Administrative delays 239w

Chothia, Yasmin 459w
Members' correspondence 459w

Chronically sick
Wales 137w

Chronically Sick & Disabled Persons Act 1970
Questions
3w

Church Action on Namibia 400w

Church Commissioners
Inner city areas 12-4
Small businesses 14

Church of England
Namibia 400w

Church schools
Leeds 760
Teachers 13

Churchill, Mr Winston
Debates etc
Crown Proceedings (Armed Forces) Bill, 2R (13.02.87) 567-74, 585, 607-9

Cider
Food additives 166w

City of London Anti-Apartheid Group 113w
Demonstrations 113w

City of Westminster
Maternity benefits 347-8w, 589w

City of Westminster Bill 1986/87
Debates etc
2R order read (12.02.87) 441, (19.02.87) 1041

City technology colleges 571w
Construction costs 571w
Government grants 571w
Lincoln 571w
Private investment 571w

Civil Aviation Authority
Codes of practice 840w

Civil defence
Chemical weapons 173w
Local government expenditure 433w
South Yorkshire 488w

Civil proceedings
Metropolitan Police 218w

Civil servants
Charitable donations 422w, 545w
Montgomery, Simon 392w
Recruitment 383w

Civil servants' background
Diplomatic service 693w
Education 383w

Civil servants' secondment 655-6

Civil servants' visits abroad
Nuclear power stations 10w
Sizewell B 10w

Civil service
Accountants 671-2w
Equal opportunities 654-5
Ethnic minorities 656-7
Militant tendency 655, 657
Productivity 655
Public administration 655
Women's employment 654-5
Youth training scheme 672w

Civil service dispersal
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices 818w
Property Services Agency 664w

Civil service manpower 180w
Data processing 428w, 434w
Government departments 420w
Local government reform 420w
Nature Conservancy Council 550w
Property repayment services 668w
Radioactive wastes 602w
Radiochemical inspectorate 415-7w
Restart programme 161w
Trading funds 545w, 829-30w

Civil service personnel management
Careers development 654

Civil service recruitment
Asians 878-9w
Ethnic minorities 878-9w
Ethnic monitoring 879-80w

Civil service retirement 654

"Civil Service Year Book 1987" 473w
Telephone numbers 473w

Clackmannan
Maternity benefits 704-5w

Clark, Mr Alan, *Minister of State for Employment*
Questions
Antidumping, EC action 523w
Balance of trade 164-6w
Cars, Imports 633w
EC external trade, USA 630w
Export controls, South Africa 165w
Export controls, USA 749w, 751w
Export licensing, USA 630w
Exports 440w
Exports, Defence equipment 629w
Import controls, Forest protection 3-4w
Import controls, Ramie 439w
Import controls, South Africa 626w
Imports 214w
Imports, West Germany 524-5w, 527w
Lorries, Germany 437w
Manufactured exports 748w
Motor vehicles, Import controls 633w
Oil imports 524w
Overseas trade, South Africa 165w
Overseas trade, Spain 214w
Overseas trade, Suriname 4-6w
Petroleum, International trade 630-3w
Protection of Trading Interests Act 1980 875-7w
Soya beans, Imports 440w
UN companies abroad, South Africa 4w

Clark, Dr David
Debates etc
Agricultural land (09.02.87) 25
Radioactive waste disposal (09.02.87) 47-51
Questions
Access to countryside, North Yorkshire Moors National Park 116w
Acid rain, Pollution control 112w
Air pollution, Trees 234-5w
Atmospheric Effects Review Group 112w
Capital transfer tax, Bolton Abbey 34w
Capital transfer tax, Countryside 35-6w
Exceptional needs payments, Draught-proofing materials 140w
Housing insulation, Exceptional needs payments 111w
Land use, Rural areas 161
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Radioactive waste disposal 602w
Natural radioactivity, Housing problems 547-8w
Nuclear power stations, Radioactive waste disposal 415-6w
Photochemical Oxidants Review Group 112w, 670w
Radiation hazards, Health physics 426w
Radiochemical Inspectorate, Civil service manpower 417w
Radon gas, Housing problems 114w, 413-4w
Trees, Urban areas 413w
Water pollution, Water authorities 416w
Wild animals, Poisoning 268w, 333w

Clark, Dr Michael
Debates etc
Agricultural land, Land use (09.02.87) 79-80
Radioactive waste disposal (09.02.87) 29, 44-5, 48, 50-1, 61-2
Questions
Coal mining, Ministers' domestic visits 467w
Donars, Computer applications 819-20w

Clark, Sir William
Questions
Mortgage relief, Tax yields 179-80w

Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth, *Paymaster General*
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.02.87) 476-91, 495, 498-9, 501, 510
Questions
Action for jobs, Portsmouth 768w
Community programme, Young people 427w, 610-1w
Employment, West Midlands 767-8w
Job training scheme, Equal opportunities 429w, 536w
Job training scheme, Further education 535w
Job training scheme, Training allowances 162-3w, 429w
Job training schemes 528w
Management consultants, Dept of Employment 607-10w
Manpower Services Commission, Expenditure 55w
Prison accommodation, Scotland 295
Public Accounts Committee, Dept of Employment 532w
Restart programme, Advertising 769w
Restart programme, Ashfield 609w
Restart programme, Civil service manpower 161w
Restart programme, Employers attitudes 769w
Restart programme, Greater London 606-7w
Restart programme, Interviews 609w
Restart programme, Stoke-on-Trent 769w
Vacancies, Professional & Executive Recruitment 533w

Clarke, Mr Tom
Debates etc
Handicapped (17.02.87) 820-3
Questions
Adult education, Scotland 299
Arms exports, UNITA 697w
Brain drain, Higher education 569w
British Film Institute 478w
Colleges of education, Scotland 188w
Handicapped 156
Handicapped children 141-4w
Handicapped children, Northern Ireland 78-80w
Handicapped children, Wales 91-2w
Handicapped pupils, Northern Ireland 177w
Handicapped pupils, Scotland 64w
Handicapped pupils, Special educational needs 92w
Higher education, Scotland 186w
Maternity benefits, Monklands 354-5w, 357w
Occupational therapy, Hospital waiting lists 211w
Occupational therapy, Recruitment 211w
Prime Minister domestic visits, Moodiesburn 521w
Special educational needs, Northern Ireland 78w

Special educational needs, School population 25-6w
Student grants, Scotland 261w

Class sizes
Local education authorities 644-54w
Primary, education 12-24w, 644-54w
Secondary education 12-24w

Clay, Mr Bob
Questions
Average earnings, Single people 181w

Clelland, Mr David
Questions
Further education, Young people 762-3
Maternity benefits, Newcastle 352w
Maternity benefits, Tyne Bridge 394-5w

Clergy
Pay 12-4

Clerkenwell Road 371w
Burglary 371w

Clwyd
Doctors' list of patients 455w, 846-7w
Local government expenditure 5
Maternity benefits 146w, 151w
Unemployment 15, 226w

Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Questions
ABM Treaty, USA 873w
Arms control treaties 873-4w
Business statement 468
Community health councils, Health services finance 151
Import controls, South Africa 626w
Maternity benefits, Cynon Valley 354w, 590w
Prime Minister visits abroad, USSR 522w
Satellites, National security 461w
Sherman Theatre, Cardiff, Arts finance 168w
Sizewell Inquiry, Nuclear accidents 469w

Clydebank
Maternity benefits 343w

Clydesdale
Maternity benefits 513-4w

Clydeside
Government assistance 306

Coal
Central Electricity Generating Board 469w
Import controls 687w
Imports 472w, 773w
South Africa 472w, 640, 642, 687w

Coal consumption
Concessionary coal 317w
Yorkshire & Humberside 316-7w

Coal fired power stations
Cancer hazards 644
Central Electricity Generating Board 838-9w
Coal mining 642
Coal prices 10w
Construction 640-2, 648
Electricity consumption 640-1, 647-8
Kincardine 641
Power industry 642
South Africa 642
South of Scotland Electricity Board 838-9w

Coal mine closures
West Fife 263w

Coal mining
Capital investment 650
Coal fired power stations 642
Industrial disputes 640
Ministers' domestic visits 467w
North West Leicestershire 466w
Productivity 642
Youth training scheme 392w

Coal prices
Coal fired power stations 10w

Coastguard
Helicopters 685w, 839w

Cockeram, Mr Eric
Questions
Ministers of religion, Pay 1w
Sheep meat, Prices 782w

Cocks, Rt Hon Michael
Questions
Time sharing, Advertising Standards Authority 315-6w
Time sharing, Departmental leaflets 316w

COD Bicester 102w

Codes of practice
Civil Aviation Authority 840w
Public libraries 479w
Racial conflict 215w

Cohen, Mr Harry
Debates etc
Parental Leave Bill, 1R (11.02.87) 317-9
Police records, Computers (20.02.87) 1233-6, 1239-40
Questions
AIDS, Contraceptives 710-1w
Animal cruelty, Pest control 113w
Cancer, Diagnosis 857-8w
Contraceptives, Prescriptions 202w
Data networks, Computers in government departments 33w, 644w
Data networks, Consultants 321w
Data networks, Dept of Health & Social Security 271w
Data networks, Home Office 6w
Data networks, Treasury 33-4w
Defence procurement, Disclosure of information 106w
Delaney, Michael, Death 867w
Demonstrations, City of London Anti-Apartheid Group 113w
Euratom, Nuclear fuel reprocessing 316w
Euratom, Nuclear fuel reprocessing 316w
Guinness, Company investigations 368w
Maternity benefits, Leyton 817-8w, 859w
Museums & galleries, Fees & Charges 442w
Plutonium, Exports 633w
Plutonium, Nuclear reactors 470w
Prisoners, Contraceptives 323w
Racial conflict, Codes of practice 215w
Unemployment, Kensington & Chelsea 49-50w
Urban programme, Parliamentary constituencies 849-52w

Coleman, Mr Donald
Debates etc
Business statement (19.02.87) 1079
Questions
Satellite broadcasting, Political broadcasting 6w

College closures
Jordanhill College of Education 264w
Physical education 264w

Colleges of education
Educational finance 188w
Scotland 188w

Colvin, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.02.87) 529-33
Questions
A36, Road construction 155w
Agricultural land, Land use 481w
Agricultural policy 788w
Agriculture, Wales 9
Alcoholic drinks, Consumer expenditure 106w
Common agricultural policy 1055
Farmers, Pensions 601w
Food surpluses, Charities 333-4w, 1050
Food surpluses, Disadvantaged 333-4w
Food surpluses, EC action 334-5w
Inland Revenue, Cash limits 233-4w
Land use, Rural areas 166
Licensed premises 319-20w
Licensing laws 215w
NHS, Property transfer 198w
Pensioners, Food surpluses 823-4w
Smallholdings, Town & country planning 416w
Taxation, Outgoers' scheme 384w

Commencement orders 131w
Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation & Representation) Act 1986 131w

Committee of Vice-Chancellors & Principals 566w
Student grants 566w

Committee on the Biological Effects Ionising radiation 413-4w

Committee on the Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment
Cancer hazards 505-6w

Committee on the Safety of Medicines
Reye's syndrome 598-9w

Common agricultural policy 785w, 798w, 1055
Agricultural production 676w, 767-8
EC budget 393w
Prices 1041, 1043-5
Self-sufficiency 482w

Common farm prices
Beef & veal 481w
Cereals 481w
European Commission 787w

Common fisheries policy 788w

Common Good Fund 266w
Aberdeen 266w

Common sheep meat regime 1041-2

Communications
Hercules aircraft 365w

Community care
AIDS 150, 191-2w
Handicapped 130w, 281w
Health services finance 149-50

Community Care Review 130w
Handicapped 130w

Community charge 263w, 265-6w, (11.02.87) 320-68, 388w, 613-4w
Crofting 263w
Local government staff 265-6w
Scotland 388w
Strathclyde Regional Council 265-6w

Community development
Arts 480w
Liverpool Royal Institute 53w

Community health council
Hospital closures 595-6w

Community health councils 151-2
Health services finance 151
Hospital closures 500-1w
Rutland 151

Community health services
Capital investment 502w

Community programme 53w, 301w
Convictions 844w
Fraud 427w, 457w, 844w
Government grants 162w
Inquiries 843w
Religion 765w, 768w
Scotland 457w, 764-5w
Strathclyde 843w
Unemployment benefits 391w
Wales 764-5w
West Midlands 844-5w
Young people 427w, 610-1w

Company investigations
Guinness 526w

Companies
Audit (10.02.87) 171
Directors (10.02.87) 171
Foreign investment in UK 1053
Insulation 8

Companies (Audit Committees) Bill 1986/87
Debates etc
1R (10.02.87) 171

Company cars
Motoring 183w

Company investigations
Guinness 368w, 525w, 623w, 627w
Insider trading 748w
Marconi 684-5w
Torvinstyle Properties 367w

Company law
Directors 160w

Compensation
Accidents 450
Dairy farming 782-3w
Fisheries 786w
Local government staff 420w
Police misconduct 218w
Sheep 40w, 1051-2

Competition
Bus services 624w
Defence procurement 563-4w

Complaints
Family doctors 211w
Family practitioner committees 211w

Complaints against police
News International 217w
Plastic bullets 464w

Compulsory purchase
Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive 548w

Computer applications
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices 153w
Diagnosis 500w
Donors 819-20w
Early day motions 59-60w
Family doctors 500w
Hospital beds 198w
Motor vehicles 735-6w
Road accidents 139w
Table Office 59-60w
Transplant surgery 819-20w

Computer software
Sizewell B 469w

Computers
Police records (20.02.87) 1233-40
USA 763

Computers in government departments 6w, 33-4w, 271w
Data networks 33w, 644w
Passports 218-9w

Computers in National Health Service
Accident & emergency departments 139w
Medical records 139-40w
North West Regional Health Authority 504-5w
North Western Regional Health Authority 720w

Concannon, Rt Hon J D
Questions
Maternity benefits, Mansfield 809w

Concessionary coal 384w
Coal consumption 317w

Concessionary television licences 11, 1054
Elderly 1054

Concrete
Non-statutory training organisations 534w

Conditions of employment
Prison staff 638w, 769w

Conductive education 574w
Research finance 574w

Confederation of British Industry 467w
Scotland 264w

Conferences
Lancaster House 125-6w, 314w

Confidence-building measures 692w

Confiscation orders 640w

Conifers 385w
Tree planting 385w

Conjugal visits
Mental patients 499w

Conservation
Agriculture 1047-8

Conservation areas
Property development 157w

Conservative Party
Fascism 766

Construction
Armed forces deployment 291-3w
Blood products laboratory 510w
British Library 383w
Coal fired power stations 640-2, 648
Eastbourne Hospital 822-3w
Fast reactors 9w
Nuclear power stations 9w
Peterhead Prison 260w
Power stations 647-8

Construction costs
British Library 383w
City technology colleges 571w
Dornoch road bridge 612w

Construction Industry Training Board 254w, 534w
Expenditure 534w
Income 534w
Industrial training board levies 254w

Consultants
Data networks 321w
District Works Offices, Westminster 669w
Fees & charges 188-9w
Grampian health board 188-9w
Merit awards 144-5
Nuclear Installations Inspectorate 301-2w
Police national computer 321w

Consultation papers 481w

Consumer Credit Act 1974 440w
Building societies 440w
Questions
626-7w

Consumer expenditure
Alcoholic drinks 106w

Consumer protection
Time sharing 315-6w

Contadora Group 694w

Contraceptives
AIDS 710-1w
Prescriptions 202w, 710-1w
Prisoners 323w

Contract catering 777w
Royal Naval Hospital Haslar 777w

Contracts
Derelict land grants 238w

Contracts for services 856-7w
Energy efficiency 36w

Contracts of employment
Youth training scheme 528w

Convention of Scottish Local Authorities 265w
Local government finance 265w

Conventional weapons
Arms control 693w
Warsaw Pact 693w

Convictions
Community programme 844w
Deportation 372w
Teachers 368w

Conway, Mr Derek
Debates etc
Rover Group (19.02.87) 1068
Questions
Agriculture, Conservation 1048

Cook, Mr Frank
Debates etc
Radioactive waste disposal (09.02.87) 43, 53-6, 58-60
Questions
FACET, Sellafield 470-1w
Iran-Iraq war, Tanker ships 229w
Library Associaton, Public libraries 474-5w
Speech therapists, Pay 154-5

Cook, Mr Robin
Debates etc
Housing finance, Scotland (18.02.87) 1031-3, 1037
Questions
Golden Wonder, Broxburn 267w
Long stay patients, Mental hospitals 137w
Maternity benefits, Basildon 863w
Maternity benefits, Livingston 862-3w
Mental patients, Long stay patients 89-91w

Coombs, Mr Simon
Questions
Local government revenue 239-40w
Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights 175w

Cooper, Frank
Ministry of Defence 294w
National security 294w
Telephone calls 294w

Copeland
Maternity benefits 516w

Corbett, Mr Robin
Debates etc
Access to Personal Files Bill, 2R (20.02.87) 1173, 1204-7
Broadcasting Bill (HL), 2R (16.02.87) 688, 696-8
Rover Group (19.02.87) 1071-2
Social Fund (Maternity & Funeral Expenses) Bill, Rem stages (09.02.87) 112
Questions
A38, Road safety barriers 45-6w
AIDS, Haemophilia 283w
AIDS, West Midlands 283w
Animals Procedures Committee, Public appointments 174w
Area museum councils, Arts finance 480w
Community health councils 151-2
Deportation, British Airways 323w, 374w
Food surpluses, Charities 1050
Loft insulation, Birmingham 740w
Maternity benefits, Birmingham 275w
South Africa, Economic sanctions 687w

Corbyn, Mr Jeremy
Debates etc
Business statement (19.02.87) 1081
Parental Leave Bill, Members' conduct (11.02.87) 319
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 (Continuance) Order 1987 (10.02.87) 278
Tamils (17.02.87) 781-2, 875
Women (17.02.87) 831
Questions
AIDS, World Health Organisation 362w
Deportation, Tamils 913
Nicaragua, USA 906
Tamils, Political refugees 771

Cormack, Mr Patrick
Questions
Food surpluses, Disadvantaged 1050
Royal Opera House, Property development 653

Cornwall
Manpower Services Commission 53w, 255-8w
Maternity benefits 591w
Radon gas 115-6w

Corporal punishment
Local government social services 138w

Corporate plans
Rover Group (19.02.87) 1059-73

Corporation tax 329w
House of Commons questions 329w

Corrie, Mr John
Debates etc
Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc (Scotland) Bill, Allocation of time motion (11.02.87) 337

Questions
Cash limits 458w
Energo research, Nuclear fuel reprocessing 837w
Land use, Scotland 301
Tree planting, Caithness 541w

Cost effectiveness 6w, 271w, 388w, 471w, 509w, 764-5w, 826-7w
Public expenditure 826-7w

Cost of living
Student grants 759-60

Cottage hospitals 199w
NHS 199w

Couchman, Mr James
Questions
Horticulture, Agricultural production 785-6w

Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People
Government grants to voluntary organisations 720w

Council house rents 741w
Housing benefits 146

Council house sales 669-70w
Wales 12

Council house transfers
National mobility scheme 664w

Council house waiting lists
Northern Ireland 77w

Council housing
Electrical control equipment 549w
Empty housing 243w, (17.02.87) 783-7
Flats 417w
Flooding 116w
Homelessness 300-2w
Housing completions 187w
Housing standards 235-8w

Council housing finance
Scotland (11.02.87) 409-32

Council of Europe (13.02.87) 632-8

Councillors' attendance allowances
Invalidity benefits 363-4w
Supplementary benefits disregards of income 363-4w

Countryside
Capital transfer tax 34-6w
Tree planting 165

County courts
Judges 763w

County Hall 419w
Demolition 419w

Court cells 643w
Prisoners 643w

Court of Appeal
Prison sentences 157-8

Courts
Northern Ireland 452-3

Coventry
Maternity benefits 150w, 207-8w

Cox, Mr Tom
Questions
Food surpluses, Butter 601-2w
Food surpluses, Costs 784w
Fresh start 638w
Fresh start, Prison governors 638w
Fresh start, Prison Officers Association 638w
Fresh start, Prison staff 555w, 769w
Holloway Prison, Prison staff 554w
Homelessness, Sheltered housing 201-2w
Maternity benefits, Peterborough 704w
Maternity benefits, Wandsworth 704w
Prison medical services AIDS 373w
Prison population 770w
Prison population, Prison administration 770-1w
Prison staff, Fresh start 554-5w
Prison staff, Greater London 554w
Prison staff, Northern Ireland 448
Prison staff, Pay 638w
Prison staff, Training 554-5w
Prisoners, AIDS 372w
Prisons, Crown immunity 555w
Prisons, fresh Start 372-3w
Prisons, Public order policing 554w
Radioactive wastes 113-4w
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Inquiries 452
Turkey, Official engagements 695w
Wandsworth Prison, Car parks 173w
Wandsworth Prison, Land use 8w

Craigen, Mr Jim
Debates etc
Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc (Scotland) Bill, Allocation of time motion (11.02.87) 355-6
Banking Bill, Rep & 3R (19.02.87) 1097
Rate Rebates & Rate Support Grant Scotland Orders (18.02.87) 1012, 1025-6
Rover Group (19.02.87) 1070
Questions
Archaeology, Scotland 796w
British Telecom, Scotland 189w
Cervical cancer, Screening 63-4w
Community programme 53w
Employment schemes 52w
Local government finance, Convention of Scottish Local Authorities 265w
Local government finance, Rates & rating 159w
Maternity benefits, Glasgow 152-3w
Rate support grants, Local authorities in Scotland 189-90w
Skilled workers, Vacancies 52w
Student grants 171w

Cranborne, Viscount
Questions
Afghanistan, Human rights 158

Cranes
Defence equipment 183-4w

Crewe
Asbestosis 587w
British Rail Engineering 46w
Maternity benefits 347w, 588w

Crime
Guinness 526w
Royal Ulster Constabulary 465-6w
Ulster Defence Regiment 465-6w

Crime prevention
Glass 5w
Housing 321-2w
Security equipment 321w
Terrorism 5w

Crime victims
Government grants 639w

Criminal investigation
Child destruction 8w
Highlands & Islands Development Board 161w
Metropolitan Police 561-2w
Wild animals 333w

Criminal Justice Act 1961
Questions
433w, 456w

Criminal Justice Bill 1986/87
Questions
7w

Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975
Association of Directors of Social Services 538-9w
Questions
538-9w

Critchley, Mr Julian
Debates etc
Broadcasting Bill (HL), 2R (16.02.87) 669-71, 673
Crown Proceedings (Armed Forces) Bill, 2R (13.02.87) 594

Crofting
Community charge 263w
Rates & rating 263w
Rating revaluations 188w

Cross Channel electricity link 470w
Electricity 470w

Crouch, Mr David
Debates etc
British Railways Bill, 2R (16.02.87) 711-2, 717
Questions
Community care, Health services finance 150

Crown immunity 216w, 555w, (13.02.87) 567-609
Prisons 555w
Television licences 216w

Crown Proceedings (Armed Forces) Bill 1986/87
Debates etc
2R (13.02.87) 567-609

Crown Prosecution Service 1w, 407w, 763-4w
Administrative delays 407w
Legal costs 407w

Crown Suppliers 667w
Privatisation 667w
Procurement 667w

Crowther, Mr Stan
Questions
Musicians, Government assistance 479w
Quota of handicapped workers, Dept of Health & Social Security 192w

Cruise missiles 870w

Culcheth
Empty housing 643w

Cultural heritage
Greater London Council 418-9w

Cumbernauld
Maternity benefits 274w, 276w

Cunliffe, Mr Lawrence
Questions
Butter, USSR 789w
Dangerous mental patients, Hospital discharges 433-4w
Maternity benefits, Leigh 515-6w

Cunningham, Dr John
Debates etc
Housing (10.02.87) 175-84, 187, 190-1
Local Government Bill, Scope of Bill (18.02.87) 916-7
Questions
Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People, Government grants to voluntary organisations 720w
Maternity benefits, Copeland 516w

Curriculum 571w
Schools 761
Secondary education 755

Currie, Mrs Edwina, *Under-Secretary of State for Health & Social Security*
Debates etc
Breast cancer, Screening (17.02.87) 889-92
NHS, West Midlands (19.02.87) 1160-4
St Christopher's Hospice (19.02.87) 1153-8
Women (17.02.87) 863-70
Questions
Accident & emergency departments, Computers in National Health Service 139w
Acute beds, Blackburn Hyndburn & Ribble Valley health authority 505w
Ambulance services, Greater London 361w
Analgesics, Children 600-1w
Arthritis, Lancashire 199w
Asbestosis, Crewe 587w
Blood donors, Prisoners 269w
Breast cancer, Screening 820w
Cancer hazards, Atomic Weapons Research Establishment 505-6w
Cerebral palsy, Children 140w
Cervical cancer 824w
Cervical cancer, Age 718-20w
Cervical cancer, Screening 285-6w

Childbirth, Bradford 361w
Community health councils 151-2
Community health councils, Health services finance 151
Community health councils, Hospital closures 500-1w
Community health councils, Rutland 151
Cottage hospitals, NHS 199w
Day care of children, Local authorities 659-61w
Day nurseries, Local authorities 710w
Dentists, Medical equipment 721w
Diabetes, Disposable syringes 271w
Donors, Computer applications 819-20w
East Hertfordshire Health Authority, NHS & private practice 501-2w
Eastbourne Hospital, Construction 822-3w
Elderly, Population 193w
Emergency services, Chemical weapons 146-7
Ethnic minorities, Childbirth 212w
Ethnic minorities, Population 212w
Family Forum, Government grants 509w
Fertility, Medical research 209-10w
Food poisoning, European Economic Community 587-8w
Handicapped children 141-4w
Health centres 503w
Health services finance 131-2w
Heart diseases, Costs 364w
Hepatitis 129w
Hepatitis, Vaccination 867w
Hospital beds 133-6w
Hospital beds, Altrincham 284w
Hospital beds, Greater London 597w
Hospital beds, Leeds Eastern Health Authority 501-2w
Hospital beds, NHS 202-4w
Hospital closures 131-2w
Hospital closures, Community health council 595-6w
Hospitals, Altrincham 284w
Hypothermia, Death 193w
Hypothermia, Elderly 193w
Local government social services, Corporal punishment 138w
Long stay patients, Mental hospitals 137w
Medical records, North west region 139-40w
Medical treatments, Chemical weapons 197w
Meningitis 510w, 824w
Meningitis, Avon 510-1w
Meningitis, Death 511-2w
Meningitis, Diagnosis 284w
Meningitis, Gloucestershire 511w
Meningitis, Medical research 283-4w
Meningitis, Notifiable diseases 284w
Meningitis, Research finance 283-4w
Meningitis, Vaccination 512w, 601w
Mental health community care 195w
Mental health community care, Local government finance 194-5w
Mental patients 361w
Mental patients, Conjugal visits 499w
Methaemoglobinaemia 283w
Myalgic encephalomyelitis 278-9w
Neasden Hospital, Health service staff 285w, 721w
NHS, Land acquisition 136-7w
NHS, Property transfer 198w
NHS & private practice 196-7w
NHS complaints 507w
North Western Regional Health Authority, Computers in National Health Service, 504-5w, 720w
Nurses, South Manchester Health Authority 720w
Preventive medicine 191w
Psittacosis, Death 823w
Queen Elizabeth II Hospital, Welwyn Garden City 341w
Reye's syndrome, Committee on the Safety of Medicines 598-9w
Reye's syndrome, Drug research 599-600w
Reye's syndrome, Young people 599w
Royal Liverpool Hospital, Hospital closures 509w
Screening, Stonehouse 721w
Secure community home schools 598w
South East Thames Regional Health Authority, Radiotherapy 147-8
Soya beans, Nutrition & health 137-8w
Surgery, Regional health authorities 210w
Transplant surgery 128-9w
Water supply, Fluoridation 510w
Women, Dept of Health & Social Security 493-6w

Cynon Valley 354w
Maternity benefits 354w, 590w

Cyprus 11-2w
Peace negotiations 695-6w

Czechoslovakia
Foreign policy 690w

DAF (19.02.87) 1059-73

Dairy farming
Agricultural land 676w
Agricultural subsidies 604w, 785w
Compensation 782-3w
Food inspection 482w
Outgoers' scheme 384w
Production quotas 337-8w, 486w
Subsidies 338w
Wales 8-9

Dalgety Foods 267w

Dalyell, Mr Tam
Debates etc
Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc (Scotland) Bill, Allocation of time motion (11.02.87) 335-6
Adjournment debates (17.02.87) 776
Broadcasting Bill (HL), 2R (16.02.87) 692-8, 700, 703
Housing, Scotland (11.02.87) 413, 422-3
Lord Advocate, Oral questions (09.02.87) 23
Police right of search, Standing Order No 20 applications (11.02.87) 312-6
Police right of search, BBC (16.02.87) 742-3, 745-9
Public expenditure (18.02.87) 929-31, 934-5, 958, 963-6, 995
Radioactive waste disposal (09.02.87) 35, 38, 46, 58-9, 65
Questions
Armed forces deployment, Boddam Island 365w
Attorney-General, National security 407-8w
Bain & Company, Prime Minister visits abroad 623w
BBC, Police right of search 230w, 268w, 435w, 795-6w
BBC external services, Government grants 12w
Business statement 467
Director of Public Prosecutions, Police right of search 371w
Falkland Islands, Defence 685-6w
Falkland Islands, Sovereignty 459w
Government contracts, Electronic Data Systems 453-4
Habib, Philip, Official engagements 230w
Immigration rules, Electronic Data Systems Ltd 547w
Law officers 808w
Livestock, Hormone treatments 791w
Lord Advocate, National security 446-8w, 773w
Maternity benefits, Edinburgh 203-6w
Maternity benefits, Linlithgow 206w
Mathematics education, Recruitment 169-70w
Middle East Association, Ministerial speeches 230w
National security, Disclosure of information 260w
National security, Inquiries 772w
National security, Prime Minister's Office 522w
National security, Prosecutions 234w
Official Secrets Act 1911, Search warrants 617w
Police raids, BBC 457w
Police right of search, BBC 9w, 445-7w, 606w, 771w
Prime Minister, House of Commons questions 161w
Procurator Fiscal Service, Police right of search 388w
Procurator Fiscal Service, Search warrants 308
Procurators fiscal, BBC 772w
Prosecutions, Prison riots 257w
Protheroe, Alan, Territorial Army 685w
Rothschild, Lord, National security 605w
Satellites, International Telecommunications Union 368w, 441-2w, 629w
Search warrants, BBC 617-8w
Search warrants, Sheriffs 618w
Self-determination of states, UN Charter 830w

Dangerous mental patients
Habitual offenders 434w
Hospital discharges 433-4w

Darren colliery 450w
Planning appeals 450w
Waste disposal 450w

Data networks
Computers in government departments 33w, 644w
Consultants 321w
Dept of Health & Social Security 271w
Home Office 6w
Treasury 33-4w

Data processing
Civil service manpower 428w, 434w
Dept of Employment 428w
Home Office 434w

Davies, Mr Ron
Debates etc
Agricultural land (09.02.87) 24-6
Agricultural land, Land use (09.02.87) 76, 80
Questions
Agriculture, Conservation 1047
AIDS 397w
AIDS, Health education 397w
Bus services, Competition 624w
Community programme, Unemployment benefits 391w
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, Caerphilly 140-1w
Energy consumption 472w
Family income 826w
Higher education 584w
Housing starts, Rhymney Valley 80w
Immigrants, Special education 558-9w
Industrial training schemes 536w
Job training scheme, Equal opportunities 429w, 536w
Job training scheme, Further education 535w
Job training scheme, Training allowances 162-3w, 429w
Land use, Wales 9-10
Manpower Services Commission, Expenditure 55w
Maternity benefits, Caerphilly 146-7w
Sherman Theatre, Cardiff 477w
Supplementary benefits, Mortgages 154w

Davis, Mr Terry
Questions
Area museum councils, Government grants 383w
Exceptional needs payments, Building repairs 520w
Indonesia, Hawk Jet trainer aircraft 831w
Industrial tribunals, Birmingham 408w, 764w
Unemployment benefits, Birmingham 392w
Water supply, Fluoridation 510w

Day care of children
Local authorities 659-61w

Day centres
Handicapped 280-1w, 455w

Day nurseries
Local authorities 710w

Deakins, Mr Eric
Questions
Agricultural land, Rates & rating 1046
Agricultural products, Prices 790w
Attendance allowance, Members' correspondence 140w
Common farm prices, Cereals 481w
EC budget 877w
EC budget, Expenditure 672w
Economic situation, EC Presidency 807-8w
Food surpluses, UK contributions to EC budget 422w
Manufactured exports 748w
Maternity benefits, Walthamstow 272-3w, 589-90w
Middle East, UN General Assembly 874w
Museums & galleries, Fees & charges 442w
NATO, Military balance 488w
Own resources, European Court of Justice 877w
Rates & rating, East Sussex 740w
Strategic defence initiative 897-8
Tamils, Political refugees 772-3
Television, 10 Downing Street 807w

Death
AIDS 192w
Asbestosis 587w
Cancer hazards 506-8w
Delaney, Michael 867w
Horses 484w
Hypothermia 11, 193w
Meningitis 511-2w
Paramilitary forces 456w
Police vehicles 556-7w
Psittacosis 823w
Rajiah J 461w
Smoking related diseases 153-4
Terrorism 433w

Death grants
Social Fund (09.02.87) 81-116

Death registration
AIDS 867w

Debts
Brazil 893
Local authorities 741w

Debts written off
Film industry 233w

Decapol
Water 415w

Deeds of covenant 183w
Children 183w
Tax yields 36w
Young people 183w

Defective housing 235-8w
Hypothermia 11

Defence
Falkland Islands 685-6w
USA 869w
Warships 869-70w

Defence contracts 304w
Bofors gun 488-9w
DROPS 289-91w
Early warning systems 106w
Marconi 684-5w

Defence equipment
Balance of trade 776w
Cranes 183-4w
Exports 629w
Laird (Anglesey) 565w
USA 776w

Defence expenditure 293-4w
Defence procurement 490-1w
Disclosure of information 490w
Experimental aircraft programme 490w
National Audit Office 294w, 490w
National security 294w
Polaris 871w
Satellites 304w, 367w, 778w
Tornado aircraft 873w
Trident 871-2w

Defence industries
Scotland 872w

Defence land
Land values 565w

"Defence Open Government Document, 87/01"
Publishing 869w

Defence procurement
Artillery 489w
Competition 563-4w
Defence expenditure 490-1w
Disclosure of information 105-6w
DROPS 102-4w, 289-91w, 487-8w, 563w, 680w
Early warning systems 685w
Electrical industry (12.02.87) 559-66
Guided weapons 304w
Helicopters 870w
National security 105-6w
Polaris 871w
Scotland 872w
Torpedoes 489w
Trident 871w

Defence research
DROPS 102-3w, 487-8w

Delaney, Michael 867w
Death 867w
Police custody 867w

Delegated legislation
Wales 455w

Demolition
County Hall 419w
Offshore structures (11.02.87) 369-408, (566, 638 corrigenda)

Demonstrations
Apartheid 113w
City of London Anti-Apartheid Group 113w
News International 216-7w, 373w, 436w
Trafalgar Square 738-9w

Dental charges 143-4

Dental charges exemptions 143-4

Dentistry
Costs 93-6w
Wales 93-6w

Dentists
Manpower 93-4w
Medical equipment 721w
Wales 93-4w

Denzell Hospital 284w

Dept of Agriculture & Fisheries for Scotland 64-5w

Dept of Education & Science
Management consultants 656w
Public Accounts Committees 583w

Dept of Employment
Data processing 428w
Information technology 429w
Management consultants 607-10w
Public Accounts Committee 532w

Dept of Energy
Mangement consultants 634-5w
Public Accounts Committee 634w

Dept of the Environment
Departmental correspondence 380w
Higher civil servants 856w
Local government services 381-2w
Management consultants 665-6w
Opinion surveys 247w
Procurement 667w
Public Accounts Committee 662-3w

Dept of Health & Social Security
Data networks 271w
Management consultants 714-8w
Quota of handicapped workers 192w
"Social & Economic Responses to Climatic Variability in the UK" 212w
Women 493-6w

Dept of Health & Social Security local offices
Administrative delays 153w, 361w
Caerphilly 140-1w
Camberwell 818-9w
Civil service dispersal 818w
Computer applications 153w
Industrial disputes 140-1w
Office floorspace 818w
Oval 866w
Repairs & maintenance 819w
Telephone 819w

Dept of the Registers of Scotland 267-8w

Dept of Trade & Industry
Management consultants 628-9w
Public Accounts Committee 523w

Dept of Transport
Local government 412w
Local government functions 411-2w
Management consultants 624-5w
Public Accounts Committee 623w

Departmental circulars
Planning inquiries 737w

Departmental coordination
Adult education 223w

Departmental correspondence 380w, 412w, 459w, 769w
Dept of the Environment 380w
Falkland Islands 459w
Local authorities in London 380w

Departmental forms 472w

Departmental initiatives 111w, 493-6w
Play 111w

Departmental leaflets
AIDS 191w
Time sharing 316w

Departmental progress 799-807w

Departmental publications
HM Inspectorate of Schools 219w

Dependants
Social security 509w

Deportation 430-1w
Acquittals 372w
Airlines 323w
British Airways 323w, 374w
Convictions 372w
Tamils 909-14

Deposited papers
Speaker's rulings & statements (12.02.87) 476

Derby
Maternity benefits 359-60w

Derelict land
Building land 167
Property development 166

Derelict land grants 116-7w, 238-9w, 452-5w, 739-40w
Birmingham 238w, 739-40w
Contracts 238w
Labour only subcontracting 238-9w
Lancashire 739w
Mid Glamorgan 452-4w
Saxon Developments 116-7w
Wales 452-5w
West Midlands 238w, 740w

Design
Merchant ships 291w

Detection rates
Burglary 434w
Northern Ireland 447-8

Developing countries
Pesticides 666-7w
Publicity 409-10w

Development agencies
South west region 458

Development aid 408w

Development plans
Wales 377w

Devolution
Northern Ireland government 445
Northern Ireland 451

Devon
Horses 336w
Maternity benefits 591w

Devonport Dockyard (09.02.87) 117-34

Dewar, Mr Donald
Debates etc
Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc (Scotland) Bill, Allocation of time motion (11.02.87) 324, 356-9, 362
Rate Rebates & Rate Support Grant Scotland Orders (18.02.87) 1013-7, 1027
Questions
BBC, Ministerial correspondence 794-5w
BBC, Search warrants 309-10
Police right of search, Members' correspondence 260w
Rape, Scotland 798w
Scottish Development Agency, Government grants 457-8w, 616w
Wealth, Scotland 306

Diabetes
Disposable syringes 271w, 298, 397w

Diagnosis
Administrative delays 857-8w
Cancer 857-8w
Computer applications 500w
Meningitis 284w

Dickens, Mr Geoffrey
Debates etc
Standing Order No 20 applications (11.02.87) 314-6
Questions
Unemployment, Northern Ireland 442

Diesel fuel
Standards specifications 317w

Difficult to let properties 156w
Local authorities 156w

Diplomatic immunity
Diplomatic service 231w
Drinking & driving 231w
Driving offences 831w
Extradition 2w
Members' correspondence 400w

Diplomatic relations
Albania 907-8
South Africa 689w
SWAPO 401w

Diplomatic service
Civil servants' background 693w
Diplomatic immunity 231w
Employment discrimination 693w
South Africa 688w

Diplomatic service education allowances
Pupils 697-8w

Direct labour departments
Profitability 669w

Direct taxation
Tax allowances 182-3w

Director of Public Prosecutions
National security 407-8w
Police right of search 371w

Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland 406-7w

Directors
Companies (10.02.87) 171
Company law 160w

Disabled Persons (Services Consultation & Representation) Act 1986
Debates etc
(17.02.87) 788-828
Questions
37w, 156, 192w, 280w
Commencement orders 131w
Government grants 37w
Local government finance 156-7

Disadvantaged
Food surpluses 333-5w, 783-4w, 1048-51
Housing insulation 646-7
Intervention stocks 9, 333-4w

Disciplinary proceedings 304w, 306w, 392w
Drug abuse 306w
Montgomery, Simon 392w

Disclosure of information
A36 155w
Central Electricity Generating Board 470w
Defence expenditure 490w
Defence procurement 105-6w
Merit awards 144-5
National security 1w, 260w, 294w, 407-8w, 606w, 764w, 773w, 777-8w, 873w
New earnings survey 428w
Nuclear power stations 317w
Personal records (20.02.87) 1165-223

Discretionary student grants
Further education 833-6w

Discrimination
Gaelic Athletic Association 725w

Disease control 824w

Disposable syringes 271w, 397w
AIDS 297-8
Diabetes 271w, 298, 397w
Drug abuse 512w

District health authorities
Expenditure 139w

District Works Offices, Westminster
Consultants 669w

Divorce law 605w

Dixon, Mr Don
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.02.87) 546-51
Questions
Arts centres, Regional arts 477w
Food surpluses, Charities 1048-9
Further education, Young people 567-8w
Maternity benefits, Jarrow 271-2w, 344w

Dobson, Mr Frank
Questions
AIDS, Government grants 512w
AIDS, Haemophilia 512w
AIDS, Infectious diseases 512w
AIDS, Joint financing 512w
AIDS, Medical research 512w
AIDS, Medical treatments 512w
AIDS, Notifiable diseases 512w
AIDS, Testing 512w
Blood, Imports 510w
Blood products laboratory, Construction 510w
Community health councils, Hospital closures 500-1w
District health authorities, Expenditure 139w
Drug abuse, Disposable syringes 512w
East Hertfordshire Health Authority, NHS & private practice 501-2w
Family doctors, Computer applications 500w
Local authorities, AIDS 417w
Nuclear power stations, Ambulance services 318-9w, 326-7w
Nuclear power stations, Emergency planning 326-7w
Nurses, Manpower 107-10w
Nurses, NHS pensions 107-8w
Nurses, Pay 108-9w
Pay settlements, Nurses 110w
Police housing 109-11w
Regional health authorities, Expenditure 139w
Terrence Higgins Trust, Government grants 512w
Terrence Higgins Trust, Telephone numbers 512w

Dockyard Services (Devonport) (Designation & Appointed Day) Order 1986
Debates etc
(09.02.87) 117-34

Dockyard Services (Rosyth) (Designation & Appointed Day) Order 1986
Debates etc
(09.02.87) 117-34

Dockyards
Privatisation (09.02.87) 117-34

Doctors' list of patients 823w
Clwyd 455w, 846-7w
Rhyl 455w, 846-7w

Doctors' surgeries 279-80w, 455w
Access to buildings 455w
Handicapped 279-80w
Wales 455w

Dog licences 421w

Dog wardens
Scotland 798w

Domestic violence 388w
Police 324w, 389w
Scotland 323-4w, 389w

Don Valley 144w
Maternity benefits 144w

Doncaster
Maternity benefits 273w

Donors
Computer applications 819-20w

Dormand, Mr Jack
Questions
Maternity benefits, Clydesdale 514w

Dornoch
Procurators fiscal 259w

Dornoch Firth 612w

Dornoch road bridge 612w
Construction costs 612w
Road traffic 612w

Dorset
Fisheries 677w

Dorset Institute of Higher Education 572w

Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (France) Order 1987
Debates etc
(10.02.87) 143

Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Mauritius) Order 1987
Debates etc
(10.02.87) 143

Douglas, Mr Dick
Debates etc
Dockyard Services orders 1986 (09.02.87) 128-9
Housing, Scotland (11.02.87) 428
Questions
Balance of payments 422-3w
Coal fired power stations, Construction 641
Coal mine closures, West Fife 263w
Maternity benefits, Dunfermline 516w
Wealth, Scotland 305

Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Questions
USSR, Human rights 692w

Dover, Mr Den
Questions
Local education authorities, Capital investment 762

Drama
Falkland Islands 159-60
Welsh language 651-2

Draught-proofing materials 140w, 419w
Exceptional needs payments 140w
Housing insulation 419w
Social security claimants 419w

Dried milk
Exports 42w
Radioactivity 42w

Drinking & driving
Diplomatic immunity 231w
Law enforcement 6-7w

Driver & Vehicle Licensing Centre
Motor vehicle registration 310w

Driving offences
Diplomatic immunity 831w

DROPS
Defence contracts 289-91w
Defence procurement 102-4w, 289-91w, 487-8w, 563w, 680w
Defence research 102-3w, 487-8w
Exhibitions 487w
Procurement 104w

Drug abuse
AIDS 512w
Disciplinary proceedings 306w
Disposable syringes 512w
Government assistance to voluntary organisations 65w
Health education 3
Navy 306w, 777w
Pompidou Group 215-6w
Scotland 65w

Drug crimes
Navy 366-7w

Drug labelling
Analgesics 600-1w

Drug offences
Navy 367w

Drug research
Reye's syndrome 599-600w

Drug side effects
Analgesics 600w

Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986
Questions
640w

Drugs
Expenditure 100-2w
Wales 100-2w

Drumcroon Arts Centre 475w
Ministers' domestic visits 475w

Dubs, Mr Alfred
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Ulster Unionists 444
Blood donors, Prisoners 269w
Deportation 430-1w
Deportation, Acquittals 372w
Deportation, Convictions 372w
Deportation, Tamils 914
Falkland Islands, Fishery protection 229w
Hepatitis 129w
Hospital beds, NHS 202-4w
Motor vehicles, Greater London 7-8w
NHS finance, Inner London boroughs 201w
Political refugees, Immigration applications 371-2w
Tamils, Political refugees 769-70
Tuition fees, Part-time education 570w
Visas, Nigeria 537w

Duffy, Mr A E P
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.02.87) 517-21
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement 446

Duke of Argyll 257w
Poaching 257w
Prosecutions 257w

Dulwich
Maternity benefits 864w

Dumbarton
Maternity benefits 707-8w

Dunblane bypass 188w
Administrative delays 188w

Dundee
Maternity benefits 342-3w, 351-2w, 818w
Population 387w
Radioactivity 796w
Regional aid 791-2w
Social security recipients 518-20w

Dunfermline
Maternity benefits 516w, 592-3w

Dunn, Mr Bob, Under-Secretary of State for Education & Science
Debates etc
Secondary Education, Sutton (09.02.87) 140-2
Questions
Boarding schools, Local education authorities 223-4w
Calderstones School, Liverpool, Property transfer 369w
Capital investment, Local education authorities 307-8w
Chancellors School 309w
Class sizes, Primary education 12-24w
Education Act 1981, Research 170-1w
Education support grants, Youth services 443w
Educational finance, Lancashire 27w
Local education authorities, Capital investment 443-4w
Marian School, Bishop Challoner School 12w
St Nicholas School, School closures 744w
Saltby School, Buildings repairs 444w
School buildings 170w
School buildings, Capital investment 444w
School buildings, Primary education 29w
School buildings, Secondary education 27-9w
School closures, Rural areas 444-5w
School closures, Warwickshire 170w
School meals, Secondary education 25w
School population, Local education authorities 221-2w
School population, Private education 369-70w
Secondary education, Educational standards 309w
Secondary education, Per capita costs 220-1w
Secondary education, Trafford 309w
Special educational needs, School population 25-6w
West Hatch School, Ministers' domestic visits 23-4w
Wheathampstead School 169w
Youth organisations, Government grants 370w

Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Debates etc
Agricultural land, Land use (09.02.87) 77
Broadcasting Bill (HL), 2R (16.02.87) 679, 683-7, 691, 694
Housing (10.02.87) 209-10
Women (17.02.87) 831, 842, 859-60, 870
Questions
Africa, Overseas aid 408w
Asbestosis, Crewe 587w
British Rail Engineering, Crewe 46w
Civil service recruitment, Ethnic minorities 878-9w
Civil service recruitment, Ethnic monitoring 879-80w
Consultants, Merit awards 145
Development aid 408w
Food aid from EC 408-9w
Maternity benefits, Crewe 347w, 588w
Time sharing, Spain 315w

Durham
Maternity benefits 862w

Dykes, Mr Hugh
Debates etc
Banking Bill, Rep & 3R (19.02.87) 1113, 1129-32, 1135
Questions
Arms control, USA 455
South Africa, Diplomatic service 688w

Eadie, Mr Alexander
Questions
Coal fired power stations, Coal mining 642
Maternity benefits, Midlothian 273w, 275-6w
Power stations, Construction 647-8
Severe weather payments, Scotland 303

Early day motions
Computer applications 59-60w
Kinnock, Neil 1056
Speaker's rulings & statements (19.02.87) 1083-4

Early retirement
Air force flying 304-5w
Aircrew 305w

Early warning systems
Boeing 106w, 685w
Defence contracts 106w
Defence procurement 685w
Tornado aircraft 564w

East Anglia University 568w

East Hertfordshire Health Authority 501-2w
NHS & private practice 501-2w

East Lothian
Maternity benefits 812w

East Midlands
Youth training scheme early leavers 163w

East Sussex
Rates & rating 740w

East West relations
Strategic Defence Initiative 161w

Eastbourne Hospital 822-3w
Construction 822-3w

Eastern Europe
Human rights 689w
Visas 873w

Eastham, Mr Ken
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.02.87) 523, 525-9, 541
Questions
Arts, North West region 475w
Coal fired power stations, Construction 648
Maternity benefits, Manchester 151w
Social security reform 145w
South Africa, UK companies abroad 687w

EC action
Air fares 623w
Alternative energy 648
Antidumping 523w
Cattle 269w
EC internal relations 695w
Farmers 601w
Fisheries 788w
Food surpluses 334-5w, 483w
Hormone treatments 791w
Intervention stocks 483w
Middle East 228w
Namibia 692w
Semiconductor devices (17.02.87) 887
Terrorism 228w

EC Agricultural Council 288-9w

EC aid
Honduras 172-3w
Nicaragua 172w

EC budget 798w, 877w
Agriculture 542-3w
Common agricultural policy 393w
European Council 159w, 521-2w
Exchange rates 30-4w
Expenditure 542-3w, 672w
Judgments 37w
UK contributions 37w, 521-2w, 785w
UK repayments 827-8w

EC budget contributions 33-4w, 672w

EC countries
Agricultural support systems 786w
AIDS 129w
Food additives 881w
Further education 576-8w
Light dues 311w
Middle East 874w

Railway transport 624w
Sheep 845w
Social security 595w
Tobacco duties 179-80w

EC external trade
Beef & veal 481w
Butter 789w
USA 630w
USSR 1050

EC Finance Council
Export credit 543-4w

EC Foreign Affairs Council 698w
Central America 694w

EC grants & loans
Employment schemes 425-6w
European Investment Bank 828w
Expenditure 876w, 879-80w
Northern region 663-4w
Western Isles 296

EC internal relations
EC action 695w

EC Presidency 164w
Economic situation 807-8w
European Economic Community 807-8w
Overseas trade 214w

Eccles
Maternity benefits 591-2w

Ecology Commission 112w

Economic growth
National income 544w

Economic league 868w
Intelligence Services 868w
Police 868w
Police records 868w

Economic policy 805-7w
Scotland 305
Taxation 455-6

Economic regions
Arts 168w
Employment opportunities 454-5

Economic sanctions
Namibia 692w
South Africa 232w, 687w

Economic situation 478w
Arts 476w, 478w
Brazil 893
EC Presidency 807-8w
Rural areas 81w
Scotland 264w

Edinburgh
Maternity benefits 203-6w, 355-6w, 702w, 814w
Restart programme 614w

Edinburgh Castle 260w

Education
Armed forces dependants 293w
Civil servants' background 383w
Ethnic minorities 370w
Industry 570w
Innovation 572w
Local education authorities 761
Youth training scheme 528w

Education Act 1981
London University 656-7w
Research 170-1w
Questions
25-6w, 170-1w, 583w, 656-7w

"Education & Training White Paper" 528w

Education (No 2) Act 1986
Schools 760-1
Questions
138w, 760

Education (Nutrition Requirements) Bill 1986/87
Debates etc
2R (20.02.87) 1224-9

Education of children at home
South Glamorgan 80w

Education support grants 443w, 838w
Expenditure 838w
Youth services 443w

Educational administration
Northern College of Education 457-8w

Educational finance 658w
Bradford 572w
Building repairs 444w
Business education 456
Capital investment 79w
Colleges of education 188w
Educational publications 451-2w
General Certificate of Secondary Education 443w, 658w
Higher education 186w
Highlands of Scotland 298-9
Housing management 315w
Immigrants 558-9w
Lancashire 27w
Newry 450
North West region 757
Northern Ireland 79w, 453
Northern Ireland Universities Research Working Party 453
School buildings 836w
Scotland 299
Special educational needs 573w
Teachers 658w

Educational publications
Educational finance 451-2w
Expenditure 568w
Wales 451-2w

Educational standards 222-3w
Lancashire 570-1w
School admission 573w
Secondary education 309w
Trade competitiveness 573w

Educational visits 474w
Museums & galleries 474w

Edwards, Rt Hon Nicholas, *Secretary of State for Wales*
Debates etc
Agricultural land (09.02.87) 25
Questions
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service 227w
Agriculture, Wales 8-10, 295-6w, 750-63w
Cereals, Wales 750w
European Regional Development Fund, Wales 375w
Food inspection, Wales 10
Horticultural Development Council, Wales 295w
House renovation grants 227w
Job centres, Wales 296-8w
Land use, Agricultural land 10
Land use, Rural areas 10
Land use, Wales 9-10
Management consultants, Welsh office 637w
Manpower Services Commission, Wales 298w
Manufacturing industries, Wales 226w
Ministers' domestic visits, Rhondda Valley 80w
National income, Wales 226w
Orders & regulations, Wales 91w
Parrot Corporation, Factories 846w
Rate support grants, Wales 5
Rates & Rating, Wales 4
Rural areas, Economic situation 81w
Sheep, Livestock 845w
Unemployment, Mid Glamorgan 226w
Unemployment, Wales 15, 297-8w, 637w
Welsh Development Agency, Industrial estates 375w

Efficiency scrutinies 585w

Eggar, Mr Tim, *Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs*
Debates etc
Council of Europe (13.02.87) 634-8
Questions
Afghanistan 690w
Afghanistan, Foreign policy 536w
Afghanistan, Refugees 228w
Afghanistan, Torture 399w
Afghanistan, USSR 227-8w
Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference 328w
Austria, AIDS 328w
BBC external services 231w
BBC external services, Broadcasting finance 230-1w
Belize, Armed forces deployment 905-6
Bennet, C, Zambia 874-5w
Brazil, Debts 893
Brazil, Economic situation 893
Brazil, Overseas trade 893-4
British dependent territories, European Convention on Human Rights 689w
Central America, EC Foreign Affairs Council 694w
Central America, Ministers' visits abroad 689w
Central America, Peace negotiations 904-5
Central America, USA 690w
Chile, Refugees 690w
Chothia, Yasmin, Members' correspondence 459w
Cyprus, Peace negotiations 695-6w
Diplomatic immunity, Driving offences 831w
Diplomatic immunity, Members' correspondence 400w
Diplomatic service, Diplomatic immunity 231w
Diplomatic service education allowances, Pupils 697-8w
Diplomatic service, Employment discrimination 693w
Falkland Islands, Departmental correspondence 459w
Falkland Islands, Fish conservation 694w
Falkland Islands, Fishery protection 229w
Falkland Islands, Sovereignty 459w
Guatemala, Ministers' visits abroad 905
Immigration controls, Genetics 232w
Italy, Exchange rates 902
Italy, Foreign policy 902
Italy, Import penetration 902
Lebanon, British residents abroad 459w
Management consultants, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 697w
Nicaragua, USA 905-6
Perez, Fernando, Kidnapping 231-2w
Public Accounts Committee, Foreign & Commonwealth office 536w
Rajiah, J, Death 461w
Self-determination of states, UN Charter 830w
Terrorism, EC action 228w
Turkey, Official engagements 695w
Turks, & Caicos Islands 462w
UN finances, UN agencies 695w
United Nations, UK contributions 832w
Visas, Eastern Europe 873w
Visas, Immigration appeals 537w
Visas, Indian subcontinent 696w
Visas, Nigeria 537w
Western European Union 874w

Egypt
Foreign policy 399-400w
Ministers' visits abroad 564w

El Salvador
Armed forces training 229w
Human rights 229w

Elderly
Concessionary television licences 1054
Hypothermia 193w
Population 193w

Elections
Hong Kong 895
Local authorities 558w
Parish councils 549w

Electrical control equipment
Council housing 549w

Electrical industry
BAOR (12.02.87) 559-66
Defence procurement (12.02.87) 559-66

Electrical supply industry
Youth training scheme 392w

Electrical technology
Polychlorinated biphenyl 314w
Waste disposal 314w

Electricity
Cross Channel electricity link 470w
France 470w

Electricity consumption 261w, 469w
Coal fired power stations 640-1, 647-8
Energy conservation 644
Weather 639

Electricity distribution 635w

Electricity generation 10-2w
Costs 468w
Nuclear power 643-4
Nuclear power stations 639-40
Weather 639-40

Electricity supply industry
Privatisation 10w

Electricity tariffs
Billing 468w
France 168w
Industrial energy consumption 168w

Electronic Data Systems 453-4, 547w
Government contracts 453-4
Training 454

Electronic Data Systems Ltd
Immigration rules 547w

Electronic surveillance
Embassies 328w
Republic of Ireland 328w

Embassies
Electronic surveillance 328w

Emergency planning 301-3w, 317-9w, 322w, 326-7w, 455-6w, 634w, 636w
Nuclear accidents 326-7w
Nuclear Installations Inspectorate 301w
Nuclear power stations 303w, 317-9w, 322w, 326-7w, 634w, 636w
Torness power station 455-6w

Emergency powers
Terrorism (10.02.87) 263-86

Emergency services 146-7, 841-3w
Chemical weapons 146-7

Emery, Sir Peter
Debates etc
Radioactive waste disposal (09.02.87) 40, 51-3

Emigration
Jews 229w

Employers' attitudes
Restart programme 769w

Employment 531-2w
Arts 475-6w
Greenock 163-4w
Hertfordshire 531w, 766w
Manufacturing industries 767-8w
Nuclear power 466w
Privatisation 329w
Welwyn 531w
Welwyn Hatfield 766w
West Midlands 767-8w
Women 390w

Employment agencies
Health service staff 866-7w

Employment discrimination
Diplomatic service 693w

Employment opportunities
Arms exports 684w
Arts 651
British Coal Corporation Enterprise 467-8w, 649-50
Economic regions 454-5
Highlands & Islands Development Board 265w
Kymmene-Stromberg 541w
Low pay 454-5, 458
Scotland 265w
Springburn 265w
Urban development grants 548w

Employment schemes 52w, (12.02.87) 476-536, 536w, 537-58
Black country 769w
Costs 608w
EC grants & loans 425-6w
European Social Fund 391w, 425-6w
Manpower Services Commission 797-8w
Wales 298w
West Midlands 769w

Empty housing
Armed forces housing 683w
Council housing 243w, (17.02.87) 783-7
Culcheth 643w
Prison staff 643w

Energy action areas
Government grants 646-7

Energy conservation
Electricity consumption 644
Factories 126w
Managers 471w
Weather 649

Energy consumption 472w

Energy costs
Nuclear power 645
Nuclear power stations 639

Energy efficiency 36w, 466-7w, 646
Contracts for services 36w
Northern Ireland 647
Public sector 36w

Energy research
Alternative energy 648
Gas-cooled reactors 466w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 837w
Tidal power 468w

English education
GCE A level 369w

English Heritage
Park Vista 113w

English language
Examination boards 758

Enterprise zones
Strabane 442

Entry clearances
Administrative delays 772w

Enveloping schemes 158-9w
Housing improvement 158-9w

Environment
Radioactive waste disposal 412w

Environment protection 413w
Agricultural land 1047-8
North Sea 668-9w

Environmentally sensitive
Government grants 789w

Environmentally sensitive areas (09.02.87) 70-80, 602-3w, 789w
Berkshire 335w, 602-3w
Suffolk 602-3w

Environmentally Sensitive Areas (The Broads) Designation Order 1986
Debates etc
(10.02.87) 171

Environmentally Sensitive Areas (Cambrian Mountains) Designation Order 1986
Debates etc
(10.02.87) 171

Environmentally Sensitive Areas (Pennine Dales) Designation Order 1986
Debates etc
(10.02.87) 171

Environmentally Sensitive Areas (Somerset Levels & Moors) Designation Order 1986
Debates etc
(10.02.87) 171

Environmentally Sensitive Areas (South Downs) Designation Order 1986
Debates etc
(10.02.87) 171

Environmentally Sensitive Areas (West Penwith) Designation Order 1986
Debates etc
(10.02.87) 171

Equal opportunities
Civil service 654-5
House of Commons 604w
Job training scheme 429w, 536w
Women 493-6w

Equal pay
Speech therapists 155, 566 (corrigendum)

Equality Exchange
House of Commons 604w

Equipment
Gas accidents 173w

Essex
Neighourhood Energy Action 466-7w
Pupil-teacher ratios 753
Special educational needs 568w

Ethnic minorities
AIDS 129-30w
Bangladesh 370w
Childbirth 212w
Civil service 656-7
Civil service recruitment 878-9w
Education 370w
Higher civil servants 856w
Population 212w

Ethnic monitoring 879-80w
Civil service recruitment 879-80w

Euratom
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 316w

EUREKA 735-6w

Europe
Strategic defence initiative 898-9

European Assembly
Lancaster House 314w

European Commission
Common farm prices 787w

European Convention on Human Rights
British dependent territories 689w

European Council
EC budget 159w, 521-2w

European Court of Justice
Own resources 877w

European currency unit 30-4w

European Economic Community
EC Presidency 807-8w
Food poisoning 587-8w
Mafia 323w, 329w, 394w
Measurement 482w

European Investment Bank 808w
EC grants & loans 828w
UK contributions 828w

European Regional Development Fund
Expenditure 841w
Northern Ireland 841w
Regional planning & development 876w
Scotland 879-80w
Wales 375w

European Security Conference 903
USSR 691w

European Social Fund
Employment schemes 391w, 425-6w

Evans, Mr John
Debates etc
Agricultural land, Land use (09.02.87) 79
Employment schemes (12.02.87) 529, 546
Questions
Bus services, North West region 378w
Energy efficiency 466w
Fishing vessels, Licensing 601-2w
Further education, Young people 567-8w

Maternity benefits, St Helens 207w
Occupational deafness, Industrial disablement benefits 148

Evennett, Mr David
Questions
Child destruction, Criminal investigation 8w
Child destruction, Prosecutions 1w
Nuclear power, Operating costs 167w

Evidence
Northern Ireland 463w, 726-7w

Examination boards
English language 758

Exceptional circumstances additions
Bathing 210w

Exceptional needs payments
Administrative delays 196w, 225w
Birmingham 154w
Building repairs 520w
Draught-proofing materials 140w
Housing insulation 111w
Maternity benefits 590-1w
Members' correspondence 398w
Northern Ireland 224-5w
Owner occupied housing 520w
Supplementary benefits 397-8w

Exchange rates
EC budget 30-4w
Green pound 1046-7
Italy 902
Taxation 543w

Exhaust emissions
Exhibitions 114w
Upper Waiting Hall 114w

Exhibitions
British Rail 60-1w
DROPS 487w
Exhaust emissions 114w

Exmoor
Sheep 603w

Experimental aircraft programme 490w
Defence expenditure 490w

Explosives Act 1875
Questions
841-3w

EXPO 88 405w, 533w
British Tourist Authority 533w
Finance 405w
Tourism 533w

Export controls
South Africa 165w
Technology transfer 749-51w
USA 749-51w, 763

Export credit
EC Finance Council 543-4w

Export credit guarantees
Brazil 893-4

Export licensing
USA 630w

Export of live animals
Legislation 789w

Export promotion
Arms trade 873w
British embassies 696w

Export rebates
Libyan Arab Republic 42w

Exports 214w, 440w
Beef & veal 41-2w, 481w, 485w
Channel tunnel 626w
Defence equipment 629w
Dried milk 42w
Plutonium 633w

External financing limits
British Shipbuilders 524w

Extradition
Diplomatic immunity 2w
Ingley, James 2w

Eyre, Sir Reginald
Debates etc
Rover Group (19.02.87) 1064

FACET
Sellafield 470-1w

Factories
Energy conservation 126w
Insulation 126w
Parrot Corporation 846w

Factory closures
Broxburn 267w
Caterpillar Tractors 262w, 304, 306

Fairbairn, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc
Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc (Scotland) Bill, Allocation of time motion (11.02.87) 325, 331
Questions
Agricultural production, Scotland 307
Recycling, House of Commons accommodation 18
Scottish courts, Glasgow 310

"Faith in the City" 12

Falkirk
Maternity benefits 810-1w

Falkland Islands
Capital investment 694w
Censorship 159-60
Defence 685-6w
Departmental correspondence 459w
Drama 159-60
Fish conservation 694w
Fisheries 11w, 1042-3
Fishery agreements 1043
Fishery protection 229w
Fishing vessels 1042-3
Income 1043
Sovereignty 459w

Falkland Islands Legislative Council 459w

Fallon, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Local Government Bill, Scope of Bill (18.02.87) 923
Public expenditure (18.02.87) 950, 958, 987-8
Rover Group (19.02.87) 1070
Questions
National mobility scheme, Council house transfers 664w
Nurses, Manpower 198-9w
Overtime 609w
Public expenditure, Northern Ireland 448-9
Public expenditure, Scotland 304-5

Family doctors
Age 502-4w
Complaints 211w
Computer applications 500w
Manpower 92-4w
Merseyside 502-4w
Wales 92-4w, 99w

Family Forum 509w
Expenditure 509w
Government grants 509w

Family income 826w
Expenditure 518w

Family income supplements 518w
Administrative delays 200w
Income tax 270w
Low pay 709-10w
Scotland 709-10w
Social security recipients 270w

Family Planning Association 718w, 720w
Government grants to voluntary organisations 720w

Family planning clinics
Minors 209w

Family practitioner committees
Complaints 211w

Farm Animal Welfare Council 790w

Farm buildings
Change of use 164-5, 481w
Rates & rating 481w

Farm capital grant scheme 788w

Farm incomes 1046-7
Rates & rating 787w, 1045-6

Farmers
Bank loans 66-7w
EC action 601w
Pensions 601w
Scotland 66-7w

Farms
Cereals 779-80w
Change of use 881-2w
Livestock 779w
Rates & rating 1046

Farr, Sir John
Questions
Business statement 467
Channel tunnel, Investment 1058
Cottage hospitals, NHS 199w
Forestry, Northern Ireland 443
Import controls, Ramie 439w
Livestock, Beef & veal 1052
School admission, Educational standards 573w

Fascism
Conservative Party 766

Fast reactors
Construction 9w

Fatchett, Mr Derek
Questions
Arts, Employment 475-6w
Community programme, Young people 427w, 610-1w
Hospital beds, Leeds Eastern Health Authority 501-2w
Hospital waiting lists, Leeds 200w
Housing investment programmes, Leeds City Council 158w
Maternity benefits, Leeds 358-9w
Rate support grants, Leeds City Council 157w
Social security recipients, Leeds 210w
Speech therapists, Pay 197w
Student grants 566w
Unemployment benefits, Leeds 210-1w
Unemployment, Leeds 162w

Faulds, Mr Andrew
Debates etc
Points of order (12.02.87) 471
Questions
Antidumping, EC action 523w
Business statement 470
Heveningham Hall 416-7w
Hong Kong, Vietnamese refugees 894
Insulation, Government grants 553-4w
Maternity benefits, Warley 705-6w
Royal Greenwich Observatory 742w
Secretaries of State, Jopling, Michael 159
Tamils, Political refugees 774

Favell, Mr Tony
Debates etc
Local Government Bill, Scope of Bill (18.02.87) 924
Rover Group (19.02.87) 1072
Questions
Cherished number plates 252w
Civil service, Youth training scheme 672w
Fire services, Local government expenditure 433w
House of Commons accommodation 17
Maintenance relief, Tax yields 829w
Maintenance, Tax yields 544w
Nuclear power, North West region 466w
Public sector employment, Average earnings 533w
Regional arts associations, Arts finance 232w
Secretaries of State, Jopling, Michael 156
Youth training scheme, Coal mining 392w
Youth training scheme, Public sector 610w

Faversham
Maternity benefits 345-6w, 517w

Fazeli, Bijan
Bombings 432w

Fees & charges
Adult education 836w
Airports 625w
Consultants 188-9w
Food inspection 10, 482w
Health service staff 866-7w
Licensing 867-8w
Light dues 311w
Museums & galleries 442w
Oil storage 841-3w
Open University 579-80w
Parking offences 7-8w

Ferries
St Helena 527w

Fertilisers
Nitrogen 783w

Fertility
Medical research 209-10w
Research 186-7w
Scotland 186-7w

Field, Mr Frank
Debates etc
Social Fund (Maternity & Funeral Expenses) Bill, Rem stages (09.02.87) 9, 85-6, 91-2, 94, 101, 106, 108-9, 113
Social Security (Payments on account) Regulations 1987 (17.02.87) 878, 881
Questions
Abortion, Foreign patients 362-3w
Church Commissioners, Inner city areas 12-3
Marian School, Bishop Challoner School 12w
Norman Shaw building, Reprography 473w

Fields, Mr Terry
Debates etc
Access to Personal Files Bill, 2R (20.02.87) 1191-4
Questions
Community development, Liverpool Royal Institute 53w
Household bleach, Hazardous materials 4w
Manpower Services Commission, Liverpool Heritage Developments 53w, 429w
Maternity benefits, Liverpool 396-7w
Property transfer, Liverpool University 27w

Fife
Road works 612w

Film 478w

Film industry
Debts written off 233w
Taxation 330w

Finance Act 1976
Questions
35w

Financial institutions
Self-regulatory systems 165w
Youth training scheme 427-8w

Financial management initiative 523w, 532w, 536w, 557w, 603w

Financial services 427-8w, 436-7w
Banks 437w
Building societies 437w
Licensing 436-7w
Self-regulating organisations 436-7w

Financial Services Act 1986
Questions
436-7w

Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Questions
Homesteading schemes 418w
Primary education, Per capita costs 745-7w

Fire escapes 320w, (13.02.87) 610-28

Fire prevention
Multiple occupation 2

Fire services
Building repairs 215w
Gas accidents 173w
Housing 109-11w
Local government expenditure 433w
Manpower 174w
Pay settlements 110w

Firearms
Northern Ireland 464w, 731-2w

Fish conservation
Falkland Islands 694w
North Sea 786w
Norway 393w

Fisher, Mr Mark
Debates etc
Oral question time point of order (16.02.87) 657
Questions
Art works, British Rail 60-1w
British Library, Construction 383w
British Library, Construction costs 383w
Restart programme, Advertising 769w
Restart programme, Employers attitudes 769w
Restart programme, Stoke-on-Trent 769w
Royal Opera House, Property development 652-3

Fisheries 781w
Compensation 786w
Dorset 677w
EC action 788w
Falkland Islands 11w, 1042-3
Government grants 789w
Light dues 46w, 780w
Scotland 65-6w
Seals 39-41w, 486w
Total allowable catches 790w

Fishery agreements
Falkland Islands 1043

Fishery protection
Falkland Islands 229w
Grey seals 64-5w
Scotland 64-5w

Fishery protection vessels 229w

Fishing quotas 786w

Fishing vessels
Falkand Islands 1042-3
Licensing 601-2w
Light dues 65-6w, 799w
Refrigeration 601-2w

Five Continents Group 230w
Nuclear test ban 230w

Five Star Developments 367w

Flags & Emblems (Display) Act (Northern Ireland) 1954
Law reform 444

Flannery, Mr Martin
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.02.87) 480-1
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 (Continuance) Order 1987 (10.02.87) 281-2
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Republic of Ireland 77w
Central America, Ministers' visits abroad 689w
Nicaragua, USA 905
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Inquiries 452
Wheelchairs, Aids for handicapped 197w

Flats
Council housing 417w
Leasehold housing 158w, 311w

Flats Management Committee of Inquiry 311w

Fleet Air Arm 489w

Fletcher, Sir Alex
Questions
BBC, Search warrants 308-9
Guinness, Takeovers 547w
Procurators fiscal, Police rights of search 259-60w

Flooding
Council housing 116w
Government grants to local authorities 116w

Fluoridation
Water supply 510w

Food
Agricultural production 408w

Food additives
Beer 166w
Cider 166w
EC countries 881w

Food aid from EC 408-9w

Food consumption
Sheep meat 603w

Food contamination
Mercury 1048

Food inspection
Dairy farming 482w
Fees & charges 10, 482w
Wales 10

Food labelling
Publicity 785w

Food poisoning
Animal feed 336-7w, 484w, 679w
European Economic Community 587-8w
Horses 336-7w, 483-4w, 678-80w
Livestock 484w, 679w
Notifiable diseases 483-4w, 680w

Food prices
Price increases 787w

Food surpluses 767-8, 784w
Beef & veal 287w
Butter 482w, 601-2w, 784w
Cereals 779-80w
Charities 287w, 325w, 333-5w, 783-4w, 1048-51
Costs 784w
Disadvantaged 333-5w, 783-4w, 1048-51
EC action 334-5w, 483w
Packaging 784w
Pensioners 784w, 823-4w
Set-aside schemes 1043-4
Sheep meat 1042
Social security recipients 387w
UK contributions to EC budget 422w

Fookes, Miss Janet
Debates etc
Dockyard Services Orders 1986 (09.02.87) 126-7

Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Debates etc
Dockyard Services Orders 1986 (09.02.87) 130
Questions
Maternity benefits, Blaenau Gwent 703w
Public expenditure, Northern Ireland 449

Football
Hooliganism 365w
Identity cards 117w
Membership cards 117w

Football League 117w

Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Management consultants 697w
National security 164w
Public Accounts Committee 536w

Foreign companies in UK
Government assistance to industry 523w

Foreign investment in UK
Companies 1053

Foreign patients
Abortion 362-3w
NHS charges 711-4w, 750w

Foreign policy
Afghanistan 536w
Czechoslovakia 690w
Egypt 399-400w
Italy 902
Middle East 694w
Namibia 401w, 459-60w
Persian Gulf 692w
Poland 697w
South Africa 688-9w
Turkey 695w
USSR 688w, 691w

Foreign relations
Gambia 908

Forensic science 770w
Archaeology 770w

Forest protection
Import controls 3-4w
Tropical forests 3-4w

Forestry
Agricultural land 165-6w, 301, 779w
Marginal land 299-300
National Audit Office 484w
Northern Ireland 443
Scotland 262w, 299-302
Tourism 302
Water resources 114w

Forestry grants 541w

Forman, Mr Nigel
Debates etc
Public expenditure (18.02.87) 939
Secondary Education, Sutton (09.02.87) 139-40
Questions
Nurses, Manpower 153
Personal income, Income tax 824-6w
Science & technology research 1056-7

Forrest Committee see Breast Cancer Screening Working Party

Forsyth, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc (Scotland) Bill, Allocation of time motion (11.02.87) 326-7, 336-7, 340, 343, 348-51
Adjournment debates (17.02.87) 778-9
Housing, Scotland (11.02.87) 411
Police right of search, BBC (16.02.87) 745-8
Rate Rebates & Rate Support Grant Scotland Orders (18.02.87) 1015, 1020-2
Questions
Cash limits, Central Office of Information 330w
Dunblane bypass, Administrative delays 188w
Forestry, Scotland 301-2
Highlands & Islands Development Board, Criminal investigation 161w
Sheep 786w

Forth, Mr Eric
Debates etc
Agricultural land (09.02.87) 26
Banking Bill, Rep & 3R (19.02.87) 1100-2
Business statement (19.02.87) 1079
Early day motions, Leader of the Opposition (19.02.87) 1083
Local Government (Empty Council Houses) Bill, 1R (17.02.87) 786
Social Fund (Maternity & Funeral Expenses) Bill, Rem stages (09.02.87) 87, 98
Standing Order No 20 applications (11.02.87) 315
Questions
British Shipbuilders, External financing limits 524w
Business statement 468
Cereals, Farms 779-80w
Consultants, Merit awards 145
Languages 584w
National income, Economic growth 544w
Nuclear power stations, Nuclear safety 641
Own resources 878w
Tamils, Political refugees 770-1
Unemployment, Mid-Worcestershire 765-6w
Wealth, Expenditure 306
Welsh language, Government grants 6

Fossil fuelled power stations 640
Air pollution control 213w

Foster, Mr Derek
Debates etc
Women (17.02.87) 870

Foulkes, Mr George
Debates etc
Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc (Scotland) Bill, Allocation of time motion (11.02.87) 361
Housing, Scotland (11.02.87) 409, 411-2, 414-5, 419-22, 425, 427
Rate Rebates & Rate Support Grant Scotland Orders (18.02.87) 1008, 1016, 1022
Women (17.02.87) 865
Questions
Brazil, Overseas trade 893-4
British dependent territories, European Convention on Human Rights 689w
Burglary, Clerkenwell Road 371w
Falkland Islands, Departmental correspondence 459w
Maternity benefits, Ayr 815-6w
Maternity benefits, Bury St Edmunds 816w, 858w
Maternity benefits, Carrick 814-5w
Nicaragua, USA 906
Nuclear accidents, USSR 387w
Overseas trade, Suriname 4-6w
Procurators fiscal, Kilmarnock 259w
Shipbuilding, Manpower 261-2w

Fowler, Rt Hon Norman, *Secretary of State for Social Services*
Questions
Consultants, Merit awards 144-5
Dental charges 143-4
Dental charges exemptions 144
Hospital waiting lists 585-7w
Nurses, Merit awards 145
Smoking related diseases, Tobacco advertising 153-4

Fox, Sir Marcus
Questions
Radcliffe Report, Subversion 561-3w

France
Electricity 470w
Electricity tariffs 168w
Nuclear power 645
Road markings 247-8w

Franks, Mr Cecil
Questions
Food prices, Price increases 787

Fraser, Mr John
Debates etc
Housing (10.02.87) 230
Housing (Houses in Multiple Occupation) Bill, 2R (13.02.87) 617-9
Questions
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, Oval 866w
Higher civil servants, Dept of the Environment 856w
Inner cities initiatives, Lambeth 852-6w
Police vehicles, Road accidents 771w
Urban development grants, Employment opportunities 548w

Fraser, Mr Peter, *Solicitor-General for Scotland*
Questions
BBC, Search warrants 308-10
Domestic violence 388w
Domestic violence, Police 389w
Duke of Argyll, Poaching 257w
Highlands & Islands Development Board, Criminal investigation 161w
Legal aid, Scotland 259w
Lord Advocate, National security 446-8w, 773w
Management consultants, Lord Advocate 616w
National security, Disclosure of information 260w
National security, Inquiries 772w
Official Secrets Act 1911, Search warrants 617w
Police right of search, BBC 8-9w, 445-7w
Police right of search, Members' correspondence 260w
Procurator fiscal, BBC 772w
Procurator fiscal service, Finance 307-9
Procurator fiscal service, Police right of search 388w
Procurator fiscal service, Prosecutions 309
Procurator fiscal service, Search warrants 308
Procurators fiscal, BBC 774w
Procurators fiscal, Dornoch 259w
Procurators fiscal, Kilmarnock 259w
Procurators fiscal, Police rights of search 259-60w
Prosecutions, Poaching 258w
Prosecutions, Prison riots 257-8w
Scottish courts, Glasgow 310
Search warrants, BBC 546w, 617-8w
Search warrants, Sheriffs 618w
Tape recorded evidence, Police interrogation 259w
Transient people, Scotland 258w

Fraserburgh
Prime Minister domestic visits 303w

Fraud
Community programme 427w, 457w, 844w
Housing construction 405-6w
Proceeds of crime 640w

Fraud squad 525w
Guinness 525w

Freeman, Mr Roger, Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces
Debates etc
Crown Proceedings (Armed Forces) Bill, 2R (13.02.87) 599-608
Questions
Aircrew, Air force 489w
Aircrew, Armed forces officers 305w
Aircrew, Armed forces strength 305w
Aircrew, Early retirement 305w
Aircrew, Navy 489w
Armed forces, AIDS 680-1w
Armed forces deployment, Scotland 872w
Armed forces education allowances 684w
Armed forces housing, Empty housing 683w
Armed forces housing, Gibraltar 778w
Armed forces housing, Local authorities 683-4w
Armed forces housing, Mobile homes 778w
Armed forces pensions, Lump sum payments 305-6w
Armed forces punishment, Hooliganism 365w
Army, Sir John Moores barracks 365w
Defence land, Land values 565w
Hare, Squadron Leader, Air force flying 304w
Helicopters, Coastguard 685w
Kitson, Frank, National security 873w
National employer liaison committee 564w
Navy, Drug abuse 306w, 777w
Navy, Drug crimes 366-7w
Navy, Drug offences 367w
Protheroe, Alan, Territorial Army 685w
RAF Mount Batten, Armed forces training 491-2w

Freeson, Rt Hon Reg
Debates etc
Housing (10.02.87) 192-5, 244, 254
Local Government Bill, Scope of Bill (18.02.87) 919
Questions
Maternity benefits, Brent 860w
Poland, Nazi war crimes 896

Fresh Start 372-3w, 554-5w, 638w, 769w
Manpower 555w
Prison governors 638w

Prison Officers Association 638w
Prison staff 554-5w, 769w
Prisons 372-3w

Freud, Mr Clement
Debates etc
Broadcasting Bill (HL), 2R (16.02.87) 670, 680-2
Oral question time point of order (16.02.87) 658
Questions
Ancient monuments, Town & country planning 421w
Armed forces housing, Gibraltar 778w
Armed forces housing, Mobile homes 778w
Arts sponsorship, Tobacco industry 478w
British Theatre Association, Libraries 877w
City technology colleges, Private investment 571w
Conservation areas, Property development 157w
Gambia, Foreign relations 908
Motorways, Road closures 155-6w
Power industry disconnections 468-9w
Psittacosis, Death 823w
Theatres, University Grants Committees 652

Front line states
South Africa 694-5w

Fruit juices
Mafia 394w

Fry, Mr Peter
Questions
A1-M1 link, Public inquiries 253w

Fuel bills 468-9w

Funerals
Hospitals 200w

Further education
Age participation rates 576-8w
Capital investment 836-7w
Discretionary student grants 833-6w
EC countries 576-8w
Job training scheme 535w
North west region 757-8
Pupils 833-6w
Student counselling 169w
Tertiary colleges 572w
Young people 567-8w, 762-3

Further education colleges 836w
Adult education 836w

Gaelic Athletic Association 725w
Discrimination 725w

Gaelic language
Government grants 325w
Nursery education 447

Gale, Mr Roger
Questions
Agricultural land, Land use 779w

Galley, Mr Roy
Questions
Community care, Health services finance 150
Curriculum 571w
Deportation, Tamils 914
NHS & private practice 196-7w
Poland, Human rights 896

Gambia
Foreign relations 908
Overseas aid 908
Senegal 908

Gaming (Amendment) Bill (HL) 1986/87
Debates etc
2R order read (20.02.87) 1229

Garcia, R J 868w
Visas 868w

Gardner Merchant 777w
Hospital catering 777w

Garngoch colliery 450-1w
Planning appeals 450-1w

Garrett, Mr Ted
Questions
EC grants & loans, Northern region 663-4w

Gas accidents
Equipment 173w
Fire services 173w

Gas-cooled reactors
Energy research 466w

Gas supply industry
New earnings survey 428w

Gas tariffs
Billing 468w

Gaza Strip 228w

Gazumping
House purchase (10.02.87) 172-4

GEC A level
English education 369w
Northern Ireland 453

General Certificate of Secondary Education
Educational finance 443w, 658w
Staffordshire 443w
Teaching aids 224w

General Motors 633w
West Germany 524w

Genetics
Affiliation 232w
Immigration controls 232w

Geneva Conventions 329w

Geology
Nature Conservancy Council 550-1w
Sites of special scientific interest 551w

George Donald Evans & Deborah Jane Evans (Marriage Enabling) Bill (HL) 1985/86
Debates etc
2R* (10.02.87) 143

Germany
Lorries 437w

Germanyuk, Ulyana
USSR 830w

Gibraltar
Armed forces housing 778w

Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Questions
Defence procurement, Competition 563-4w
DROPS, Defence contracts 289-91w
DROPS, Defence procurement 102-4w, 487-8w, 563w, 680w
DROPS, Defence research 103w
DROPS, Procurement 104w

Glasgow
Maternity benefits 152-3w, 205w, 860-1w
Scottish courts 310

Glasgow Royal Infirmary 611w
Nurses 611w

Glass
Building regulations 311-2w
Burglary 5w
Crime prevention 5w
Safety standards 311-2w

Gloucester
Blood donors (09.02.87) 19

Gloucestershire
Meningitis 510-1w

Glyn, Dr Alan
Questions
Business statement 470

Godman, Dr Norman A
Debates etc
Housing, Scotland (11.02.87) 410-1
Petroleum Bill, Rep & 3R (11.02.87) 372, 389-92, 395, 398, 408
Social Fund (Maternity & Funeral Expenses) Bill, Rem stages (09.02.87) 89, 94-5, 101, 103-4, 106, 110-1
Questions
Apprentices, Strathclyde 187w
Area manpower boards, Training 844w
Auctioneers, Licensing 326w
Chiropodists, Scotland 796w
Community programme, Fraud 427w, 457w, 844w
Community programme, Government grants 162w
Community programme, Religion 765w, 768w
Community programme, Strathclyde 843w
Employment, Greenock 163-4w
Falkland Islands, Fish conservation 694w
Falkland Islands, Fishing vessels 1043
Fisheries, Light dues 780w
Homelessness, Scotland 63w
Housing completions, Scotland 187w
Jobclubs, Greenock 187w
Light dues, Fishing vessels 65-6w, 799w
Manpower Services Commission, Employment schemes 797-8w
Manpower Services Commission, Scotland 795-7w
Manufacturing industries, Strathclyde 187w
Maternity benefits, Greenock 355w, 357-8w
Mental health services, Scotland 326w
Palestine, Refugee camps 409w
Police, Scotland 186w
Prison accommodation, Scotland 186w
Prisoners, AIDS 325-6w
Reagan, President, Prime Minister official engagements 302w
Regional development grants, Scotland 261w
Scottish Arts Council 478w
Severe weather payments, Publicity 341w
Severe weather payments, Scotland 820-1w
Shellfish, Mercury 1048
St Helena, Ferries 527w
Tape recorded evidence, Police interrogation 259w
Unemployment benefits, Redundancy 518w
Wealth, Scotland 306

Gold
Albania 907-8

Golden Wonder 267w
Broxburn 267w

Golding, Mrs Llin
Debates etc
Women (17.02.87) 849, 853-4
Questions
Adult education, Unemployed 571-2w
Defence contracts 304w
Maternity benefits, Newcastle-under-Lyme 865-6w

Goodhart, Sir Philip
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.02.87) 508-10
Orgorodnikov, Alexander, Public petitions (19.02.87) 1149
St Christopher's Hospice (19.02.87) 1150-4

Goodlad, Mr Alastair, *Under-Secretary of State for Energy*
Questions
Central Electricity Generating Board, Disclosure of information 470w
Electricity, Cross Channel electricity link 470w
Electricity consumption 469w
Electricity consumption, Weather 639
Electricity distribution 635w
Electricity generation 10-2w
Electricity generation, Nuclear power stations 639-40
Electricity supply industry, Privatisation 10w
Electricity tariffs, France 168w
Energy research, Nuclear fuel reprocessing 837w
Euratom, Nuclear fuel reprocessing 316w
FACET, Sellafield 470-1w
Fast reactors, Construction 9w
Fossil fuelled power stations, Air pollution control 213w
Gas-cooled reactors, Energy research 466w
Nuclear accidents, Nuclear power stations 430w

Nuclear Installations Inspectorate 472w
Nuclear power, Electricity generation 643-4
Nuclear power, Energy costs 645
Nuclear power, North West region 466w
Nuclear power, Operating costs 167w
Nuclear power stations, Ambulance services 318-9w
Nuclear power stations, Emergency planning 317w, 634w, 636w
Nuclear power stations, Leukaemia 644
Nuclear power stations, Licensing 471w
Nuclear power stations, Nuclear safety 317-8w, 644
Plutonium, Exports 633w
Plutonium, Nuclear fuel reprocessing 316w
Plutonium, Nuclear reactors 470w
Power industry disconnections 468-9w
Power stations 635-6w
Power stations, Capital investment 10w
Power stations, Planning permission 635w
Pressurised water reactors, Nuclear safety 213-4w
Pressurised water reactors, USA 644
Radioactivity, Hinkley Point 470w
Sizewell B 643-4
Sizewell B, Capital investment 9w
Sizewell B, Civil servants' visits abroad 10w
Sizewell B, Computer software 469w
Sizewell B, Costs 10w
Sizewell B, Nuclear power stations 167w
Sizewell B, Nuclear safety 469w
Sizewell Inquiry, Nuclear accidents 469w

Goods vehicles
Road tax 840w

Gould, Mr Bryan
Debates etc
Public expenditure (18.02.87) 937-44, 946, 996, 1000
Questions
EC budget, Exchange rates 30w
Mental hospitals, Hospital closures 448w
Mental patients, Hospital discharges 447-9w

Government
Nuclear accidents 303w

Government achievements 799-805w

Government assistance
Clydeside 306
Musicians 479w

Government assistance to industry
Aerospace industry 875-6w
Airbuses 747w
Foreign companies in UK 523w
North West region 626w
Railway transport 624w
Rolls-Royce Aeroengines 438w
Rural areas 38-40w
Small businesses 56-60w
Wales 213-4w

Government assistance to voluntary organisations
Drug abuse 65w

Government contracts
Electronic Data Systems 453-4
Property Services Agency 667-8w

Government departments
Accountants 605-10w, 613w, 616w, 624-5w, 628-9w, 634-5w, 637w, 641-2w, 656w, 665-6w, 697w, 714-8w, 723-5w
Cash limits 79w, 105w, 330w, 405w
Civil service manpower 420w
Management consultants 671-4w, 676-7w, 683w
Opinion surveys 247w
Procurement 233w
Public Accounts Committee 523w, 528w, 532w, 536w, 557w, 583w, 603w, 623w, 634w, 662-3w, 825w
Weather 212w

Government grants
Action for Community Employment 446-7
AIDS 512w
Area museum councils 383w
BBC external services 12w
City technology colleges 571w
Community programme 162w
Crime victims 639w
Disabled Persons (Services Consultation & Representation) Act 1986 37w
Energy action areas 646-7
Environmentally sensitive 789w
Family Forum 509w
Fisheries 789w
Gaelic language 325w
Hostels 611-2w
Insulation 553-4w
Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin 636w
National Marriage Guidance Council 321w
North West Regional Health Authority 505w
Play board 550w
Pollution control 112w
Probation & aftercare 560-1w
Science & technology 368w, 441w
Scottish Development Agency 457-8w, 616w
Sports Council 116w
Terrence Higgins Trust 512w
Victim support schemes 639w
Welsh language 5-7
Welsh Water Authority 299w
Workers' Educational Association 299
Youth organisations 370w

Government grants to local authorities 662w
Capital investment 307-8w
Flooding 116w
Road safety 252w
Severe weather payments 303
Urban programme 552w
Water supply 299w

Government grants to voluntary organisations
Brook Advisory Centre 720w
Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People 720w
Family Planning Association 720w

Gow, Mr Ian
Debates etc
Banking Bill, Rep & 3R (19.02.87) 1097
Housing (10.02.87) 180
Local Government Bill, Scope of Bill (18.02.87) 919
Questions
A22, Road works 736w
Devolution, Northern Ireland government 445
Doctors' list of patients 823w
Eastbourne Hospital, Construction 822-3w
Land use, Rural areas 166
Level crossings, Hampden Park 736w

Gower, Sir Raymond
Questions
Motorway service areas 44w
Railway network, Wales 18
Rates & rating, Wales 4

Graduates
Nature Conservancy Council 549w
Open University 580w

Grammar schools 569w
Selective schools 754-5

Grampian health board 188-9w
Consultants 188-9w

Grampian Regional Council (Harbours) Order Confirmation Bill 1986/87
Debates etc
Rep* (11.02.87) 293
3R* (12.02.87) 441

Grant, Sir Anthony
Questions
A1-M1 link 43w
Business statement 463
Common agricultural policy, Prices 1044-5
Railway electrification 379w
Road markings, France 247-8w

Grant recycling 117-24w
Local government finance 117-24w

Granton gas works 263w

Grazing land
Land use 338-40w

Greater London
Ambulance services 361w
Arts 168w
Burglary 434w
Hospital admissions 597w
Hospital beds 597w
Local government 412w, 435w
Local government functions 411-2w, 435w, 480-1w, 483w
Local government services 381-2w
Motor vehicles 7-8w
Orange badge scheme 249w
Prison staff 554w
Restart programme 606-7w

Greater London Council
Cultural heritage 418-9w
Local government reform 239w

Greater Manchester
Transport Users' Consultative Committees 252-3w

Green pound 41w, 485w, 789w
Exchange rates 1046-7
Livestock 1046-7, 1052-3
Republic of Ireland 485w

Greenbelt
Building land 166
Hertfordshire 852w
Planning permission 162, 168

Greenock
Employment 163-4w
Jobclubs 187w
Maternity benefits 355w, 357-8w

Greenway, Mr Harry
Debates etc
Access to Personal Files Bill, 2R (20.02.87) 1166, 1170
Business statement (19.02.87) 1079
Crown Proceedings (Armed Forces) Bill, 2R (13.02.87) 573, 594-6, 598
Oral question time point of order (16.02.87) 657
Questions
Afghanistan, USSR 227-8w
Business statement 469
Church Commissioners, Small businesses 14
Civil service personnel management, Careers development 654
Deportation, Tamils 910
Hotels, Insurance 48w
House of Commons accommodation 16-7
Income tax, Tax rates & bands 178w
Perivale Hospital, Members' correspondence 808w
Petroleum revenue tax 29-30w
Prime Minister official engagements 160w, 303w, 523w, 808w
Public libraries, News international 478w
Secondary education, Selective schools 754
Student grants, Cost of living 759
Supplementary benefits, Social security recipients 153w
Teachers, Pay 568w

Greenwich
Maternity benefits 865w

Gregory, Mr Conal
Debates etc
Housing (10.02.87) 200, 204, 229-34
Questions
Billing, Judgments 436w

Grey seals 64-5w, 486w
Fishery protection 64-5w
Research 65w

Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Debates etc
Banking Bill, Rep & 3R (19.02.87) 1146-7
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 (Continuance) Order 1987 (10.02.87) 273-7
Questions
Police discipline, Witnesses 320w

Griffiths, Mr Peter
Questions
Terrorism, IRA 765

Griffiths, Roy 281w

Grimsby
Maternity benefits 395-6w

Grist, Mr Ian
Questions
Gambia, Overseas aid 908
House renovation grants, Wales 79-80w
Sherman Theatre, Arts finance 652

Ground, Mr Patrick
Questions
Honduras, Bilateral aid 172-3w
Nicaragua, Bilateral aid 172w
Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment, Public appointments 156w

Guatemala
Ministers' visits abroad 905

Guided weapons 101w
ALARM 490w
Defence procurement 304w

Guillotine (11.02.87) 320-68

Guinness 525-6w
Cazenove 525w
Company investigations 368w, 525-6w, 623w, 627w
Crime 526w
Fraud squad 525w
Insider trading 547w
Macfarlane, Norman 261w
Scotland 267w
Takeovers 547w

Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn, Minister of State for Agriculture, Fisheries & Food
Questions
Agricultural improvement scheme, Land use 779w
Agricultural land, Dairy farming 676w
Agricultural land, Forestry 779w
Agricultural land, Land use 778-9w
Agricultural land, Rates & rating 1045-6
Agricultural policy 788w
Agricultural production, Common agricultural policy 676w
Agricultural production, Prices 782w
Agricultural products, Marketing 788w
Agricultural products, Prices 782w, 790w
Agricultural products, Production quotas 288w, 486w
Agricultural support systems, EC countries 786w
Beef & veal, Agricultural subsidies 781-2w, 785w
Beef & veal, Exports 41-2w, 481w, 485w
Beef & veal, Intervention stocks 287w, 485w
Beef & veal, Prices 781w
Butter, USSR 789w
Cereals, Farms 779-80w
Cereals, Food surpluses 779-80w
Cereals, Prices 781-2w
Cereals, Production quotas 780w
Common agricultural policy 785w
Common agricultural policy, Prices 1041, 1043-5
Common agricultural policy, Self-sufficiency 482w
Common farm prices, Cereals 481w
Common farm prices, European Commission 787w
Common fisheries policy 788w
Common sheep meat regime 1041-2
Dairy farming, Agricultural subsidies 604w
Dairy farming, Compensation 782-3w
Dairy farming, Food inspection 482w
Dairy farming, Production quotas 337-8w, 486w
Dairy farming, Subsidies 338w
Dried milk, Exports 42w
EC Agricultural Council 288-9w
Export rebates, Libyan Arab Republic 42w
Falkland Islands, Fisheries 1042-3
Falkland Islands, Fishery agreements 1043
Falkland Islands, Fishing vessels 1043
Farm incomes, Rates & rating 787w
Fish conservation, North Sea 786w
Fish conservation, Norway 393w
Fisheries 781w
Fisheries, Compensation 786w
Fisheries, Dorset 677w
Fisheries, Government grants 789w
Fisheries, Light dues 780w
Fisheries, Seals 486w
Fishing vessels, Licensing 601-2w
Food surpluses 784w
Food surpluses, Butter 482w, 601-2w, 784w
Food surpluses, Charities 783-4w, 1048-51
Food surpluses, Costs 784w
Food surpluses, Disadvantaged 784w, 1050
Food surpluses, EC action 483w
Green pound 41w, 485w, 789w
Hill livestock allowances 1053
Livestock, Beef & veal 1052
Livestock, Farms 779w
Livestock, Green pound 1052-3
Measurement, Standardisation 482w
Milk, Production quotas 783w
Pigmeat, Imports 485-6w
Pigmeat, Netherlands 42w
Public Accounts Committee, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 603w
Salmon Advisory Committee, Public appointments 166-7w
Seals, Fisheries 39-41w
Seeds, Testing 882w
Set-aside schemes, Agricultural surpluses 786w
Sheep 786w
Sheep meat, Prices 782w, 1042
Suckler cow premiums 42w, 484w
Total allowable catches, Fisheries 790w

Habib, Philip 230w, 690w
Official engagements 230w

Habitual offenders
Dangerous mental patients 434w

Hackney
Maternity benefits 145w, 147-8w, 151w

Haemophilia
Advisory services 283w
AIDS 283w, 512-3w

Hai, Nguyen Von 772w
Visas 772w

Hamilton, Mr Archie, Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement
Debates etc
Dockyard Services orders 1986 (09.02.87) 118-21, 125, 130-2
Questions
Accountants, Ministry of Defence 681-3w
Armed forces civilians, Scotland 872w
Armed forces dependants, West Germany 293w
Armoured fighting vehicles, Industrial production 304w
Arms exports, Employment opportunities 684w
Arms trade, Export promotion 873w
Bofors gun, Defence contracts 488-9w
Bofors gun, Warships 488w
Bofors guns, Ammunition 681w
Chatham Dockyard, Radioactive waste disposal 564-5w
Defence contracts 304w
Defence equipment, USA 776w
Defence expenditure 293-4w
Defence expenditure, Defence procurement 490-1w
Defence expenditure, National Audit Office 294w, 490w
Defence expenditure, Satellites 304w
Defence industries, Scotland 872w
Defence procurement, Artillery 489w
Defence procurement, Competition 563-4w
Defence procurement, Disclosure of information 105-6w
Defence procurement, Scotland 872w
DROPS, Defence contracts 289-91w
DROPS, Defence procurement 102-4w, 487-8w, 563w, 680w
DROPS, Defence research 103w
DROPS, Procurement 104w
Early warning systems, Boeing 106w, 685w
Experimental aircraft programme, Defence expenditure 490w
Guided weapons 101w
Guided weapons, ALARM 490w
Guided weapons, Defence procurement 304w
Helicopters, Defence procurement 870w
Laird (Anglesey), Defence equipment 565w
Marconi, Company investigations 684-5w
Merchant ships, Design 291w
Military aircraft 101-2w
Military vehicles, Land Rover 184w
Ministers' visits abroad, Egypt 564w
Ministry of Defence, Scotland 872w
National security, Ministry of Defence 184w
Polaris, Costs 871w
Polaris, Defence expenditure 871w
Polaris, Defence procurement 871w
Public Accounts Committee, Ministry of Defence 870w
RAF Binbrook, Armed forces civilians 777w
RAF Binbrook, Ministers' domestic visits 777w
Rapier missiles, Armed forces deployment 564w
Remotely piloted vehicles 101w
Royal Naval Hospital Haslar, Contract catering 777w
Royal ordnance factories 492-3w
Royal ordnance factories, Blackburn 491w
Royal ordnance factories, Redundancy 492w
Royal Yacht, Shipbuilding 565w
Satellites, Defence expenditure 778w
Satellites, International Telecommunications Union 106w
Satellites, Ministry of Defence 491w
Satellites, National Audit Office 367w
Seabed Operations Vessel 680w
Tornado aircraft, Defence expenditure 873w
Tornado aircraft, Early warning systems 564w
Torpedoes, Spearfish 489w
Torpedoes, Tigerfish 489w
Trident, Costs 871w
Trident, Defence expenditure 871-2w
Trident, Defence procurement 871w

Hamilton, Mr James
Debates etc
Business statement (19.02.87) 1077
Housing (10.02.87) 258
Questions
Caterpillar Tractors, Factory closures 262w, 304
Maternity benefits, Scotland 352-3w, 516w
Youth training scheme, Education 528w

Hamilton, Mr Neil
Questions
Agricultural production, Prices 782w
Kampuchea, Human rights 690w
Pay beds 160w
Residential care, Board & lodging charges 499-500w

Hamilton, Mr Willie W
Debates etc
Dockyard Services Orders 1986 (09.02.87) 129
Public expenditure (18.02.87) 956-60
Questions
Diplomatic service, Employment discrimination 693w
Housing problems, Scotland 263w
Low pay, Employment opportunities 458
Maternity benefits, Devon 591w
Methaemoglobinaemia 283w
Nuclear weapons deployment, Publicity 184w
Nurses, Recruitment 198w

Personal social services, Local government expenditure 268w
Pesticides, Developing countries 666-7w
Police right of search, BBC 322w
Royal Yacht, Shipbuilding 565w
Sheep, Radioactivity 1051-2

Hampden Park 736w
Level crossings 736w
Road traffic 736w

Hampson, Dr Keith
Debates etc
Local Government Bill, Scope of Bill (18.02.87) 921
Questions
Helicopters, Aerospace industry 438-9w

Hancock, Mr Michael
Questions
Action for jobs, Portsmouth 768w
Animal welfare, Expenditure 677w
Land use, Rural areas 162-3
Local government finance, Grant recycling 117-24w
Maternity benefits, Portsmouth 709w
Navy, Drug crimes 366-7w
Navy, Drug offences 367w
Police custody, Personal property 8w
Ports, Warships 366w
Royal Naval Hospital Haslar, Contract catering 777w
Teachers' pensions, National Service 370w
Television licences, Crown immunity 216w
Warships, Iceland 185w

Handicapped 156, 192w
Access to buildings 279-80w
Building alterations 240-1w
Community care 130w, 281w
Community Care Review 130w
Day centres 280-1w, 455w
Doctors' surgeries 279-80w
Local government expenditure 130-1w
Northern Ireland Office 77-8w
Opposition days (17.02.87) 788-828
Public appointments 3w, 77-8w, 280w, 327-8w
Scotland 66-7w
Scottish Office 327-8w
Social services 66-7w, 131w
Spectacles 718w
Wales 455w
Young people 280-1w

Handicapped children 141-4w
Northern Ireland 78-80w
Wales 91-2w

Handicapped drivers
Parking 249-52w

Handicapped pupils
Northern Ireland 177w
Scotland 64w
Secondary education 573w
Special educational needs 92w
Wales 92w

Hanley, Mr Jeremy
Debates etc
Access to Personal Files Bill, 2R (20.02.87) 1184, 1200-4
Banking Bill, Rep & 3R (19.02.87) 1117-9, 1135-8, 1147
Police records, Computers (20.02.87) 1233
Questions
EC Foreign Affairs Council 698w

Hannam, Mr John
Debates etc
Handicapped (17.02.87) 805-9
Questions
Confederation of British Industry 467w
Falkland Islands, Drama 159-60
Museums & galleries, Art works 480w
Nuclear power stations, Leukaemia 644
Procurement, Government departments 233w

Hardy, Mr Peter
Debates etc
Agricultural land, Land use (09.02.87) 76
Calling of Members, Oral questions (11.02.87) 312
Petroleum Bill, Rep & 3R (11.02.87) 395-6, 398-9, 402-4
Questions
Agricultural land, Forestry 301
Air fares, EC action 623w
Business statement 466
Coal fired power stations, Construction 640
Export of live animals, Legislation 789w
Invalid care allowances, Married women 596w
Maternity benefits, Wentworth 273w, 276w
Middle East, Foreign policy 694w
Rate rebates, Social security recipients 190-1w

Hare, Squadron Leader 304w
Air force flying 304w

Hargreaves, Mr Ken
Questions
Armed forces dependants, West Germany 293w
Farm capital grant scheme 788w

Harman, Ms Harriet
Questions
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, Camberwell 818-9w
Maternity benefits, Dulwich 864w
Maternity benefits, Peckham 863-5w

Harris, Mr David
Debates etc
Agricultural land, Land use (09.02.87) 78
Questions
Passports, Computers in government departments 218-9w
Unemployment, Northern Ireland 442

Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Questions
M1, Motorway service areas 310w
M1, Telephones 309-10w

Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Questions
Maternity benefits, Clydesdale 513-4w

Harvey, Mr Robert
Questions
Agriculture, Wales 10
Mental health services, Wales 7-8

Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Debates etc
Public expenditure (18.02.87) 932

Hawk Jet trainer aircraft 831w
Indonesia 831w

Hawkins, Mr Christopher
Debates etc
Banking Bill, Rep & 3R (19.02.87) 1103
Employment schemes (12.02.87) 525
Questions
Agricultural land, Rates & rating 1045

Hawkins, Sir Paul
Questions
Farm incomes, Rates & rating 787w

Hayes, Mr Jerry
Debates etc
Employment policy, Labour Party (12.02.87) 476
Employment schemes (12.02.87) 492
Local government Bill, Scope of Bill (18.02.87) 920
Questions
British Airports Authority, Shares 311w
Health service staff, Employment agencies 866-7w
Public libraries, Finance 474w

Haynes, Mr Frank
Debates etc
Social Fund (Maternity & Funeral Expenses) Bill, Rem stages (09.02.87) 102, 111-2
Questions
British Rail, Profitability 378w
Business statement 466
Coal, Central Electricity Generating Board 469w
Livestock, Beef & veal 1052
Local education authorities, Capital investment 569w
Public libraries, Local government expenditure 168-9w
Restart programme, Ashfield 609w
Set-aside schemes, Agricultural surpluses 786w
Sizewell B, Public participation in planning 645-6
Trent Regional Health Authority, Official engagements 200w
Turks & Caicos Islands 462w

Hayward, Mr Rob
Questions
Terrorism, Crime prevention 5w
Theatres, Local authorities 477w

Hazardous materials
Household bleach 4w

Headteachers
Management techniques 760-1

Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Questions
Arms control treaties, USSR 907
Maternity benefits, Leeds 700-1w
Strategic defence initiative, ABM Treaty 899

Health & Safety Executive
Sizewell Inquiry 54w

Health centres 503w

Health education
AIDS 129-30w, 191w, 296, 397w, 546w, 751-3
Drug abuse 3
Literacy 397w
Meningitis 283-4w
Smoking 3
Special health authorities 3-4
Students 397w
Wales 3-4, 546w
Young people 751-3

Health Education Authority (Establishment & Constitution) Order 1987
Debates etc
(10.02.87) 171

Health Education Authority Regulations 1987
Debates etc
(10.02.87) 171

Health physics
Radiation hazards 426w

Health service staff 132w
Employment agencies 866-7w
Fees & charges 866-7w
Housing 285w
Manpower 75-6w, 85-90w
Neasden Hospital 285w, 721w
Northern Ireland 75-6w
Office workers 450w
Redundancy 84-6w, 847-8w
Wales 84-90w, 450w, 847-8w

Health services finance 131-2w
Community care 149-50
Community health councils 151
Mental health community care 150-1
Mental health services 7

Hearing Aid Council Act 1968 (Amendment) Bill 1986/87
Debates etc
2R order read (13.02.87) 630

Hearing aids
Licensing 3w

Heart diseases 81w
Costs 364w
Social costs 364w

Heathcoat-Amory, Mr David
Questions
Agricultural land, Taxation 779w

Art works 477w
Electricity consumption, Weather 639
Strategic defence initiative, Europe 898-9
Student grants 566w

Heathrow
Visas 643-4w

Heating allowances 139w, (18.02.87) 925-6
Brighton 284w
Northern region 138w
Pensioners 201w
Scotland 201w
Social security recipients 596w, 598w
Supplementary benefits capital limits 596-7w

Heddle, Mr John
Debates etc
British Railways Bill, 2R (16.02.87) 709-11
Law of Property (Amendment) Bill, 1R (10.02.87) 172-4
Local Government Bill, Scope of Bill (18.02.87) 917
Questions
Farms, Change of use 881-2w
Hospital beds, Computer applications 198w
Housing management, Higher education 315w
Land use, Rural areas 167
Small businesses, Tenancy agreements 156w
Special educational needs 583w
Special educational needs, School choice 584w
Special schools, School closures 582-3w
Town & country planning 112w

Hedgerow Protection Bill 1986/87
Debates etc
2R order read (20.02.87) 1230

Heffer, Mr Eric S
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.02.87) 542-4
Housing (10.02.87) 178, 220-1
Women (17.02.87) 854
Questions
Civil service, public administration 655

Helicopters
Aerospace industry 438-9w
Costs 557-8w
Defence procurement 870w
Hindley, Myra 557-8w
Newham 218w
Police patrolling 218w
Rescue services 625-6w
Coastguard 685w, 839w
Western isles 839w

Hemsworth
Maternity benefits 514-5w

Henderson, Mr Barry
Debates etc
Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc (Scotland) Bill, Allocation of time motion (11.02.87) 326, 329-30, 332, 349, 352
Questions
Fish conservation, North Sea 786w
Prison accommodation, Scotland 294
Road works, Fife 612w
Transient people, Scotland 258w
University finance, Rates & rating 575-6w
Weather, Scotland 304

Hepatitis 129w
Blood donors 129w
Lincoln Prison 769-70w
Prisoners 769-70w
Vaccination 867w

Hercules aircraft 365w
Communications 365w

Heritage coast 239w
Planning appeals 239w

Hertfordshire
Employment 531w, 766w
Greenbelt 852w

Hevenningham Hall 416-7w

Hickey, Vincent 771w
Inquiries 771w

Hickmet, Mr Richard
Questions
Food poisoning, Horses 483-4w, 678-80w
Food poisoning, Livestock 484w, 679w
Horses, Food poisoning 336-7w
Privatisation 405w
Westway & Sons, Horse Hage 484w, 679-80w

Hicks, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Dockyard Services orders 1986 (09.02.87) 123-4
Questions
Manpower Services Commission, South west region 53w, 255-8w

Higgins, Rt Hon Terence
Debates etc
Public expenditure (18.02.87) 944-7

High technology 749-50w

Higher civil servants
Dept of the Environment 856w
Ethnic minorities 856w

Higher education 584w
Age participation rates 742-4w
Brain drain 568-9w, 755-7
Capital investment 836-7w
Educational finance 186w
Housing management 315w
Scotland 186w
Student counselling 169w
Student numbers 570w

Highland Forest Products
Inverness 300-1

Highlands & Islands Development Board
Criminal investigation 161w
Employment opportunities 265w

Highlands of Scotland
Adult education 298-9
Educational finance 298-9

Highway code 736-7w

Hill, Mr James
Questions
Business statement 470

Hill livestock allowances 41w, 1053

Hind, Mr Kenneth
Questions
Capital investment, Local education authorities 307-8w
Highway code 736-7w
Registration of births deaths & marriages 585w

Hindley, Myra 557-8w
Helicopters 557-8w

Hinkley Point
Radioactivity 470w

Hinkley Point A 316w

Hinkley Point B 470w

Hirst, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc (Scotland) Bill, Allocation of time motion (11.02.87) 333, 340-7
Rate Rebates & Rate Support Grant Scotland Orders (18.02.87) 1023
Questions
AIDS, Health education 751-2
EC budget, Expenditure 542-3w
Macfarlane, Norman, Guinness 261w
Preventitive medicine 191w
Prison accommodation, Scotland 294-5
Prosecutions, Prison riots 257-8w

Historic Buildings & Monuments Commission for England 113w

Historic Buildings Council for Wales 300w
Annual report 300w

HM Chief Inspector of Prisons 615w

HM Inspectorate of Schools
Departmental publications 219w

HMS Ark Royal 366w

HMS Challenger 680w

HMS Hubberston 366w

HMS Juno 366w

HMS London 366w

HMS Wilton 366w

Hogg, Mr Douglas, *Under-Secretary of State at the Home Department*
Debates etc
Police records, Computers (20.02.87) 1236-40
Questions
Animal Procedures Committee, Public appointments 174w
Burglary, Clerkenwell Road 371w
Burglary, Glass 5w
Burglary, Greater London 434w
Bus lanes, Parking offences 174w
Child destruction, Criminal investigation 8w
Civil defence, Chemical weapons 173w
Crime prevention, Housing 321-2w
Crime prevention, Security equipment 321w
Dangerous mental patients, Hospital discharges 433-4w
Death registration, AIDS 867w
Delaney, Michael, Death 867w
Drinking & driving, Law enforcement 6-7w
Economic League, Police 868w
Economic League, Police records 868w
Fire services, Building repairs 215w
Fire services, Local government expenditure 433w
Fire services, Manpower 174w
Forensic science 770w
Forensic science, Archaeology 770w
Gas accidents, Fire services 173w
Hindley, Myra, Helicopters 557-8w
Local authorities, Elections 558w
Mafia, European Economic Community 323w
Metropolitan Police, Civil proceedings 218w
Metropolitan Police, Criminal investigation 561-2w
Motor vehicles, Greater London 7-8w
Multiple occupation, Safety standards 320w
Neighbourhood watch schemes 373w
News International, Complaints against police 217w
News International, Lorries 5w
News International, Police equipment 373w
News International, Police records 217-8w
News International, Public order policing 216-7w, 436w
News International, Riot control weapons 373-4w
Photographs, Police records 217w
Police, Nuclear power stations 322w
Police, Road traffic control 174-5w
Police custody, Personal property 8w
Police discipline, Witnesses 320w
Police firearms, Police patrolling 218w
Police patrolling, Helicopters 218w
Police vehicles, Road accidents 771w
Public order policing, Wapping 869w
Puppies, Animal welfare 320-1w
Racial conflict, Codes of practice 215w
Racial conflict, Newham 215w
Road accidents, Police vehicles 556-7w
Road traffic offences, Information 868-9w
Road traffic police, Written questions 373w
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 433w
Voting rights, Students 374w

Hogg, Mr Norman
Debates etc
Banking Bill, Rep & 3R (19.02.87) 1109
Employment schemes (12.02.87) 477
Housing, Scotland (11.02.87) 416-7
Questions

Maternity benefits, Cumbernauld 274w, 276w
New towns, Manufacturing industries 267w

Holland, Mr Stuart
Debates etc
Housing (Houses in Multiple Occupation) Bill, 2R (13.02.87) 622, 626

Holloway Prison 554w
Prison staff 554w
Resignations 554w

Holt, Mr Richard
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.02.87) 493, 521-5
Questions
Business statement 463
Mobility allowance, Administrative delays 191w
Occupational deafness, Industrial disablement benefits 149
Public expenditure, Northern Ireland 450

Home Office
Data networks 6w
Data processing 434w
Information technology 434w
Local government 435w
Local government functions 435w
Management consultants 641-2w
Public Accounts Committee 557w

Home Robertson, Mr John
Debates etc
Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc (Scotland) Bill, Allocation of time motion (11.02.87) 323, 336, 341, 348
Rate Rebates & Rate Support Grant Scotland Orders (18.02.87) 1012, 1021
Questions
Agricultural land, Town & country planning 388w
Common agricultural policy, Prices 1044
Community charge, Scotland 388w
Crofting, Rating revaluations 188w
Electricity consumption 261w
Food surpluses, Disadvantaged 784w
Forestry, Scotland 302
Hill livestock allowances 1053
Land use, Rural areas 166-7
Maternity benefits, East Lothian 812w
Maternity benefits, Western Isles 817w
Sheep meat, Prices 1042
Torness power station, Emergency planning 455-6w

Homelessness (10.02.87) 175-261, 852w
Council housing 300-2w
North West region 127w
Scotland 63w
Sheltered housing 201-2w
Single people 63w
South East region 127w
Wales 300-2w

Homesteading schemes 418w

Honduras
Bilateral aid 172-3w
EC aid 172-3w

Hong Kong 227w
Annual reports 831w
China 895
Elections 895
Ministers' visits abroad 692w
Vietnamese refugees 894

Hooliganism
Armed forces punishment 365w
Football 365w

Hordern, Sir Peter
Debates etc
Agricultural land, Land use (09.02.87) 79
Questions
Housing construction, South East region 663w
Privatisation, Income 825w

Hormone treatments
EC action 791w
Livestock 791w

Horse Hage 679-80w
Westway & Sons 484w, 679-80w

Horses
Animal feed 484w, 679-80w
Death 484w
Devon 336w
Food poisoning 336-7w, 483-4w, 678-80w

Horticultural Development Council 295w
Wales 295w

Horticulture
Agricultural production 785-6w
Marketing 1053

Hospices
Terminal care (19.02.87) 1150-8

Hospital admissions
Greater London 597w

Hospital beds 133-6w
Altrincham 284w
Computer applications 199w
Greater London 597w
Leeds Eastern Health Authority 501-2w
Leeds Western Health Authority 501-2w
NHS 202-4w
Northern Ireland 75-8w
Sale 284w
Scotland 63w
Wales 82-3w, 89-90w

Hospital catering
Gardner Merchant 777w

Hospital closures 131-2w
Bradford Health Authority 597w
Burnley Pendle & Rossendale Health Authority (09.02.87) 69
Community health council 595-6w
Community health councils 500-1w
Machynlleth (16.02.87) 723-33
Mental hospitals 448w
North Wales Hospitals 7-8
Northern Ireland 76w
Private Members' motions (09.02.87) 69
Royal Liverpool Hospital 509w
Scotland 62-3w
Stobill Hospital 325w
Wales 82-3w

Hospital Complaints Procedure Act 1985
Questions
507w

Hospital consultants
Chest medicine 226-7w
Pay 857w
Wales 226-7w

Hospital discharges 194-5w, 433-4w, 447-9w, 501-2w, (17.02.87) 788-828
Dangerous mental patients 433-4w
Mental patients 195w, 447-9w

Hospital length of stay
Wales 95w

Hospital orders 434w

Hospital waiting lists 585-7w
Basingstoke Hospital 200w
Leeds 200w
Occupational therapy 211w
Regional health authorities 199w
Royal Liverpool Hospital 510w
Scotland 539w

Hospitals
Advertising 200w
Altrincham 284w
Capital investment 502w
Funerals 200w
Inner city areas 194w
Machynlleth 81-2w, (16.02.87) 723-33
NHS 101w
Northern Ireland 75w
Wales 101w

Hostels
Government grants 611-2w

Hotels
Insurance 48w

Houghton
Maternity benefits 144-5w, 150w

House of Commons
Equal opportunities 604w
Equality Exchange 604w
Paper 17-8
Recycling 17-8

House of Commons accommodation 16-7
Bridge Street area 17
Recycling 18

House of Commons debates
Speaker's rulings & statements (16.02.87) 660

House of Commons division of time
Speaker's rulings & statements (19.02.87) 1109-10

House of Commons galleries (16.02.87) 750
Security 15-6
Speaker's rulings & statements (12.02.87) 487-8, (19.02.87) 1065

House of Commons questions
Administrative delays 329w
Corporation tax 329w
Prime Minister 161w

House of Commons Select Committees
Norfolk & Suffolk Broads Bill 1986/87 (10.02.87) 286, (17.02.87) 887

House of Fraser 747w
Lonrho 747w
Takeovers 747w

House prices
Housing stock 116w
North West region 126w
South East region 126w

House purchase
Gazumping (10.02.87) 172-4

House renovation grants 227w
Cardiff 79-80w
Housing & handicapped 313-4w
Wales 79-80w

Household bleach
Child safety 4w
Hazardous materials 4w

Households 117w

Housing 117w
British Coal Corporation 552w
Crime prevention 321-2w
Fire services 109-11w
Health service staff 285w
Labour mobility 1056
Multiple occupation (13.02.87) 610-28
Neasden Hospital 721w
Nurses 137w
Opposition days (10.02.87) 175-261
Radiation hazards 548w
Security equipment 321w

Housing & handicapped
Building alterations 240-1w
House renovation grants 313-4w
Local government expenditure 313-4w

Housing association grants 738w
Urban development grants 738w

Housing associations
Urban planning 738w

Housing benefits
Council house rents 146
Local authorities 145-6
Rents 146, 194w
Scotland 541w
Social security benefits rules 194w
Social security recipients 194w, 541w
Social security reform 145-6

Housing compensation
Motorways 248-9w

Housing completions
Council housing 187w
Scotland 187w

Housing construction
Fraud 405-6w
Northern Ireland 405-6w
South East region 663w
Wheelchair housing 313w

Housing finance
Housing subsidies 553w
Scotland 304-5, (18.02.87) 1031-40

Housing (Houses in Multiple Occupation) Bill 1986/87
Debates etc
2R (13.02.87) 610-28
Order for resuming adjourned 2R read (20.02.87) 1230

Housing improvement
Enveloping schemes 158-9w
Rhyl 4

Housing insulation 467w
Disadvantaged 646-7
Draught-proofing materials 419w
Exceptional needs payments 111w
Insulation grants 649, 740w
Neighbourhood Energy Action 380w, 419w, 553-4w
Rate rebates 649
Social security recipients 467w

Housing investment programmes
Burnley 664-5w
Leeds City Council 158w
Pendle 664-5w

Housing management 315w
Educational finance 315w
Higher education 315w

Housing problems
Natural radioactivity 547-8w
Radiation hazards 114-5w
Radioactivity 741-2w
Radon gas 114-5w, 413-6w
Scotland 263w
Teachers 753

Housing Revenue Account Rate Fund Contribution Limits (Scotland) Order 1987
Debates etc
(11.02.87) 409-32

Housing revenue accounts (11.02.87) 409-32

Housing standards
Council housing 235-8w
Local authorities 235-8w

Housing starts
Mid Glamorgan 80w
Rhymney Valley 80w

Housing stock
House prices 116w
Local government expenditure 2-3

Housing subsidies
Housing finance 553w

Housing Support Grant (Scotland) Order 1987
Debates etc
(11.02.87) 409-32

Housing Support Grant (Scotland) Variation Order 1987
Debates etc
(11.02.87) 409-32

Housing support grants
Scotland (11.02.87) 409-32

Hove District Council 670w
Rate support grants 417w, 670w

***Howard, Mr Michael,** Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade & Industry*
Questions
Banks, Financial services 437w
Building societies, Consumer Credit Act 1974 440w
Company investigations, Guinness 525-6w
Financial institutions, Self-regulatory system 165w
Financial services, Self-regulating organisations 436-7w
Guinness, Company investigations 368w, 627w
Handicapped, Public appointments 3w
Household bleach, Hazardous materials 4w
Insider trading, Company investigations 748w
Insider trading, Merchant banks 747-8w
Interest rates, Personal loans 626-7w
Mailing lists, Mailing Preference Service 367w
Manchester Ship Canal Company, Takeovers 440w
Securities & Investments Board 629-30w
Takeovers, House of Fraser 747w
Time sharing, Advertising Standards Authority 315-6w
Time Sharing, Departmental leaflets 316w
Time sharing, Spain 315w
Torvinstyle Properties, Company investigations 367w

Howarth, Mr Alan
Debates etc
Banking Bill, Rep & 3R (19.02.87) 1098-100
Oral question time point of order (16.02.87) 658
Questions
Arts, Charitable donations 475w
Schools, Education (No 2) Act 1986 761

Howarth, Mr George
Debates etc
Public expenditure (18.02.87) 981-3
Questions
Museums & galleries, Educational visits 474w
Supplementary benefits, Administrative delays 196w

Howarth, Mr Gerald
Debates etc
Banking Bill, Rep & 3R (19.02.87) 1112
Questions
British Coal, Capital investment 650
Eastern Europe, Human rights 689w

***Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey,** Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs*
Debates etc
Oral question time intervention (18.02.87) 902
Questions
Arms control treaties, USSR 906-7
European Security Conference 903
Hong Kong, China 895
Hong Kong, Elections 895
Hong Kong, Vietnamese refugees 894
Lebanon, British residents abroad 686w
Overseas students 831-2w
South Africa, Diplomatic relations 689w
Strategic defence initiative 897-8
Strategic defence initiative, ABM Treaty 896-9
Strategic defence initiative, Europe 898-9
USSR, Human rights 903-4

Howell, Rt Hon David
Debates etc
Public expenditure (18.02.87) 948, 976-81
Questions
Local authorities, Debts 741w
Members' pensions 474w

Howell, Mr Ralph
Questions
Agricultural subsidies, Expenditure 286w
Balance of trade 164-6w
Civil service manpower 180w
Common agricultural policy, Prices 1043-4
Family income, Expenditure 518w
Family income supplements, Social security recipients 270w
Imports 214w
Income tax, Low pay 384w
Privatisation, Employment 329w
Public expenditure, Public sector employment 233w, 826w
Skilled workers, Manpower 161-2w

Howells, Mr Geraint
Questions
Cereals, Wales 750w
Educational publications, Educational finance 451-2w
Gas-cooled reactors, Energy research 466w
Health education, Wales 546w
Land use, Agricultural land 10
Rural areas, Economic situation 81w
Severe weather payments, Supplementary benefits 193w
Sheep, Livestock 845w

Hoyle, Mr Doug
Debates etc
Rover Group (19.02.87) 1066
Questions
Defence equipment, Cranes 183-4w
Hindley, Myra, Helicopters 557-8w
Prison staff, Empty housing 643w
Prisons, Public sector housing sales 174w
Spectrum Centre, Property transfer 157w
Speech therapists, Pay 197w

Hughes, Mr Mark
Questions
Maternity benefits, Durham 862w

Hughes, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Agricultural land, Land use (09.02.87) 75
Questions
AIDS, Medical research 297
Grampian health board, Consultants 188-9w
PICKUP, Scotland 299
Severe weather payments, Press advertising 138-9w
South Africa, Angola 688w
Unemployment, Aberdeen 266w
University finance, Pay 745w
University finance, University Grants Committee 744-5w

Hughes, Mr Roy
Questions
Humber bridge, Finance 409w
Maternity benefits, Newport 354w, 590w
Multiple occupation, Wales 2-3
Nuclear power stations, Licensing 471w
Radioactivity, Hinkley Point 470w
Rate support grants, Wales 5
Severn barrage 167w
Severn bridge, Repairs & maintenance 378w
Sizewell B, Computer software 469w

Hughes, Mr Sean
Questions
Arts centres, Regional arts 477w
Educational publications, Expenditure 568w
Industrial training board levies, Construction Industry Training Board 254w
Legislation, Treasury 181w

Hughes, Mr Simon
Debates etc
House of Commons divisions (11.02.87) 312
Tamils (17.02.87) 876
Questions
Church Commissioners, Inner city areas 13
Church Commissioners, Small businesses 14
Deportation, Tamils 911
Fisheries, Seals 486w
Grey seals, Fishery protection 64-5w
Health & Safety Executive, Sizewell Inquiry 54w
Hospital beds, Altrincham 284w
Hospitals, Altrincham 284w
House of Commons accommodation, Bridge Street area 17
Literacy, Voluntary organisations 570w
NHS, Urban areas 192w
Nurses, Vacancies 152-3
Play, Departmental initiatives 111w

Play facilities 124-5w
Seals, Fisheries 39-41w
"Sizewell B Public Inquiry Report" 645
Smoking related diseases, Tobacco advertising 153-4

Hull
Light dues 46w

Human organs 128-9w, 819-20w

Human rights
Afghanistan 158
Angola 462-3w
British dependent territories 689w
Eastern Europe 689w
El Salvador 229w
Kampuchea 690w
Namibia 401w, 460w
Poland 896
SWAPO 402w
Turkey 11w
USSR 691-2w, 903-4

"Human Rights & Namibia" 401w

Human Rights Bill 1986/87
Debates etc
Order for resuming adjourned 2R read (20.02.87) 1230

Humber bridge 409w
Finance 409w

Humberside Airport 321w
Immigration 321w

Hume, Mr John
Questions
Exceptional needs payments, Administrative delays 225w
Exceptional needs payments, Northern Ireland 224w
Forestry, Northern Ireland 443
Nursery education, Belfast 447
Severe weather payments, Northern Ireland 175-6w
Unemployment, Strabane 442

Hunt, Mr David, *Under-Secretary of State for Energy*
Questions
British Coal Corporation, Barnsley 467-8w
British Coal Corporation, Capital investment 650
British Coal Corporation, Manpower 319w
British Coal Corporation, Productivity 469w
British Coal Corporation, Public sector housing sales 213w
British Coal Corporation Enterprise, Employment opportunities 468w, 649-50
Coal, Central Electricity Generating Board 469w
Coal, Imports 472w, 773w
Coal consumption, Concessionary coal 317w
Coal consumption, Yorkshire & Humberside 316-7w
Coal mining, Ministers' domestic visits 467w
Coal mining, North West Leicestershire 466w
Energy action areas, Government grants 646-7
Energy conservation, Managers 471w
Energy conservation, Weather 649
Energy efficiency 466w, 646
Energy efficiency, Northern Ireland 647
Housing insulation 467w
Housing insulation, Social security recipients 467w
Loft insulation, Insulation grants 647, 649
Neighbourhood Energy Action, Essex 466-7w
Severn barrage 167w
Severn barrage, Research 642-3
Tidal power, Energy research 468w

Hunter, Mr Andrew
Questions
Basingstoke Hospital, Hospital waiting lists 200w
Rajiah, J, Death 461w
South Africa, Foreign policy 688-9w

Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas, *Secretary of State for the Home Department*
Debates etc
Broadcasting Bill (HL), 2R (16.02.87) 662-6, 681
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 (Continuance) Order 1987 (10.02.87) 263-70, 282
Questions
BBC, Police right of search 435w
Bombings, Kensington & Chelsea 432w
Broadcasting, Ministerial responsibility 435w
Data networks, Consultants 321w
Data networks, Home Office 6w
Data processing, Home Office 434w
Information technology, Home Office 434w
Local government functions, Home Office 435w
Local government, Home Office 435w
Management consultants, Home Office 641-2w
Metropolitan Police, Costs 772w
Official Secrets Act 1911, Law reform 557w
Passports, Computers in government departments 218-9w
Police right of search, BBC 322w, 771w
Prosecutions, Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 435-6w
Public Accounts Committee, Home Office 557w
Terrorism, Crime prevention 5w
Terrorism, Police detention 432w

Hypothermia
Death 11, 193w
Defective housing 11
Elderly 193w
Wales 11

"I Spy Strangers" (16.02.87) 750

Iceland
Warships 185w

Identifiers 862-3w

Identity cards
Football 117w

Immigrants
Educational finance 558-9w
Special education 558-9w

Immigration
Humberside Airport 321w

Immigration Act 1971
Questions
644w

Immigration appeals
Administrative delays 641w
Visas 537w

Immigration applications
Political refugees 371-2w

Immigration controls
Genetics 232w
Interviews 321w
Maladministration 644w

Immigration rules
Electronic Data Systems Ltd 547w

Import controls
Bees 41w
Coal 687w
Forest protection 3-4w
Motor vehicles 633w
Ramie 439w
South Africa 626w

Import duties
Antidumping 523w

Import penetration 827w
Italy 902

Imports 214w
Blood 510w, 512w
Cars 633w
Channel tunnel 626w
Coal 472w, 773w
Pigmeat 42w, 485-6w
Rhubarb 791w
Soya beans 440w
West Germany 524-5w, 527w

Income
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service 483w, 678w
Construction industry Training Board 534w
Falkland Islands 1043
NHS 711-4w
Privatisation 825w
Television licences 216w

Income tax
Family income supplements 270w
Low pay 384w
Personal income 824-6w
Tax allowances 182w
Tax rates & bands 178w, 181-2w
Tax yields 178w, 182w

Independent Broadcasting Authority (16.02.87) 662-705

Indian subcontinent
Visas 696w

Indonesia
Arms trade 831w
Hawk Jet trainer aircraft 831w

Induction loops 3w

Industrial building allowances
Costs 825w

Industrial democracy 606w

Industrial development
Planning permission 113w

Industrial disablement benefits
Occupational deafness 148-9
Social security adjudications 722w

Industrial disputes
Coal mining 640
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices 140-1w
Teachers 568w, 573w

Industrial energy consumption
Electricity tariffs 168w

Industrial estates
Welsh Development Agency 375w

Industrial health & safety
Building industry 162w
Screening 533-4w

Industrial planning
Town & country planning 113w

Industrial production
Armoured fighting vehicles 304w
Manufacturing industries 764

Industrial training board levies
Construction Industry Training Board 254w

Industrial training schemes 536w

Industrial tribunals
Barristers 764w
Birmingham 408w, 764w
Professional qualifications 408w

Industry
Education 570w

Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929
Questions
8w

Infectious diseases
AIDS 512w

Inflation
Pensions 456

Information
Road traffic offences 868-9w

Information technology
Dept of Employment 429w
Home Office 434w

Training 429w, 434w

Information technology centres 391w
Lancashire 391w
Youth training scheme 391w

Ingham, Bernard 522w

Ingley, James 2w
Extradition 2w

Injuries
Northern Ireland 406-7w
Plastic bullets 464w, 731w

Inland Revenue
Cash limits 233-4w

Inner cities initiative 610-1w, 849-56w
Lambeth 852-6w

Inner city areas
Church Commissioners 12-4
Hospitals 194w

Inner London boroughs
NHS finance 201w
Rate rebates 126w
Rates & rating 126w

Inner London Education Authority
Video recordings 1056

Innovation
Education 572w

Inquiries
Community programme 843w
Hickey, Vincent 771w
National security 772w
Peterhead Prison 615w
Royal Ulster Constabulary 332w, 452

In-service training
Expenditure 838w
Welsh language 295w

Insider trading
Company investigations 748w
Guinness 547w
Merchant banks 747-8w

Instalment credit
Open University 580w

Institute for Terrestrial Ecology 112w

Insulation
Companies 8
Factories 126w
Government grants 553-4w
Wales 8

Insulation grants
Housing insulation 649, 740w
Loft insulation 377w, 380w, 387w, 647, 649
Scotland 387w
Wales 8, 377w

Insurance
Hotels 48w

Insurance brokers 427-8w

Intelligence services
Economic League 868w

"Interactions Between Grey Seals & UK Fisheries" 64-5w, 486w

Interest rates
Brazil 893
Personal loans 626-7w

Interior decoration 667w

International Commission on Radiological Protection 413-4w, 426w

International conferences
Arms control 692-3w

International Frequency Registration Board 686w
Satellites 686w

International Fund for Ireland 450

International Maritime Organisation 838w

International studies
Secondary education 445w

International Telecommunications Union 442w, 491w, 686w
Ministry of Defence 491w
Satellites 106w, 368w, 441-2w, 629w, 686w

International trade
Petrochemicals 630-3w
Petroleum 630-3w

Intervention prices
Beef & veal 287-8w

Intervention stocks 784w
Beef & veal 287-8w, 485w
Charities 287w, 325w, 333-4w
Disadvantaged 9, 333-4w
EC action 483w
Social security recipients 387w
UK contributions to EC budget 422w

Interviews
Immigration controls 321w
Restart programme 609w

Intimidation 365w
Army 365w

Invalid care allowances
Administrative delays 596w
Married women 596w
Severe disability premium 130w

Invalidity benefits
Councillors attendance allowances 363-4w
Social Security recipients 130w

Inverness
Highland Forest Products 300-1

Inverness Prison 540w
Prison staff 540w

Investment
Channel tunnel 1058
Scotland 305

Investment income
Rolls-Royce Aeroengines 438w

IRA
Terrorism 765

Iran
Arms exports 693w
Arms trade 160
British residents abroad 160

Iran-Iraq war
Tanker ships 229w

Irvine
Paper industry 264w, 300, 541w

Irving, Mr Charles
Debates etc
Housing (10.02.87) 244
Questions
El Salvador, Human rights 229w

Islam
Northern Ireland 368-9w

Isle of Dogs enterprise zone 111w

Islington
Maternity benefits 813-4w, 858-9w

Italy
Exchange rates 902
Foreign policy 902
Import penetration 902
National income 544w
Terrorism 902

Jackson, Mr Robert
Questions
Farm incomes, Rates & rating 787w

Jaguar Rover Australia 630w
Privatisation 630w

Janner, Mr Greville
Debates etc
Agricultural land (09.02.87) 26
Business statement (19.02.87) 1078
Housing (10.02.87) 188
Questions
Business statement 465
Coal mining, North West Leicestershire 466w
Debts written off, Film industry 233w
Housing improvement, Enveloping schemes 158-9w
Interest rates, Personal loans 626-7w
Italy, Foreign policy 902
Maternity benefits, Leicester 206-8w
Older workers, Men 254w
Recycling, House of Commons 17
Retirement age 284w
Taxation, Film industry 330w

Jarrow
Maternity benefits 271-2w, 344w

Jessel, Mr Toby
Debates etc
Crown Proceedings (Armed Forces) Bill, 2R (13.02.87) 573, 589-91
Motor Cycle Noise Bill, Money res (16.02.87) 719-21
Oral question time point of order (16.02.87) 657
Questions
Arts finance, Tourism 651

Jews
Emigration 229w
USSR 229w, 691w

Job centres
Action for Jobs 768w
Jobclubs 49w
Manpower 48w
Wales 296-8w

Job training scheme 154w, 162-3w, 429w, (12.02.87) 476-528, 528w, 529-35, 535w, 536, 536w, 537-58, 610-1w
Adult education 535w
Equal opportunities 429w, 536w
Further education 535w
Supplementary benefits 154w
Training allowances 162-3w, 429w
Unemployment benefits 429w
Women 162-3w

Jobclubs 48-9w, 187w, 792-4w
Greenock 187w
Job centres 49w
Scotland 792-4w
Take-up of employment 187w

John, Mr Brynmor
Debates etc
Agricultural land (09.02.87) 24
Agricultural land, Land use (09.02.87) 71
Questions
Agricultural land, Rates & rating 1046
Agriculture improvement scheme 482-3w, 677-8w
Agriculture improvement scheme, Land drainage 483w
Food surpluses 784w
Food surpluses, Charities 1050-1
Food surpluses, EC action 483w
Land drainage, Agricultural Development & Advisory Service 483w, 678w
Land drainage, Agricultural improvement scheme 483w
Land use, Rural areas 10
Multiple occupation, Wales 1-2
Pesticides, Agricultural research 483w, 679w

John Ernest Rolfe & Florence Iveen Rolfe (Marriage Enabling) Bill (HL) 1985/86
Debates etc
2R* (10.02.87) 143

Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Debates etc
Broadcasting Bill (HL), 2R (16.02.87) 670
Questions
Dairy farming, Compensation 782-3w

Johnston, Sir Russell
Debates etc
Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc (Scotland) Bill, Allocation of time motion (11.02.87) 360
Housing, Scotland (11.02.87) 420-1
Rate Rebates & Rate Support Grant Scotland Orders (18.02.87) 1019-20

Questions
EC Presidency 164w
Employment opportunities, Highland & Islands Development Board 265w
Inverness Prison, Prison staff 540w
Jobclubs, Scotland 792-4w
Vredeling directive 606w

Joint financing
AIDS 512w

Jones, Mr Barry
Questions
Attendance allowance, Wales 508w
Derelict land grants, Mid Glamorgan 452-4w
Derelict land grants, Wales 455w
Doctors' surgeries, Access to buildings 455w
Handicapped, Day centres 455w
Hospital consultants, Chest medicine 226-7w
Hypothermia, Wales 11
Manufacturing industries, Wales 226w
Maternity benefits, Alyn & Deeside 274-5w
Maternity benefits, Wales 515w
National income, Wales 226w
Unemployment, Mid Glamorgan 226w
Unemployment, Wales 15, 637w
Welsh language, Government grants 7
Youth training scheme, Take-up of employment 81w

Jones, Mr Gwilym
Questions
Multiple occupation, Wales 2
Water supply, Property development 82w

Jones, Mr Robert B
Questions
Austria, AIDS 328w
Housing subsidies, Housing finance 553w

Jopling, Rt Hon Michael, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Debates etc
Agricultural land, (09.02.87) 24-5
Agricultural land, Ministerial statements (09.02.87) 70-80
Questions
Accountants, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 676-7w
Agricultural land, Land use 481w
Agricultural subsidies, Expenditure 286w
Beef & veal, Intervention prices 287-8w
Beef & veal, Intervention stocks 288w
Common agricultural policy, EC budget 393w
Food surpluses, Charities 287w, 333-4w
Food surpluses, Disadvantaged 333-4w
Food surpluses, EC action 334-5w
Fruit juices, Mafia 394w
Hill livestock allowances 41w
Local government functions, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 483w
Rural areas, Agriculture 38-40w
Sheep, Compensation 40w

Jopling, Michael 159
Secretaries of State 156, 159

Jordanhill College of Education 264w
College closures 264w

Judges
County courts 763w

Judgments
Billing 436w
EC budget 37w

Juries
Northern Ireland 452-3
Scottish courts 185w

Kampuchea
Human rights 690w

Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Debates etc
Broadcasting Bill (HL), 2R (16.02.87) 666-9
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 (Continuance) Order 1987 (10.02.87) 269-73

"Keeping the Peace" 105w

Keighley
Maternity benefits 515w

Kennedy, Mr Charles
Debates etc
Social Fund (Maternity & Funeral Expenses) Bill, Rem stages (09.02.87) 88-9, 91, 93, 106-7
Social Security (Payments on account) Regulations 1987 (17.02.87) 878, 883-4
Questions
Crofting, Community charge 263w
Family income supplements, Administrative delays 200w
Gaelic language, Government grants 325w
Juries, Scottish courts 185w
Northern College of Education, Educational administration 457-8w
University finance, Scotland 567w
Welsh language, Government grants 5-6

Kensington & Chelsea
Bombings 432w
Unemployment 49-50w

Kenya
Armed forces deployment 870w

Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Questions
Albania, Diplomatic relations 908
Overseas students 831-2w
Strategic defence initiative, ABM Treaty 898

Kestrel Marine Life 798w
Tayside enterprise zone 798w

Key, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Oral question time intervention (17.02.87) 755
Questions
Agricultural products, Prices 782w
AIDS, Health education 752
Central America, Peace negotiations 905
Local government social services, Corporal punishment 138w

Khurt, A T L 866w
Members' correspondence 866w

Kidnapping
Perez, Fernando 231-2w, 234w

Kidney patients 131w
Attendance allowance 131w
Medical treatments 131w

Kilmarnock
Maternity benefits 811w
Procurators fiscal 259w

Kincardine
Coal fired power stations 641

King, Mr Roger
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.02.87) 479, 492
Housing (10.02.87) 247
Rover Group (19.02.87) 1065, 1070
Questions
Passenger transport executives, Redundancy pay 379w

King, Rt Hon Tom, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement 332-3w, 445-6
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Referenda 446
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Republic of Ireland 77w
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Ulster Unionists 444-5
Building industry, Northern Ireland 452
Courts, Northern Ireland 452-3
Devolution, Northern Ireland government 445
Gaelic Athletic Association, Discrimination 725w
Northern Ireland government 444
Northern Ireland Office, Orders & regulations 546w
Political parties, Northern Ireland 331-2w
Republic of Ireland 331w
Republic of Ireland, Anglo-Irish Agreement 331w
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Inquries 332w, 452
Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights 175w
Ulster Unionists 444-5

Kingston upon Hull
Maternity benefits 350-1w

Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Debates etc
Business statement (19.02.87) 1074-6
Housing (10.02.87) 177
Questions
ABM Treaty, Strategic defence initiative 764-5, 1054
Business statement 461-2
Disabled Persons (Services Consultation & Representation) Act 1986, Local government finance 156-7
Taxation, Economic policy 455-6

Kinnock, Neil 1056
Early day motions 1056

Kirkwood, Mr Archy
Debates etc
Access to Personal Files Bill, 2R (20.02.87) 1165-71, 1188, 1222-3
Housing, Scotland (11.02.87) 413
Women (17.02.87) 842-5
Questions
Abortion, NHS 497-500w
AIDS, Scotland 297-8
Developing countries, Publicity 409-10w
Dog wardens, Scotland 798w
Green pound, Exchange rates 1046-7
Hospital consultants, Pay 857w
Housing insulation, Draught-proofing materials 419w
International studies, Secondary education 445w
Land use, Scotland 301-2
Social security benefits 202w
Sports centres, Rates & rating 266w
UN finances, UN agencies 695w
University of East Anglia, Ministers' domestic visits 568w

Kitson, Frank 606w, 777-8w
National security 606w, 764w, 777-8w, 873w

Kittery Court 239w
Planning appeals 239w

Knight, Mr Greg
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.02.87) 489, 513
Handicapped (17.02.87) 803, 811-3
Questions
Animal husbandry 790w
Beer, Food additives 166w
Business statement 469-70
Cider, Food additives 166w
Industrial disablement benefits, Social security adjudications 722w
Prime Minister official engagements 808w

Knight, Dame Jill
Debates etc
Rover Group (19.02.87) 1067
Questions
Abortion, Minors 147
Crown Prosecution Service, Legal costs 407w
Prison sentences, Court of Appeal 157-8

Knowles, Mr Michael
Questions
Radioactive wastes 415w
University Grants Committee, University finance 172w

Knox, Mr David
Questions

Alternative energy, EC action 648
Council house sales, Wales 12
EC internal relations, EC action 695w
Milk, Production quotas 783w
Multiple occupation, Safety standards 320w

Komomeya, Vilho 459-60w

Kymmene-Stromberg 541w
Employment opportunities 541w

Labour mobility
Housing 1056

Labour only subcontracting 238-9w
Derelict land grants 238-9w

Labour Party
Agriculture 1044
Local government staff 654
Nottinghamshire 458

Laird (Anglesey) 525w, 565w
Defence equipment 565w
Patents 525w

Lambeth
Inner cities initiatives 852-6w

Lambie, Mr David
Debates etc
Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc (Scotland) Bill, Allocation of time motion (11.02.87) 346-8, 351
Housing, Scotland (11.02.87) 424-5
Housing finance, Scotland (18.02.87) 1033-4
Rate Rebates & Rate Support Grant Scotland Orders (18.02.87) 1020, 1022-5
Questions
Paper industry, Irvine 300
Urinary system disorders, Medical equipment 263-4w

Lamond, Mr James
Debates etc
Parliamentary privilege (12.02.87) 472
Questions
Arms control treaties, Chemical weapons 900
Business statement 465
Food surpluses, Charities 784w
Maternity benefits, Oldham 203w, 394w
Student grants 565-6w, 759
USSR, Ministers' visits abroad 691w

Lamont, Rt Hon Norman, Financial Secretary to the Treasury
Debates etc
Public expenditure (18.02.87) 950, 995-1001
Questions
Average earnings 177-8w
Average earnings, Single people 181w
Capital transfer tax, Bolton Abbey 34w
Capital transfer tax, Countryside 35-6w
Company cars, Motoring 183w
Concessionary coal 384w
Corporation tax 329w
Corporation tax, House of Commons questions 329w
Debts written off, Film industry 233w
Deeds of covenant, Children 183w
Deeds of covenant, Young people 183w
Exchange rates, Taxation 543w
Family income 826w
Income tax, Low pay 384w
Income tax, Tax allowances 182w
Income tax, Tax rates & bands 178w, 181-2w
Income tax, Tax yields 182w
Industrial building allowances, Costs 825w
Inland revenue, Cash limits 233-4w
Legislation, Treasury 181w
Maintenance relief, Tax yields 829w
Maintenance, Tax yields 544w
Mortgage relief, Tax yields 179-80w
Pay settlements, Tax rates & bands 331-2w
Personal income, Income tax 824-6w
Petroleum revenue tax 29-30w
Privatisation, Employment 329w
Privatisation, Income 825w
Public Accounts Committee, Treasury 825w
Shares, Share ownership 425w
Students, Taxation 743w
Tax allowances, Direct taxation 182-3w
Tax burden, Married men 827w
Tax yields, Deeds of covenant 36w
Tax yields, Petroleum revenue tax 878w
Taxation, Film industry 330w
Taxation, Outgoers' scheme 384w
Taxpayers, Tax rates & bands 330w

Lancashire
Arthritis 199w
Derelict land grants 739w
Educational finance 27w
Educational standards 570-1w
Information technology centres 391w
Local education authorities 762
Pensioners 594-5w
Retirement age 594w
Single people 594-5w

Lancaster House 125-6w, 314w
Conferences 125-6w, 314w
European Assembly 314w
Le Pen, Jean-Marie 125-6w

Land acquisition
Canary Wharf 382w
NHS 61-2w, 136-7w

Land Compensation Act 1973
Questions
249w

Land drainage 677-8w
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service 483w, 678w
Agricultural improvement scheme 483w

Land ownership & tenure
Vacant land registers 246-8w

Land registration
Privatisation 267-8w
Scotland 267-8w
Vacant land 243-8w

Land Rover 184w
Military vehicles 184w

Land use
Agricultural improvement scheme 779w
Agricultural land 10, (09.02.87) 70-80, 287w, 338-40w, 481w, 601w, 778-9w
Grazing land 338-40w
Marginal land 326w
Rural areas 9-10, 158, 161-9, 307, 481w
Scotland 300-2
Structure plans 158
Wales 9-10
Wandsworth Prison 8w

Land values
Defence land 565w
Prisons 555-6w

Landing charges 625w

Landlord & tenant
West Yorkshire 2w

Landlord & Tenant Act 1954
Small businesses 156w
Questions
156w

Lang, Mr Ian, Under-Secretary of State for Scotland
Debates etc
Housing finance, Scotland (18.02.87) 1034-40
Questions
Apprentices, Strathclyde 187w
Auctioneers, Licensing 326w
British Rail Engineering, Springburn 265w
British Telecom, Scotland 189w
Caterpillar Tractors, Factory closures 304
Coal fired power stations, Central Electricity Generating Board 838-9w
Coal mine closures, West Fife 263w
Community programme, Fraud 457w
Domestic violence, Police 324w
Domestic violence, Scotland 323-4w
Electricity consumption 261w
Employment, Greenock 163-4w
Employment opportunities, Highlands & Islands Development Board 265w
European Regional Development Fund, Scotland 879-80w
Golden Wonder, Broxburn 267w
Granton gas works 263w
Guinness, Scotland 267w
Inverness Prison, Prison staff 540w
Investment, Scotland 305
Jobclubs, Greenock 187w
Jobclubs, Scotland 792-4w
Juries, Scottish courts 185w
Kestrel Marine Life, Tayside enterprise zone 798w
Land registration, Privatisation 267-8w
Macfarlane, Norman, Guinness 261w
Manpower Services Commission, Employment schemes 797-8w
Manpower Services Commission, Scotland 795-7w
Manufacturing industries, Redundancy 264-5w
Manufacturing industries, Strathclyde 187w
Ministers, Scottish Office 305
New towns, Manufacturing industries 267w
Nuclear power stations, Ambulance services 327w
Nuclear power stations, Emergency planning 326-7w
Oil industry, Scotland 266w
Paper industry, Irvine 264w
Paramilitary forces, Death 456w
Peterhead Prison, Construction 260w
Peterhead Prison, Inquiries 615w
Police, Scotland 186w
Prison accommodation, Scotland 186w
Prisoners, Alcoholism 614w
Prisoners transfers, Northern Ireland 456w
Public expenditure, Scotland 304-5
Rape, Scotland 324-5w, 385-6w
Regional aid, Dundee 791-2w
Regional development grants, Scotland 261w
Restart programme, Edinburgh 614w
Shipbuilding, Manpower 261-2w
Small businesses, Regional development grants 262w
Torness power station 261w
Torness power station, Emergency planning 455-6w
Travel-to-work areas, Blairgowrie 295-6
Unemployment, Aberdeen 266w
Unemployment, Scotland 264w
Wealth, Expenditure 306
Wealth, Scotland 305-6
Weather, Scotland 304

Langbaurgh
Maternity benefits 356-7w

Languages 584w

Languages education
Expenditure 584w

Latham, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Housing (10.02.87) 175
Questions
Armed forces education allowances 684w
Arms control treaties, USSR 907
Beef & veal, Agricultural subsidies 781-2w
Boarding schools, Local education authorities 223-4w
Boarding schools, State education 657w
Boarding schools, Statistics 657-8w
Building industry, Northern Ireland 452
Community health councils, Rutland 151
Construction Industry Training Board, Income 534w
Diplomatic service education allowances, Pupils 697-8w
Limited list prescribing 821-2w
Mucodyne, Limited list prescribing 821w
Non-statutory training organisations, Manpower Services Commission 534w
Northern Ireland government 444
Peres, Shimon, Official engagements 693w
Play board, Government grants 550w
Prometheus project, Motor vehicles 735-6w

RAF Mount Batten, Armed forces training 491-2w
Recycling, House of Commons 17-8
Saltby School, Building repairs 444w
School closures, Rural areas 444-5w
Stamp duties, Tax yields 38w
Training 534-5w

Law enforcement
Drinking & driving 6-7w

Law of Property (Amendment) Bill 1986/87
Debates etc
1R (10.02.87) 172-4

Law officers 808w
Police right of search (11.02.87) 312-6

Law reform
Flags & Emblems (Display) Act (Northern Ireland) 1954 444
Official Secrets Act 1911 557w, 617w

Lawler, Mr Geoff
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.02.87) 527, 541
Questions
Caravan sites, Local authorities 241-2w
Education support grants, Youth services 443w
Immigration appeals, Administrative delays 641w
Industrial building allowances, Costs 825w
School buildings 170w
School population, Local education authorities 221-2w
Teachers, Vocational guidance 583w
Vacancies, Professional & Executive Recruitment 533w
Visas, Immigration appeals 537w
Visas, Indian subcontinent 696w

Lawrence, Mr Ivan
Debates etc
Housing (Houses in Multiple Occupation) Bill, 2R (13.02.87) 627, 630
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 (Continuance) Order 1987 (10.02.87) 267, 274, 277-8
Questions
Airlines, Beirut Airport 686-7w
Crown Prosecution Service 763-4w
EC external trade, USA 630w
General Certificate of Secondary Education, Staffordshire 443w
Lebanon, British residents abroads 459w
M25, Road constructio 409w
Middlesex Crown Court, Building repairs 867w
Official Secrets Act 1911, Law reform 557w
Tutbury bypass, Road construction 378w
USSR, Human rights 691w, 903-4
Youth training scheme, Take-up of employment 426w

Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel, Chancellor of the Exchequer
Questions
National income, Economic growth 544w

Layfield, Frank
Ministers' correspondence 646

Le Pen, Jean-Marie 125-6w
Lancaster House 125-6w

Lea Hall Colliery 650

Leadbitter, Mr Ted
Questions
Exceptional needs payments, Administrative delays 196w

Leadmill, Sheffield
Ministers' domestic visits 475w

Leasehold housing
Flats 158w, 311w

Lebanon
British residents abroad 459w, 686w
Refugees 537w

Lee, Mr John, Under-Secretary of State for Employment
Debates etc
Women (17.02.87) 834-42
Questions
Area manpower boards, Training 844w
Availability for work 530-2w
Community development, Liverpool Royal Institute 53w
Community programme 53w, 301w
Community programme, Fraud 427w, 844w
Community programme, Government grants 162w
Community programme, Religion 765w, 768w
Community programme, Scotland 764-5w
Community programme, Strathclyde 843w
Community programme, Unemployment benefits 391w
Community programme, West Midlands 844-5w
Data processing, Dept of Employment 428w
Employment 531-2w
Employment schemes 52w
Employment schemes, Costs 608w
Employment schemes, European Social Fund 391w, 425-6w
Employment schemes, West Midlands 769w
Employment, Welwyn 531w
Employment, Welwyn Hatfield 766w
Industrial training schemes 536w
Information technology, Dept of Employment 429w
Job centres, Manpower 48w
Jobclubs 48w
Jobclubs, Job centres 49w
Manpower Services Commission, Liverpool Heritage Developments 53w, 429w
Manpower Services Commission, South west region 53w, 255-8w
Manufacturing industries, Yorkshire & Humberside 54w
Montgomery, Simon, Disciplinary proceedings 392w
New earnings survey, Disclosure of information 428w
New earnings survey, Gas supply industry 428w
Older workers, Men 254w
Overtime 609w
Personal income, North west region 54w
Professional & Executive Recruitment, Take-up of employment 302w, 393w
Skilled workers, Manpower 161-2w
Skilled workers, Vacancies 52w
Unemployment, Barnsley 768w
Unemployment benefits, Birmingham 392w
Unemployment, Kensington & Chelsea 49-50w
Unemployment, Leeds 162w
Unemployment, Literacy 768-9w
Unemployment, Mid-Worcestershire 765-6w
Unemployment, North west region 49-52w
Unemployment, Slough 390w
Unemployment, West Midlands 766-7w
Vocational training, North West region 253-4w
Vredeling directive 606w
Women, Bradford 390w
Youth training scheme, Leicester 163w

Leeds
Church schools 760
Hospital waiting lists 200w
Maternity benefits 358-9w, 700-1w
Social security recipients 210w
Unemployment 162w
Unemployment benefits 210-1w

Leeds City Council
Housing investment programmes 158w
Rate support grants 157w

Leeds Eastern Health Authority 200w, 501-2w
Hospital beds 501-2w

Leeds Western Health Authority 200w, 501-2w
Hospital beds 501-2w

Legal aid
Scotland 259w

Legal aid (Scotland) Act 1986
Questions
259w

Legal costs
Crown Prosecution Service 407w

Legislation
Export of live animals 789w
Ten minute rule Bills 839w
Treasury 181w
Welsh language 80-1w

Leicester
Maternity benefits 206-8w
Youth training scheme 163w

Leicestershire
Maternity benefits 345w, 517w

Leigh
Maternity benefits 515-6w
Debates etc
Banking Bill, Rep & 3R (10.02.87) 1088, 1098, 1102
House of Commons divisions (11.02.87) 312
Local Government Bill, Scope of Bill (18.02.87) 922
Radioactive waste disposal (09.02.87) 36-7
Women (17.02.87) 832, 854-6
Questions
Cereals, Production quotas 780w
Curriculum 571w
Forensic science 770w
Forensic science, Archaeology 770w
Housing benefits, Social security recipients 194w
Natural radioactivity, Aberdeen 645
Prime Minister official engagements 808w

Leighton, Mr Ron
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.02.87) 510-4, 517
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 (Continuance) Order 1987 (10.02.87) 275-6
Questions
Bus lanes, Parking offences 174w
Community progamme 301w
Maternity benefits, Newham 344-5w
News International, Lorries 5w

Lester, Mr Jim
Questions
Tobacco duties, EC countries 179-80w

Letters of allotment 425w

Leukaemia
Nuclear power stations 154w, 644, 646

Level crossings
Hampden Park 736w

Lewis, Sir Kenneth
Debates etc
Radioactive waste disposal (09.02.87) 41-2
Questions
British Coal Corporation Enterprise, Employment opportunities 649-50
Business statement 464
Farm incomes 1047

Lewis, Mr Terry
Questions
Arts centres, Regional arts 477w
Social security recipients, Attendance allowance 398w
Supplementary benefits, Exceptional needs payments 397-8w

Lewisham
Maternity benefits 706w, 808-9w

Leyland Trucks (19.02.87) 1059-73

Leyton
Maternity benefits 817-8w, 859w
Unemployment 49-50w

Liability
Art works 480w

Liberal party
Rates & rating 1045

Libraries
British Theatre Association 877w

Library Association 474-5w
Public libraries 474-5w

Libyan Arab Republic
Export rebates 42w

Licensed premises 319-20w

Licensing 319-20w
Alcoholic drinks 867-8w
Auctioneers 326w
Car hire 310w
Fees & charges 867-8w
Financial services 436-7w
Fishing vessels 601-2w
Hearing aids 3w
Nuclear power stations 471w
Oil storage 841-3w
Radiophones 2-3w

Licensing laws 215w

Licensing (Occasional Permissions) Act 1983
Questions
215w

Licensing (Restaurant Meals) Bill (HL) 1986/87
Debates etc
2R order read (13.02.87) 630-1

Life imprisonment
Northern Ireland 547w, 734w, 775w
Prisoners release 775w

Lifeline Wales 819-20w

Light dues 46w, 65-6w, 311w, 780w, 799w
EC countries 311w
Fees & charges 311w
Fisheries 46w, 780w
Fishing vessels 65-6w, 799w
Hull 46w

Lighthouses
Finance 380w

Lightning aircraft 777w

Lignite
Power stations 449

Lilley, Mr Peter
Questions
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, Computer applications 153w
Hong Kong, Annual reports 831w

Limited list prescribing 821-2w
Mucodyne 821w

Lincoln
City technology colleges 571w

Lincoln Prison 769-70w
Hepatitis 769-70w

Linlithgow
Maternity benefits 206w

Listed buildings
Park Vista 113w

Literacy 584-5w
Adult education 222-3w, 569w
Health education 397w
Social security claims 279w
Training 254w
Unemployment 254w, 768-9w
Voluntary organisations 570w

Litherland, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.02.87) 528
Questions
Central America, USA 690w
Overseas trade, South Africa 165w

Lithotripsy
Scotland 263-4w

Litter 413w

Littleton Colliery 650

Liverpool
Maternity benefits 148-9w, 396-7w

Liverpool Docklands 127-8w
Expenditure 127-8w

Liverpool Heritage Developments 53w, 429w
Manpower Services Commission 53w
Merseyside Task Force 429w

Liverpool Royal Institute 27w, 53w
Community development 53w

Liverpool University 27w, 53w
Property transfer 27w

Livestock
Beef & veal 1052
Farms 779w
Food poisoning 484w, 679w
Green pound 1046-7, 1052-3
Hormone treatments 791w
Monetary compensatory amounts 1052-3
Scotland 539w
Sheep 845w

Livingston
Maternity benefits 862-3w

Livsey, Mr Richard
Debates etc
Radioactive waste disposal (09.02 87) 36-8
Questions
Common sheep meat regime 1041-2
Hypothermia, Death 193w
Land use, Rural areas 168
Regional planning & development, Wales 765-6
South Africa, Foreign policy 688w
Students grants 566w

Lliw Valley Borough Council 451w

Lloyd, Sir Ian
Questions
Arts, North West region 475w

Lloyd, Mr Tony
Debates etc
Education (Nutrition Requirements) Bill, 2R (20.02.87) 1224-6
Questions
Business statement 468-9
Falkland Islands, Fisheries 1042-3
Lebanon, Refugees 537w
Maternity benefits, Stretford 360w
Nicaragua, USA 905
North West Regional Health Authority, Computers in National Health Service 505w
North Western Regional Health Authority, Computers in National Health Service 720w
Nurses, Manpower 153
Nurses, South Manchester Health Authority 720w
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Inquiries 332w
Secondary education, Trafford 309w
Social security recipients, Stretford 822w
Trafford Park Development Corporation, Public appointments 552w
USSR, Foreign policy 688w

Loans
Building societies 440w
Rolls-Royce Aeroengines 437w

Local authorities 141-4w
AIDS 417w
Armed forces housing 683-4w
Arts 476w
Caravan sites 241-2w
Day care of children 659-61w
Day nurseries 710w
Debts 741w
Difficult to let properties 156w
Elections 558w
Housing benefits 145-6
Housing standards 235-8w
Sunday trading 432w
Theatres 477w
Urban housing renewal unit 661-2w

Local authorities in London
Departmental correspondence 380w

Local authorities in Scotland
Rate support grants 189-90w

Local authority powers
Multiple occupation 2

Local education authorities
Boarding schools 223-4w
Capital investment 307-8w, 443-4w, 569w, 761-2, 836w
Class sizes 644-54w
Education 761
Lancashire 762
Nuclear weapons deployment 184w
School population 221-2w

Local government
Dept of Transport 412w
Greater London 412w, 435w
Home Office 435w

Local Government Act 1964
Questions
670-1w

Local Government Bill 1986/87
Ministerial statements (18.02.87) 916-24
Debates etc
(18.02.87) 916-24
1R (18.02.87) 924

Local Government (Empty Council Houses) Bill 1986/87
Debates etc
1R (17.02.87) 783-7

Local government expenditure (18.02.87) 924
Aberdeen 266w
Aids for handicapped 130-1w
Bed & breakfast accommodation 667w, 852w
Civil defence 433w
Clwyd 5
Fire services 433w
Handicapped 130-1w
Housing & handicapped 313-4w
Housing stock 2-3
Personal social services 268w
Public libraries 168-9w
Severe weather payments 303-4

Local government finance
Convention of Scottish Local Authorities 265w
Disabled Persons (Services Consultation & Representation) Act 1986 156-7
Grant recycling 117-24w
Mental health community care 194-5w
Property development 167-8
Rate support grants 159w
Rates & rating 159w
Scotland 265w, 388w

Local Government Finance Bill 1986/87
Transport Users' Consultative Committees 252-3w
Questions
252-3w

Local government functions
Dept of Transport 411-2w
Greater London 411-2w, 435w, 480-1w, 483w
Home Office 435w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 483w
Office of Arts & Libraries 480-1w

Local government mortgages 741w

Local Government Planning & Land Act 1980
Questions
243-6w

Local government reform
Civil service manpower 420w
Greater London Council 239w
Local government staff 419-20w

Local government revenue 239-40w

Local government services
Dept of the Environment 381-2w

Greater London 381-2w
Rural areas 1046

Local government social services
Corporal punishment 138w

Local government staff
Community charge 265-6w
Compensation 420w
Labour Party 654
Local government reform 419-20w
Redundancy 420w

Loft insulation 377w, 380w, 387w, 740w
Birmingham 740w
Insulation grants 377w, 380w, 387w, 647, 649

Lofthouse, Mr Geoffrey
Questions
Chile, Refugees 690w
Vocational training 528w

London boroughs
Written questions 239w

London Docklands
Expenditure 127-8w

London Docklands Development Corporation
Public appointments 312w

London Docklands Railway (Beckton) Bill 1986/87
Debates etc
2R order read (12.02.87) 441, (19.02.87) 1041

London Residuary Body 418-9w, 652-3
Royal Opera House 652-3

London School of Economics 315w

London University 656-7w
Education Act 1981 656-7w

Long stay patients 89-91w, 137w, 447-9w
Mental hospitals 137w
Mental patients 89-91w

Lonrho 747w
House of Fraser 747w

Lord, Mr Michael
Questions
Agricultural land, Forestry 779w
Educational standards, Trade competitiveness 573w
Housing insulation 467w
Nurses, Managers 155

Lord Advocate
Management consultants 616w
National security 446-8w, 773w
Police right of search 446w
Speaker's rulings & statements (09.02.87) 23

Lord Chancellor
Management consultants 605-6w

Lorries
Germany 437w
News International 5w
Orders & regulations 310-1w
Overloading offences 44-5w
Road accidents 5w
Transport of hazardous materials 310-1w

Lorry drivers
Motorway service areas 410w
Roads 411w

Lorry parks 410w

Low pay
Employment opportunities 454-5, 458
Family income supplements 709-10w
Income tax 384w

Loyden, Mr Eddie
Questions
Arts, Merseyside 476w
Maternity benefits, Liverpool 148-9w
Occupational deafness, Industrial disablement benefits 149
Royal Liverpool Hospital, Hospital closures 509w
Royal Liverpool Hospital, Hospital waiting lists 510w
Soya beans, Imports 440w

Luce, Rt Hon Richard, Minister of State Privy Council Office (Minister for the Arts)
Questions
Accountants, Civil service 671-2w
Area museum councils, Arts finance 480w
Area museum councils, Government grants 383w
Art works 477w
Art works, British Rail 60-1w
Arts 478w
Arts, Association of Metropolitan Authorities 168w
Arts, Charitable donations 475w
Arts, Community development 480w
Arts, Economic situation 478w
Arts, Employment 475-6w
Arts, Employment opportunities 651
Arts, Greater London 168w
Arts, Marketing 475w
Arts, Merseyside 476w
Arts, North West region 475w
Arts centres, Regional arts 477w
Arts Council 474w
Arts finance, Arts sponsorship 479w
Arts finance, Tourism 651
Arts finance, Wales 670w
Arts sponsorship, Tobacco industry 478w
Association of Metropolitan Authorities 476w
British Film Institute 478w
British Library, Construction 383w
British Library, Construction costs 383w
British Theatre Association, Libraries 877w
Civil servants, Recruitment 383w
Civil servants' secondment 655-6
Civil service, Militant Tendency 657
Civil service, Productivity 655
Civil service, Public administration 655
Civil service, Women's employment 654-5
Civil service, Youth training scheme 672w
Civil service personnel management, Careers development 654
Civil service recruitment, Ethnic minorities 878-9w
Civil service recruitment, Ethnic monitoring 879-80w
Civil service retirement 654
"Civil service Year Book, 1987", Telephone numbers 473w
Departmental forms 472w
Drumcroon Arts Centre, Ministers' domestic visits 475w
Leadmill, Sheffield, Ministers' domestic visits 475w
Library Association 475w
Library Association, Public libraries 474-5w
Local government functions, Office of Arts & Libraries 480-1w
Management & personnel Office 656-7
Museums & galleries, Art works 480w
Museums & galleries, Educational visits 474w
Museums & galleries, Repairs & maintenance 476w
Musicians, Government assistance 479w
Objects in lieu of tax, Art works 735w
Objects in lieu of tax, Publicity 479-80w
Orchestras, Finance 477w
Public libraries, Arts finance 653-4
Public libraries, Censorship 670-1w
Public libraries, Finance 474w
Public libraries, Local government expenditure 168-9w
Public libraries, News international 478w
Public libraries, Political impartiality 479w
Radcliffe Report, Subversion 561-3w
Regional arts associations, Arts finance 232w
Royal Opera House, Property development 652-3
Scottish Arts Council 478w
Sherman Theatre, Cardiff 477w
Sherman Theatre, Cardiff, Arts finance 168w, 651-2
Theatres, Local authorities 477w
Theatres, University Grants Committee 652

Lump sum payments 305-6w
Armed forces pensions 305-6w

Luton
Maternity benefits 349-50w, 589w

Lyell, Mr Nicholas, Under-Secretary of State for Health & Social Security
Debates etc
Handicapped (17.02.87) 823-4
Social Fund (Maternity & Funeral Expenses) Bill, Rem Stages (09.02.87) 100-1, 113-4
Social Security (Payments on account) Regulations 1987 (17.02.87) 877-9, 884-6
Questions
Attendance allowance, Members' correspondence 140w
Board & lodging charges, Young people 146
Chronically sick, Wales 137w
Data networks, Dept of Health & Social Security 271w
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, Caerphilly 140-1w
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, Camberwell 818-9w
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, Computer applications 153w
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, Oval 866w
Dependants, Social security 509w
Exceptional needs payments, Administrative delays 196w
Exceptional needs payments, Birmingham 154w
Exceptional needs payments, Members' correspondence 398w
Family income supplements, Administrative delays 200w
Homelessness, Sheltered housing 201-2w
Housing benefits, Council house rents 146
Housing benefits, Rents 146, 194w
Housing benefits, Scotland 541w
Housing benefits, Social security recipents 194w
Housing benefits, Social security reform 145-6
Industrial disablement benefits, Social security adjudications 722w
Khurt, A T L, Members' correspondence 866w
Maternity benefits, Exceptional needs payments 590w
Mobility allowance, Administrative delays 191w
Pensioners, Lancashire 594-5w
Rate rebates, Social security recipients 190-1w
Retirement age, Lancashire 594w
Social security recipients, Burnley 269-10w
Social security recipients, Dundee 518-20w
Social security recipients, Slough 398w
Social security recipients, Stretford 822w
Supplementary benefits, Administrative delays 196w, 361w
Supplementary benefits, Barnsley 821-2w
Supplementary benefits, Brighton 270w
Supplementary benefits, Social security recipients 153w
Supplementary benefits, West Midlands 821w
Supplementary benefits, Young people 196w
Unemployment benefits, Leeds 210-1w
Welfare milk, Bradford 593w

M1 309-10w
Motorway service areas 310w
Telephones 309-10w

M3 44w
Road construction 44w

M4 451w
Warning signs 451w

M6 45-6w
Road traffic control 45-6w

M25 409w
Road construction 409w

M42 249w
Traffic noise 249w

M63 624w
Road construction 624w

McCartney, Mr Hugh
Questions
Maternity benefits, Clydebank 343w
Tobacco duties, Personal income 422w

McColl Committee see Artificial Limb & Appliance Centres Review

McCrindle, Mr Robert
Questions
AIDS, Community care 191-2w
Banks, Financial services 437w
Financial services, Self-regulating organisations 436-7w
Nurses, Manpower 152
Visas, Air travel 643-4w
Youth training scheme, Financial institutions 427-8w

McCurley, Mrs Anna
Debates etc
Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc (Scotland) Bill, Allocation of time motion (11.02.87) 353-5
Housing, Scotland (11.02.87) 419-20
Women (17.02.87) 850-2
Questions
AIDS, Scotland 296
Cash limits, Ministry of Defence 105w
Fertility, Medical research 209-10w
Fertility, Scotland 186-7w
Teacher training, Scotland 67-8w

McDonald, Dr Oonagh
Debates etc
Banking Bill, Rep & 3R (10.02.87) 1086-8, 1111-4, 1120, 1123, 1148-9
Public expenditure (18.02.87) 990-5
Questions
Arts 478w
Civil service, Women's employment 654-5
Deeds of covenant, Children 183w
Deeds of covenant, Young people 183w
Food surpluses, Charities 287w
Income tax, Tax allowances 182w
Income tax, Tax rates & bands 181-2w
Income tax, Tax yields 182w
Land use, Rural areas 166
Maternity benefits, Thurrock 358w
Pay settlements, Tax rates & bands 331-2w
Pupil-teacher ratios, Essex 753
Tax yields, Deeds of covenant 36w

Macfarlane, Mr Neil
Debates etc
Secondary education, Sutton (09.02.87) 135-9

Macfarlane, Norman 261w
Guinness 261w

MacGregor, Rt Hon John, Chief Secretary to the Treasury
Debates etc
Public expenditure (18.02.87) 927-37, 940, 943
Questions
Balance of payments 422-3w
Civil service manpower 180w
Disabled Persons (Services Consultation & Representation) Act 1986, Government grants 37w
Energy efficiency, Public sector 36w
Import penetration 827w
Manufacturing industries, Pay 544w
Public expenditure, Cost effectiveness 826-7w
Public expenditure, Public sector employment 233w, 826w
Public sector, Finance 545w
Trading funds 544-5w
Trading funds, Civil service manpower 545w, 829-30w

McGuire, Mr Michael
Questions
Power stations, Capital investment 10w

Machynlleth
Hospital closures (16.02.87) 723-33
Hospitals 81-2w, (16.02.87) 723-33

Machynlleth & District Hospital 81-2w

Machynlleth Chest Hospital 81-2w

McKay, Mr Allen
Debates etc
Housing (Houses in Multiple Occupation) Bill, 2R (13.02.87) 617
Local Government Bill, Scope of Bill (18.02.87) 921
Questions
Association of Metropolitan Authorities 476w
Coal, Imports 773w
Coal fired power stations, Electricity consumption 641
Cyprus 11-2w
Import controls, Forest protection 3-4w
Maternity benefits, Barnsley 146w, 152w
Supplementary benefits, Barnsley 821-2w
Teachers, Pay 573w
Unemployment, Barnsley 768w

MacKay, Mr Andrew
Debates etc
Business statement (19.02.87) 1077
Questions
AIDS, Health education 191w
State occupational pensions, Retirement age 593-4w

MacKay, Mr John, Under-Secretary of State for Scotland
Questions
Adult education, Highlands of Scotland 298-9
Adult education, Scotland 299
Agricultural land, Town & country planning 388w
Aids for handicapped, Tayside 880w
Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel, Whitley Councils 385w
Bank loans, Farmers 66-7w
Cattle, EC action 269w
Cervical cancer, Screening 63-4w
Chiropodists, Scotland 796w
Colleges of education, Scotland 188w
Drug abuse, Government assistance to voluntary organisations 65w
Fertility, Scotland 186-7w
Food surpluses, Charities 325w
Food surpluses, Social security recipients 387w
Forestry, National Audit Office 484w
Forestry, Scotland 262w, 299-302
Gaelic language, Government grants 325w
Grampian health board, Consultants 188-9w
Grey seals, Fishery protection 64-5w
Handicapped pupils, Scotland 64w
Handicapped, Scotland 66-7w
Higher education, Scotland 186w
Hospital beds, Scotland 63w
Hospital closures, Scotland 62-3w
Hospital waiting lists, Scotland 539w
Land use, Scotland 300-2
Light dues, Fishing vessels 65-6w
Livestock, Scotland 539w
Marginal land, Land use 326w
Mental health services, Scotland 61w, 326w
National Farmers' Union of Scotland, Agriculture 262-3w
NHS, Capital investment 456-7w
NHS, Land acquisition 61-2w
NHS, Management consultants 386w
Northern College of Education, Educational administration 457-8w
Nuclear power stations, Ambulance services 326-7w
Nurses, Glasgow Royal Infirmary 611w
Paper industry, Irvine 300
Personal social services, Local government expenditure 268w
PICKUP, Scotland 299
Population, Dundee 387w
Post-neonatal mortality, Scotland 69-76w
Prisoners, AIDS 325-6w
Redundancy, Scotland 63w
River Elbe, River pollution 613w
Sea pollution, Western Isles 616w
Stobhill Hospital, Maternity services 325w
Student grants, Scotland 261w
Suckler cow premiums, Administrative delays 269w
Teacher training, Scotland 67-8w
Tree planting, Caithness 541w
Tree planting, Conifers 385w
Urinary system disorders, Medical equipment 263-4w
Western Isles, Regional planning & development 296
Wild animals, Poisoning 268w

McKelvey, Mr William
Questions
Maternity benefits, Kilmarnock 811w

MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Debates etc
Rover Group (19.02.87) 1064
Questions
Chiropody 61w
Small businesses, Regional development grants 262w

Maclean, Mr David
Debates etc
Settle-Carlisle railway (11.02.87) 433-6
Questions
Student grants 758-9

Maclennan, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc (Scotland) Bill, Allocation of time motion (11.02.87) 324, 332-5, 343
Agricultural land, Land use (09.02.87) 73
Questions
Agriculture, Conservation 1048
Common farm prices, European Commission 787w
EC Agricultural Council 288-9w
Helicopters, Coastguard 685w
National Farmers' Union of Scotland, Agriculture 262-3w
Procurators fiscal, Dornoch 259w
Rescue services, Scotland 625-6w
Rural areas, Scotland 307
Tree planting, Conifers 385w

McLoughlin, Mr Patrick
Debates etc
Business statement (19.02.87) 1077
Local Government Bill, Scope of Bill (18.02.87) 20, 919
Social Security (Payments on account) Regulations 1987 (17.02.87) 886
Questions
Bovine tuberculosis, Badgers 338w
Business statement 464-5
Dairy farming, Agricultural subsidies 604w
Dairy farming, Compensation 782-3w
Dairy farming, Production quotas 337-8w, 486w
Dairy farming, Subsidies 338w
Further education, Tertiary colleges 572w
Ten minute rule Bills, Legislation 839w

McNair-Wilson, Mr Michael
Questions
A34, Newbury 411w
Building industry, Northern Ireland 449
Cancer hazards, Atomic Weapons Research Establishment 505-6w
Cash limits, Northern Ireland Office 79w
Environmentally sensitive areas, Berkshire 335w, 602-3w
Family Forum, Government grants 509w
Housing construction, Northern Ireland 405-6w
NHS complaints 507w
Northern Ireland government 450-1

Nurses, Merit awards 145

McNair-Wilson, Mr Patrick
Debates etc
Agricultural land, Land use (09.02.87) 78-9
British Railways Bill, 2R (16.02.87) 707-9, 716-8
Questions
Agricultural products, Marketing 788w
Fossil fuelled power stations 640
South Africa, Economic sanctions 232w

McNamara, Mr Kevin
Debates etc
Crown Proceedings (Armed Forces) Bill, 2R (13.02.87) 585-9, 600, 605-6
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 (Continuance) Order 1987 (10.02.87) 274, 278
Questions
Aircrew, air force 489w
Aircrew, Armed forces officers 305w
Aircrew, Armed forces strength 305w
Aircrew, Early retirement 305w
Armed forces pensions, Lump sum payments 305-6w
Armoured fighting vehicles, NATO 184w
Army in Northern Ireland, Armed forces strength 493w
Bail, Northern Ireland 406w
Body searches, Maghaberry Prison 465w
Defence procurement, Artillery 489w
Experimental aircraft programme, Defence expenditure 490w
Firearms, Northern Ireland 464w, 731-2w
Guided weapons, ALARM 490w
Heating allowances 139w
Kitson, Frank, National security 764w, 777-8w, 873w
Life imprisonment, Northern Ireland 547w, 734w, 775w
Military vehicles, Land Rover 184w
National security, Attorney-General 155w
National security, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 164w
National security, Ministry of Defence 184w
Paramilitary forces, Death 456w
Plastic bullets, Northern Ireland 406-7w, 464w, 731w
Police informers, Northern Ireland 463w, 726-7w
Prison population, Northern Ireland 463-5w, 774-6w
Prisoners' transfers, Northern Ireland 433w, 456w
Protection of Trading Interests Act 1980 875-7w
Public expenditure, Northern Ireland 449
RAF Binbrook 777w
RAF Binbrook, Armed forces civilians 777w
RAF Binbrook, Ministers' domestic visits 777w
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Assaults on police 464w, 732-3w
Scheduled offences, Northern Ireland 462w, 725-6w
Security, Northern Ireland 463w, 727-32w
Strategic defence initiative, Camp David 160w
Strategic defence initiative, East West relations 161w
Strategic defence initiative, Technology transfer 160-1w
Student grants 566w
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 433w, 463w, 773-4w
Terrorism, Police detention 432w
Terrorism, Remand in custody 431-2w
Ulster Defence Regiment, Armed forces strength 493w
Ulster Defence Regiment, Crime 465-6w
Ulster Defence Regiment, Paramilitary forces 493w
Ulster Defence Regiment, Proscribed organisations 686w
Ulster Unionists 444-5

McQuarrie, Mr Albert
Debates etc
Registered Establishments (Scotland) Bill 1986/87 1R (12.02.87) 475
Residential care, Scotland (12.02.87) 475
Questions
Agricultural land, Dairy farming 676w
Agricultural production, Common agricultural policy 676w
Agricultural products, Production quotas 288w, 486w
Bank loans, Farmers 66-7w
Beef & veal, Exports 482w, 481w, 485w
Beef & veal, Intervention prices 287-8w
Beef & veal, Intervention stocks 287-8w, 485w
Cattle, EC action 269w
Common agricultural policy, Prices 1041
Disabled Persons (Services Consultation & Representation) Act 1986, Government grants 37w
Green pound 41w, 485w
Handicapped, Scotland 66-7w
Handicapped, Social services 131w
Helicopters, Western Isles 839w
Hill livestock allowances 41w
Livestock, Scotland 539w
Measurement, Standardisation 482w
Peterhead Prison, Construction 260w
Pigmeat, Imports 485-6w
Pigmeat, Netherlands 42w
Prime Minister domestic visits, Fraserburgh 303w
Severe weather payments, Scotland 303
Suckler cow premiums 42w, 484w
Suckler cow premiums, Administrative delays 269w

McTaggart, Mr Bob
Debates etc
Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc (Scotland) Bill, Allocation of time motion (11.02.87) 338-9
Questions
Maternity benefits, Glasgow 860-1w
Nurses, Glasgow Royal Infirmary 611w

McWilliam, Mr John
Questions
Land use, Rural areas 165-6
Nursery schools 573w

Madden, Mr Max
Debates etc
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 (Continuance) Order 1987 (10.02.87) 266
Tamils (17.02.87) 779, 781
Women (17.02.87) 840
Questions
Bradford Health Authority, Hospital closures 597w
Childbirth, Bradford 361w
Dependants, Social security 509w
Deportation, Tamils 912
Educational finance, Bradford 572w
Food surpluses, EC action 335w
Immigration controls, Maladministration 644w
Lorry drivers, Motorway service areas 410w
Lorry drivers, Roads 411w
Lorry parks 410w
Maternity benefits, Bradford 591w, 705w
Social & Community Planning Research, Unemployed 270-1w
Welfare milk, Bradford 593w
Women, Bradford 390w

Madel, Mr David
Debates etc
Radioactive waste disposal (09.02.87) 65
Questions
Electricity, Cross Channel electricity link 470w

Mafia
European Economic Community 323w, 329w, 394w
Fruit juices 394w
NATO 329w

Magazine press
National security 1w
Satellites 155w, 164w, 184w

Maghaberry Prison 465w
Body searches 465w

Magistrates
Northern Ireland 2w
Resignations 2w

Magistrates' courts
Bail 560w

Mail order selling
VAT 37w, 423-4w, 541-2w

Mailing lists
Mailing Preference Service 367w

Mailing Preference Service 367w
Mailing lists 367w

Maintenance
Tax yields 544w

Maintenance relief
Tax yields 829w

Major, Mr John, *Minister of State for Social Security*
Debates etc
Handicapped (17.02.87) 795-801, 812
Social Fund (Maternity & Funeral Expenses) Bill, Rem stages (09.02.87) 89-90, 101-3, 112
Questions
Attendance allowance, Kidney patients 131w
Attendance allowance, Social security recipients 281-2w
Attendance allowance, Wales 508w
Board & lodging charges, Burnley 709w
Board & lodging charges, Residential care 361-2w
Board & lodging charges, Social security benefits rules 196w
Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People, Government grants to voluntary organisations 720w
Exceptional circumstances additions, Bathing 210w
Exceptional needs payments, Building repairs 520w
Exceptional needs payments, Draught-proofing materials 140w
Family income, Expenditure 518w
Family income supplements, Scotland 709-10w
Family income supplements, Social security recipients 270w
Handicapped 192w
Handicapped, Community care 281w
Handicapped, Community Care Review 130w
Handicapped, Day centres 280-1w
Handicapped, Local government expenditure 130-1w
Handicapped, Public appointments 280w
Handicapped, Social services 131w
Heating allowances 139w
Heating allowances, Brighton 284w
Heating allowances, Social security recipients 596w, 598w
Invalid care allowances, Married women 596w
Invalidity benefits, Councillors' attendance allowances 363-4w
Invalidity benefits, Social Security recipients 130w
Maternity benefits, Aberavon 810w
Maternity benefits, Alyn & Deeside 274-5w
Maternity benefits, Ayr 815-6w
Maternity benefits, Barking & Dagenham 701w
Maternity benefits, Barnsley 146w, 152w, 205-6w, 360-1w
Maternity benefits, Basildon 863w
Maternity benefits, Birmingham 275w, 812w, 858w
Maternity benefits, Blaenau Gwent 703w
Maternity benefits, Bootle 149w

Maternity benefits, Bradford 591w, 705w
Maternity benefits, Brent 707w, 860w
Maternity benefits, Burnley 353w, 516-7w
Maternity benefits, Bury St Edmunds 816w, 858w
Maternity benefits, Caerphilly 146-7w
Maternity benefits, Calder Valley 699-700w
Maternity benefits, Carrick 814-5w
Maternity benefits, Chesterfield 809-10w
Maternity benefits, City of Westminster 347-8w, 589w
Maternity benefits, Clackmannan 704-5w
Maternity benefits, Clwyd 146w, 151w
Maternity benefits, Clydebank 343w
Maternity benefits, Clydesdale 513-4w
Maternity benefits, Copeland 516w
Maternity benefits, Coventry 150w, 207-8w
Maternity benefits, Crewe 347w, 588w
Maternity benefits, Cumbernauld 274w, 276w
Maternity benefits, Cynon Valley 354w, 590w
Maternity benefits, Derby 359-60w
Maternity benefits, Devon 591w
Maternity benefits, Don Valley 144w
Maternity benefits, Doncaster 273w
Maternity benefits, Dulwich 864w
Maternity benefits, Dumbarton 707-8w
Maternity benefits, Dundee 342-3w, 351-2w, 818w
Maternity benefits, Dunfermline 516w, 592-3w
Maternity benefits, Durham 862w
Maternity benefits, East Lothian 812w
Maternity benefits, Eccles 591-2w
Maternity benefits, Edinburgh 203-6w, 355-6w, 702w, 814w
Maternity benefits, Falkirk 810-1w
Maternity benefits, Faversham 345-6w, 517w
Maternity benefits, Glasgow 152-3w, 205w, 860-1w
Maternity benefits, Greenock 355w, 357-8w
Maternity benefits, Greenwich 865w
Maternity benefits, Grimsby 395-6w
Maternity benefits, Hackney 145w, 147-8w, 151w
Maternity benefits, Hemsworth 514-5w
Maternity benefits, Houghton 144-5w, 150w
Maternity benefits, Islington 813-4w, 858-9w
Maternity benefits, Jarrow 271-2w, 344w
Maternity benefits, Keighley 515w
Maternity benefits, Kilmarnock 811w
Maternity benefits, Kingston upon Hull 350-1w
Maternity benefits, Langbaurgh 356-7w
Maternity benefits, Leeds 358-9w, 700-1w
Maternity benefits, Leicester 206-8w
Maternity benefits, Leicestershire 345w, 517w
Maternity benefits, Leigh 515-6w
Maternity benefits, Lewisham 706w, 808-9w
Maternity benefits, Leyton 817-8w, 859w
Maternity benefits, Linlithgow 206w
Maternity benefits, Liverpool 148-9w, 396-7w
Maternity benefits, Livingston 862-3w
Maternity benefits, Luton 349-50w, 589w
Maternity benefits, Manchester 151w, 706-7w
Maternity benefits, Mansfield 809w
Maternity benefits, Middlesbrough 859w
Maternity benefits, Midlothian 273w, 275-6w
Maternity benefits, Monklands 354-5w, 357w, 702-3w
Maternity benefits, Newcastle 352w
Maternity benefits, Newcastle under Lyme 865-6w
Maternity benefits, Newcastle upon Tyne 861-2w
Maternity benefits, Newham 276-7w, 344-5w, 812-3w
Maternity benefits, Newport 354w, 590w
Maternity benefits, Oldham 201w, 394w
Maternity benefits, Peckham 863-5w
Maternity benefits, Peterborough 704w
Maternity benefits, Portsmouth 709w
Maternity benefits, Preston 374w
Maternity benefits, Redbridge 698-9w, 701-2w
Maternity benefits, Rossendale 517w
Maternity benefits, St Helens 207-9w
Maternity benefits, Sandwell 342w, 351w
Maternity benefits, Scotland 346-7w, 352-3w, 516w
Maternity benefits, Sedgefield 349w
Maternity benefits, Sheffield 347w, 588-9w, 699-700w, 816-7w
Maternity benefits, Shettleston 588w
Maternity benefits, South Ribble 274w
Maternity benefits, Stockport 353w, 395w
Maternity benefits, Stretford 360w
Maternity benefits, Sunderland 272w, 344w
Maternity benefits, Swansea 351w, 353-4w
Maternity benefits, Tameside 346w
Maternity benefits, Thurrock 358w
Maternity benefits, Tower Hamlets 348w
Maternity benefits, Tyne Bridge 394-5w
Maternity benefits, Wales 515w
Maternity benefits, Walthamstow 272-3w, 589-90w
Maternity benefits, Wandsworth 704w
Maternity benefits, Wansbeck 272w, 341-2w
Maternity benefits, Warley 705-6w
Maternity benefits, Wentworth 273w, 276w
Maternity benefits, Western Isles 817w
Maternity benefits, Wigan 708-9w
Maternity benefits, Wolverhampton 343-4w
Maternity benefits, Workington 277-8w
Maternity benefits, Wrexham 148w, 151-2w
Mobility allowance, Age 282w
Occupational deafness, Industrial disablement benefits 148-9
Occupational pensions, Social security benefits rules 154
Pension funds, Profits 508-9w
Pensioners, Food surpluses 823-4w
Pensioners, Heating allowances 201w
Pensioners, Social security recipients 192-3w
Quota of handicapped workers, Dept of Health & Social Security 192w
Residential care, Board & lodging charges 499-500w
Retirement age 284w
Severe disability premium, Invalid care allowances 130w
Severe weather payments, Administrative delays 193-4w
Severe weather payments, Advertising 138w
Severe weather payments, Northern region 138w
Severe weather payments, Press advertising 138-9w
Severe weather payments, Publicity 341w
Severe weather payments, Scotland 398-9w, 458-9w, 820-1w
Severe weather payments, Supplementary benefits 193w, 341w
Severe weather payments, Temperature 194w, 340-2w
Severe weather, Pensioners 507w
Sheltered housing, Social security recipients 201w
Social & Community Planning Research, Unemployed 270-1w
"Social & Economic Responses to Climatic Variability in the UK", Dept of Health & Social Security 212w
Social security, EC countries 595w
Social security benefits 202w
Social security benefits rates 598w
Social security claims, Literacy 279w
Social security recipients, Attendance allowance 398w
Social security recipients, Leeds 210w
Social security reform 145w
State occupational pensions, Retirement age 593-4w
Supplementary benefits capital limits, Heating allowances 596-7w
Supplementary benefits, Exceptional needs payments 397-8w
Supplementary benefits, Mortgages 154w
Unemployment benefits, Redundancy 518w
Wheelchairs 282w
Wheelchairs, Aids for handicapped 197w

Maladministration 644w
Immigration controls 644w

Malins, Mr Humfrey
Debates etc
Housing (10.02.87) 206-9
Housing (Houses in Multiple Occupation) Bill, 2R (13.02.87) 621, 625-6

Mallon, Mr Seamus
Debates etc
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 (Continuance) Order 1987 (10.02.87) 267, 273-4, 280-1
Questions
Educational finance, Newry 450
Teachers, Convictions 368w
Teachers, Northern Ireland 465w
Ulster Unionists 444

Management & Personnel Office 656-7

Management consultants
Costs 386w
Dept of Education & Science 656w
Dept of Employment 607-10w
Dept of Energy 634-5w
Dept of Health & Social Security 714-8w
Dept of the Environment 665-6w
Dept of Trade & Industry 628-9w
Dept of Transport 624-5w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 697w
Government departments 671-4w, 676-7w, 683w
Home Office 641-2w
Lord Advocate 616w
Lord Chancellor 603-6w
Ministry of Defence 681-3w
NHS 386w
Northern Ireland Office 723-5w
Scottish Office 613w
Welsh office 637w

Management techniques
Headteachers 760-1

Managers
Energy conservation 471w
Nurses 155

Manchester
Maternity benefits 151w, 706-7w

Manchester Ship Canal Company 440w
Takeovers 440w

Mandela, Nelson 687-8w

Manpower Services Commission
Cornwall 53w, 255-8w
Employment schemes 797-8w
Expenditure 55w
Liverpool Heritage Developments 53w, 429w
Non-statutory training organisations 534w
Scotland 795-7w
South West region 53w, 255-8w
Wales 298w

Mansfield
Maternity benefits 809w

Manufactured exports 748w

Manufactured goods
Balance of trade 422-3w

Manufactured imports 748w

Manufacturing industries
Employment 767-8w
Industrial production 764
New towns 267w
Pay 544w
Redundancy 54w, 187w, 264-5w, 457-8
Scotland 264-5w
Strathclyde 187w
Wales 226w
Yorkshire & Humberside 54w

Maples, Mr John
Debates etc

Employment schemes (12.02.87) 404
Public expenditure (18.02.87) 941, 950, 958, 983-7

Marconi
Company investigations 684-5w
Defence contracts 684-5w

Marek, Dr John
Questions
Bridges, River Dee 846w
Dental charges 144
Doctors' list of patients, Clwyd 455w
Doctors' list of patients, Rhyl 846-7w
Maternity benefits, Clwyd 146w, 151w
Maternity benefits, Wrexham 146w, 151-2w
Meningitis, Diagnosis 284w
Meningitis, Medical research 283-4w
Meningitis, Notifiable diseases 284w
Meningitis, Research finance 224w, 283-4w
Prosecutions, Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 435-6w
River Dee, Road construction 451w
Road traffic offences, Information 868-9w
Road traffic, River Dee 846w
Screening, Stonehouse 721w
Unemployment, Wales 15

Margam mine
Scargill, Arthur 18

Marginal land
Forestry 299-300
Land use 326w
Scotland 326w

Marian School 12w
Bishop Challoner School 12w

Marketing
Agricultural products 788w
Arts 475w
Horticulture 1053

Marland, Mr Paul
Questions
Agricultural land, Rates & rating 1046
Farm incomes, Rates & rating 787w

Marlow, Mr Tony
Debates etc
Housing (10.02.87) 178-9, 187, 229, 236-9
Standing Order No 20 applications (11.02.87) 313
Questions
Hare, Squadron Leader, Air force flying 594w
Housing benefits, Council house rents 146
Persian Gulf, Foreign policy 692w
Taxpayers, Tax rates & bands 36-7w, 330w

Married men
Average earnings 181-2w
Tax burden 827w

Married women
Invalid care allowances 596w

Marshall, Mr David
Questions
Manufacturing industries, Redundancy 264-5w
Maternity benefits, Scotland 346-7w
Maternity benefits, Shettleston 588w
Rape, Scotland 324-5w, 385-6w
Roads, Scotland 185-6w
Severe weather payments, Scotland 398-9w, 458-9w

Marshall, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.02.87) 536-9
Questions
British National Space Centre 439-40w
Data processing, Dept of Employment 428w
Data processing, Home Office 434w
Information technology, Dept of Employment 429w
Information technology, Home Office 434w

Martin, Mr Michael J
Debates etc
Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc (Scotland) Bill, Allocation of time motion (11.02.87) 352-3
Questions
British Rail Engineering, Springburn 265w
Severe weather payments, Scotland 303-4
Stobhill Hospital, Maternity services 325w

Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Questions
Jews, USSR 229w
Maternity benefits, Barnsley 205-6w

Masonic Trust for Girls & Boys Bill 1986/87
Debates etc
2R* (10.02.87) 143

Maternity benefits
Aberavon 810w
Alyn & Deeside 274-5w
Ayr 815-6w
Barking & Dagenham 705w
Barnsley 146w, 152w, 205-6w, 360-1w
Basildon 863w
Birmingham 275w, 812w, 858w
Blaenau Gwent 703w
Bootle 149w
Bradford 591w, 705w
Brent 707w, 860w
Burnley 353w, 516-7w
Bury St Edmunds 816w, 858w
Caerphilly 146-7w
Calder Valley 699-700w
Cambridge 813-4w, 858-9w
Carrick 814-5w
Chesterfield 809-10w
City of Westminster 347-8w, 589w
Clackmannan 704-5w
Clwyd 146w, 151w
Clydebank 343w
Clydesdale 513-4w
Copeland 516w
Cornwall 591w
Coventry 150w, 207-8w
Crewe 347w, 588w
Cumbernauld 274w, 276w
Cynon Valley 354w, 590w
Derby 359-60w
Devon 591w
Don Valley 144w
Doncaster 273w
Dulwich 864w
Dumbarton 707-8w
Dundee 342-3w, 351-2w, 818w
Dunfermline 516w, 592-3w
Durham 862w
East Lothian 812w
Eccles 591-2w
Edinburgh 203-6w, 355-6w, 702w, 814w
Exceptional needs payments 590-1w
Falkirk 810-1w
Faversham 345-6w, 517w
Glasgow 152-3w, 205w, 860-1w
Greenock 355w, 357-8w
Greenwich 865w
Grimsby 395-6w
Hackney 145w, 147-8w, 151w
Hemsworth 514-5w
Houghton 144-5w, 150w
Islington 813-4w, 858-9w
Jarrow 271-2w, 344w
Keighley 515w
Kilmarnock 811w
Kingston upon Hull 350-1w
Langbaurgh 356-7w
Leeds 358-9w, 700-1w
Leicester 206-8w
Leicestershire 345w, 517w
Leigh 515-6w
Lewisham 706w, 808-9w
Leyton 817-8w, 859w
Linlithgow 206w
Liverpool 148-9w, 396-7w
Livingston 862-3w
Luton 349-50w, 589w
Manchester 151w, 706-7w
Mansfield 809w
Middlesbrough 859w
Midlothian 273w, 275-6w
Monklands 354-5w, 357w, 702-3w
Motherwell 516w
Newcastle 352w, 394-5w
Newcastle under Lyme 865-6w
Newcastle upon Tyne 861-2w
Newham 276-7w, 344-5w, 812-3w
Newport 354w, 590w
Oldham 203w, 394w
Peckham 863-5w
Peterborough 204w
Portsmouth 709w
Preston 374w
Redbridge 698-9w, 701-2w
Rossendale 517w
St Helens 207-9w
Sandwell 342w, 351w
Scotland 346-7w, 352-3w, 516w
Sedgefield 349w
Sheffield 347w, 588-9w, 699-700w, 816-7w
Shettleston 588w
Social Fund (09.02.87) 81-116, 700w
Social security 811w
Social security recipients 146w, 272w, 274w, 276w, 357-8w, 592-3w, 862w
Social security reform 144-53w, 203-9w, 271-8w, 341-61w, 374w, 394-7w, 513-7w, 588-92w, 698-709w, 808-18w, 858-66w
South Ribble 274w
Stockport 353w, 395w
Stretford 350w
Sunderland 272w, 344w
Swansea 351w, 353-4w
Tameside 346w
Thurrock 358w
Tower Hamlets 348w
Tyne Bridge 594-5w
Wales 515w
Walthamstow 272-3w, 589-90w
Wandsworth 704w
Wansbeck 272w, 341-2w
Warley 705-6w
Wentworth 273w, 276w
Western Isles 817w
Wigan 708-9w
Wolverhampton 343-4w
Workington 277-8w
Wrexham 146w, 151-2w

Maternity services
Stobhill Hospital 325w

Mates, Mr Michael
Questions
Management consultants, Dept of Employment 607-8w

Mathematics education
Recruitment 169-70w

Mature students
Student numbers 582w

Maude, Mr Francis
Debates etc
Broadcasting Bill (HL), 2R (16.02.87) 694
Social Fund (Maternity & Funeral Expenses) Bill, Rem stages (09.02.87) 98

Mawhinney, Dr Brian, *Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland*
Questions
Educational finance, Capital investment 79w
Educational finance, Newry 450
Educational finance, Northern Ireland 453
Educational finance, Northern Ireland Universities Research Working Party 453
Handicapped pupils, Northern Ireland 177w
Special educational needs, Northern Ireland 78w
Teachers, Convictions 368w
Teachers, Northern Ireland 465w
Youth services, Northern Ireland 546-7w

Maxton, Mr John
Debates etc
Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc (Scotland) Bill, Allocation of time motion (11.02.87) 338, 340-1
Housing, Scotland (11.02.87) 410-3, 417-9, 427-8
Questions

AIDS, Scotland 298
Namibia, Economic sanctions 692w
Scottish Office, Expenditure 615-6w

Maxwell-Hyslop, Mr Robin
Debates etc
Parliamentary privilege (11.02.87) 311
Questions
Brazil, Debts 693
"Civil Service Year Book, 1987", Telephone numbers 473w
Common agricultural policy, Prices 1044
Garcia, R. J., Visas 868w
Securities & Investments Board 629-30w
Wealth, Scotland 305

Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick, *Solicitor-General*
Questions
Attorney-General, National security 1w, 407-8w
Bail, Northern Ireland 406w
Child destruction, Prosecutions 1w
County courts, Judges 763w
Crown Prosecution Service 763-4w
Crown Prosecution Service, Legal costs 407w
Director of Public Prosecutions, Police right of search 371w
Divorce law 605w
Guinness, Takeovers 547w
Immigration rules, Electronic Data Systems Ltd 547w
Industrial tribunals, Birmingham 408w, 764w
Ingley, James, Extradition 2w
Kitson, Frank, National security 606w, 764w
Landlord & tenant, West Yorkshire 2w
Magistrates, Northern Ireland 2w
Management consultants, Lord Chancellor 805-6w
Middlesex Crown Court, Building repairs 867w
National security, Attorney-General 155w
National security, Magazine press 1w
Payne, Cynthia, Trials 407w
National security, Prosecutions 234w
Perez, Fernando, Kidnapping 234w
Plastic bullets, Northern Ireland 406-7w
Police right of search, BBC 606w
Rothschild, Lord, National security 605w

Maynard, Miss Joan
Debates etc
Agricultural land, Land use (09.02.87) 74
Questions
Food surpluses 767-8
Maternity benefits, Sheffield 816-7w
Pesticides, Agriculture 787w

Mbumaimma, Ceila 462-3w
Angola 462-3w

Meacher, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Blood donors, Standing Order No 20 applications (09.02.87) 19
Questions
AIDS, Expenditure 597-9w
Cancer hazards, Nuclear power stations 506-8w
Consultants, Merit awards 145
Exceptional circumstances additions, Barking 210w
Health service staff 132w
Health service staff, Wales 84-6w, 847-8w
Hospital beds 133-6w
Hospital beds, Greater London 597w
Hospital beds, Scotland 63w
Hospital beds, Wales 89-90w
Hospital closures 131-2w
Hospital closures, Community health council 595-6w
Hospital closures, Scotland 62-3w
Hospital closures, Wales 83w
Hospitals, Capital investment 502w
Import penetration 827w
Leukaemia, Nuclear power stations 154w
Mental health community care, Health services finance 150-1
NHS, Capital investment 449-50w, 456-7w
NHS, Land acquisition 61-2w, 136-7w
NHS, Property transfer 83-4w
Nurses, Housing 137w
Post-neonatal mortality, Scotland 69-70w
Redundancy, Scotland 63w
Severe weather payments, Temperature 340-2w
Social security benefits rates 598w
Soya beans, Nutrition & health 137-8w
Supplementary benefits, Administrative delays 361w
Surgery, Regional health authorities 210w
Tax burden, Married men 827w

Meadowcroft, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Adjournment debates (17.02.87) 779
Housing (10.02.87) 199-206, 258
Local Government Bill, Scope of Bill (18.02.87) 918
Questions
Armed forces housing, Empty housing 683w
Armed forces housing, Local authorities 683-4w
Arts, Greater London 166w
Central America, EC Foreign Affairs Council 694w
Defence, USA 869w
Early warning systems, Boeing 685w
Education, Ethnic minorities 370w
Electricity supply industry, Privatisation 10w
Export controls, USA 749-51w
Export licensing, USA 630w
Flats, Leasehold housing 158w
Housing benefits, Rents 146
Local authorities, Elections 558w
Nuclear power, Electricity generation 644
Parish councils, Elections 509w
Prime Minister official engagements 160w, 303w
Rate support grants, Adur District Council 417w, 670w
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Inquiries 332w
Schools, Education (No 2) Act 1986 760
Siberian gas pipeline 698w
Tamils, Political refugees 771-2

Measurement
European Economic Community 482w
Standardisation 482w

Meat
Prices 539w

Medical equipment
Dentists 721w
Urinary system disorders 263-4w

Medical records
Computers in National Health Service 139-40w
North west region 139-40w

Medical research
AIDS 297, 362w, 512w
Fertility 209-10w
Meningitis 283-4w

Medical treatments
AIDS 512w
Arthritis 199w
Chemical weapons 146-7, 197w
Costs 99-100w
Kidney patients 131w
Meningitis 511w
Wales 99-100w

Mengele, Joseph
Nazi war crimes 896

Mellor, Mr David, *Minister of State at the Home Department*
Debates etc
Broadcasting Bill (HL), 2R (16.02.87) 693, 698-705
Questions
Bail 560w
Bail hostels 322w
Bail, Magistrates courts 560w
Billing, Judgments 436w
Drug abuse, Pompidou Group 215-6w
Fraud, Proceeds of crime 640w
Fresh start 638w
Fresh start, Prison governors 638w
Fresh start, Prison Officers Association 638w
Fresh start, Prison staff 555w, 709w
Hickey, Vincent, Inquiries 771w
Holloway Prison, Prison staff 554w
Lincoln Prison, Hepatitis 709-70w
National Marriage Guidance Council, Government grants 321w
Police cells, Prisoners 642-3w
Prison medical services, AIDS 372w
Prison medical services, Sickle cell disease 639-40w
Prison medical services, Social Services Select Committee 868w
Prison overcrowding, Remand centres 322-3w
Prison population 770w
Prison population, Prison administration 770-1w
Prison staff, Empty housing 643w
Prison staff, Fresh start 554-5w
Prison staff, Greater London 554w
Prison staff, Pay 638w
Prison staff, Training 554-5w
Prisoners, AIDS 372w
Prisoners, Contraceptives 323w
Prisoners, Mental illness 436w
Prisoners on remand 559w
Prisoners on remand, Bail 559w
Prisoners on remand, Probation & aftercare 560-1w
Prisoners, Psychiatry 436w
Prisoners' transfers, Northern Ireland 433w
Prisoners, Crown immunity 555w
Prisons, Fresh Start 372-3w
Prisons, Land values 555-6w
Prisons, Public order policing 554w
Prisons, Public sector housing sales 174w
Prosecutions, Town Police Clauses Act 1847 639w
Rape, Parole 7w
Rape, Prison sentences 7w
Satellite broadcasting, Political broadcasting 6w
Television licences, Crown immunity 216w
Terrorism, Remand in custody 431-2w
Victim support schemes, Government grants 639w
Wandsworth Prison, Car parks 172w
Wandsworth Prison, Land use 8w
Youth custody, Prisons 560-1w

Members
Northern region 1055
Scotland 305

Members' conduct
Speaker's rulings & statements (10.02.87) 157, 159, 161, (11.02.87) 319, 424, 442, (12.02.87) 487-8, (18.02.87) 1019, 1022, (19.02.87) 1056, (20.02.87) 1232

Members' correspondence
Administrative delays 140w, 374w, 459w, 808w
Attendance allowance 140w
Chothia, Yasmin 459w
Diplomatic immunity 408w
Exceptional needs payments 398w
Khurt, A. T. L. 866w
Perivale Hospital 808w
Police right of search 266w
Radioactivity 796w
Ramasamy, Rajendran 374w

Members' interventions
Speakers' rulings & statements (09.02.87) 139, (11.02.87) 414, 437, (18.02.87) 1009

Members' pensions 474w

Members' secretaries
Offices 16-7

Members' speeches
Speaker's rulings & statements (09.02.87)

36, 51, 124, (10.02.87) 216, 230, 232-3, 276, (12.02.87) 533, 546, (17.02.87) 853, 870-1, (20.02.87) 1179, 1222

Membership cards 117w
Football 117w

Men
Older workers 254w

Meningitis 510w, 824w
Avon 510-1w
Death 511-2w
Diagnosis 284w
Gloucestershire 510-1w
Health education 283-4w
Medical research 283-4w
Medical treatments 511w
Notifiable diseases 284w
Research finance 224w, 283-4w
Vaccination 512w, 601w

Mental health community care 150, 195w
Health services finance 150-1
Local government finance 194-5w
Scotland 61w

Mental health services
Health services finance 7
Scotland 61w, 326w
Wales 7-8

Mental hospitals
Hospital closures 448w
Long stay patients 137w
Wales 448w

Mental illness
Prisoners 436w

Mental patients 137w, 361w
AIDS 325-6w
Conjugal visits 499w
Hospital discharges 195w, 447-9w
Long stay patients 89-91w
Wales 89-91w, 447-9w

Mentally disturbed offenders 436w

Merchant, Mr Piers
Questions
Arms control, International conferences 692w

Merchant banks
Insider trading 747-8w
Takeovers 747-8w

Merchant Shipping (Prevention & Control of Pollution) Order 1987
Debates etc
(12.02.87) 558

Merchant ships
Design 291w
St Helena 527w

Mercury
Food contamination 1048
Safety standards 1048
Shellfish 1048

Merit awards 144-5
Consultants 144-5
Disclosure of information 144-5
NHS finance 145
Nurses 145

Merseyside
Arts 476w
Family doctors 502-4w
Restart programme 606-7w

Merseyside Development Corporation 127-8w

Merseyside Task Force 429w
Liverpool Heritage Developments 429w

Methaemoglobinaemia 283w

Metropolitan Police
Civil proceedings 218w
Costs 772w
Criminal investigation 561-2w

Meyer, Sir Anthony
Questions
Housing improvement, Rhyl 4
Multiple occupation, Wales 2

Michie, Mr Bill
Questions
Cancer hazards, Nuclear power stations 1057-8
Land use, Rural areas 167-8
Leadmill, Sheffield, Ministers' domestic visits 475w
Maternity benefits, Calder Valley 699-700w
Maternity benefits, Sheffield 699-700w
South Africa, Angola 688w
Student grants 566w
Torvinstyle Properties, Company investigations 367w

Microelectronics education programme 572w

Mid Glamorgan
Derelict land grants 452-4w
Housing starts 80w
Unemployment 226w, 637w

Mid Glamorgan County Council Bill (HL) 1985/86
Debates etc
Rep[o] (17.02.87) 751

Mid-Worcestershire
Unemployment 765-6w

Middle East 693w
EC action 228w
EC countries 874w
Foreign policy 694w
Peace negotiations 228w, 399-400w, 693-4w
UN General Assembly 874w

Middle East Association 230w
Ministerial speeches 230w

Middlesbrough
Maternity benefits 859w

Middlesex Crown Court
Building repairs 867w

Midlothian
Maternity benefits 273w, 275-6w

Migration
Wales 375-6w

Mikardo, Mr Ian
Questions
Canary Wharf, Planning permission 111w
Fascism, Conservative party 766
Land acquisition, Canary Wharf 382w
Maternity benefits, City of Westminster 347-8w, 589w
Maternity benefits, Tower Hamlets 348w
Speech therapists, Pay 197w

Militant Tendency
Civil service 655, 657

Military aid
Belize 698w

Military aircraft 101-2w

Military balance
NATO 488w
Warsaw Pact 488w

Military police 694-5w

Military vehicles
Land Rover 184w
Repairs & maintenance 184w

Milk
Production quotas 337-8w, 452w, 486w, 782-3w

Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Questions
Jordanhill College of Education, College closures 264w
Maternity benefits, Glasgow 285w
Rolls-Royce Aeroengines 437-8w
Rolls-Royce Aeroengines, Capital investment 438w
Rolls-Royce Aeroengines, Government assistance to industry 438w
Rolls-Royce Aeroengines, Loans 437w

Mills, Mr Iain
Debates etc
NHS, West Midlands (19.02.87) 1159-60
Rover Group (19.02.87) 1066
Questions
Cars, Ownership 310w
M42, Traffic noise 249w
Motorways, Housing compensation 248-9w
Puppies, Animal welfare 320-1w
Spoil heaps, Ove Arup 240w

Mills, Sir Peter
Debates etc
Agricultural land, Land use (09.02.87) 72-3
Questions
Beef & veal, Prices 781w
EC Agricultural Council 288-9w
Food surpluses, EC action 335w

Mining
Spoil heaps 240w
Water resources 114w

Ministerial correspondence
BBC 794-5w

Ministerial responsibility
Broadcasting 435w
Police 618-22w

Ministerial speeches
Middle East Association 230w
Speaker's rulings & statements (11.02.87) 325

Ministerial statements
Agricultural land (09.02.87) 70-80
Local Government Bill 1986/87 (18.02.87) 916-24
Rover Group (19.02.87) 1059-73
Speaker's rulings & statements (09.02.87) 24-5, 74, 76, 80, (10.02.87) 170

Ministers
Nuclear accidents 303w
Scottish Office 305

Ministers' correspondence 478w, 794-5w
Layfield, Frank 646
News International 478w

Ministers' domestic visits
Coal mining 467w
Drumcroon Arts Centre 475w
Leadmill, Sheffield 475w
RAF Binbrook 777w
Rhondda Valley 80w
University of East Anglia 568w
West Hatch School 23-4w

Ministers of religion
Business expenses 13-4
Pay 1w

Ministers' visits abroad
Central America 689w
Egypt 564w
Guatemala 905
Hong Kong 692w
USSR 691w

Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food
Accountants 676-7w
Local government functions 483w
Public Accounts Committee 603w
Radioactive waste disposal 602w

Ministry of Defence
Accountants 681-3w
Cash limits 105w
Cooper Frank 294w
International Telecommunications Union 491w
Management consultants 681-3w
National security 184w
Property Services Agency 856w
Public Accounts Committee 870w
Satellites 491w
Scotland 856w, 872w

Minors
Abortion 147
Family planning clinics 209w

Minors' Contracts Bill (HL) 1986/87
Debates etc
2R[o] (18.02.87) 1030

Miscampbell, Mr Norman
Debates etc

Radioactive waste disposal (09.02.87) 46-7

Mitchell, Mr Austin
Debates etc
Access to Personal Files Bill, 2R (20.02.87) 1196-200
Banking Bill, Rep & 3R (10.02.87) 1092-3, 1097
Public expenditure (18.02.87) 949, 967, 969-1001
Radioactive waste disposal (09.02.87) 41-6
Questions
Building societies, Consumer Credit Act 1974 440w
Cars, Imports 633w
EC budget, Exchange rates 30-4w
EC budget, UK contributions 521-2w
EC budget contributions 33-4w
Fisheries, Compensation 786w
Government assistance to industry, Airbuses 747w
Imports, Channel tunnel 626w
Imports, West Germany 524-5w, 527w
Insider trading, Company investigations 748w
Insider trading, Merchant banks 747-8w
Lorries, Germany 437w
Manufacturing industries, Pay 544w
Maternity benefits, Grimsby 395-6w
Motor vehicles, Import controls 633w
Oil imports 524w
Petroleum, International trade 630-3w
UK Membership of EC 522w

Mitchell, Mr David, *Minister of State for Transport*
Debates etc
Settle-Carlisle railway (11.02.87) 437-40
Questions
British Rail Engineering, Crewe 46w
British Rail, Profitability 378w
British Rail, Railway timetables 46w
Bus services, Competition 624w
Bus services, North West region 378w
Car hire, Licensing 310w
Channel Tunnel Bill Select Committee 379w
Passenger transport executives, Redundancy pay 379w
Railway closures 538w
Railway electrification 379w
Railway transport, EC countries 624w
Settle-Carlisle railway, Railway closures 378w
Transport Users' Consultative Committees, Greater Manchester 252-3w

Moate, Mr Roger
Questions
Burglary, Glass 5w
Glass, Safety standards 311-2w

Mobile homes
Armed forces housing 778w

Mobility allowance
Administrative delays 191w
Age 282w
Social security benefits rules 282w
Social security recipients 281-2w
Wales 508w

Mold
Bypasses (16.02.87) 734-41

Mold bypass (16.02.87) 734-41

Monetary compensatory amounts
Livestock 1052-3

Money resolution (10.02.87) 286

Monklands
Maternity benefits 354-5w, 357w, 702-3w

Monro, Sir Hector
Debates etc
Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc (Scotland) Bill, Allocation of time motion (11.02.87) 335-8
Agricultural land, Land use (09.02.87) 74-5
Housing, Scotland (11.02.87) 425-6
Questions
Beef & veal, Prices 781w
Edinburgh castle 260w
Land use, Scotland 300

Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Questions
Hospital waiting lists 585-7w
VAT, Mail order selling 37w, 423-4w
VAT, Retail trade 423-4w
VAT, Small businesses 37w

Montgomery, Simon 392w
Civil servants 392w
Disciplinary proceedings 392w

Moodiesburn
Prime Minister domestic visits 521w

Moore, Rt Hon John, *Secretary of State for Transport*
Questions
British Airports Authority, Shares 311w
British Airways, Privatisation 48w, 626w
M1, Motorway service areas 310w
M1, Telephones 309-10w
Management consultants, Dept of Transport 624-5w
Public Accounts Committee, Dept of Transport 623w
Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment, Public appointments 156w

Morris, Rt Hon Alfred
Debates etc
Handicapped (17.02.87) 788-95
Questions
Attendance allowance, Kidney patients 131w
Attendance allowance, Social security recipients 281-2w
Building alterations, Housing & handicapped 240-1w
Handicapped 192w
Handicapped, Community care 281w
Handicapped, Community Care Review 130w
Handicapped, Local government expenditure 130-1w
Handicapped, Northern Ireland Office 77-8w
Handicapped, Public appointments 3w
Handicapped, Scottish Office 327-8w
Health services finance 131-2w
Industrial health & safety, Screening 533-4w
Invalidity benefits, Social Security recipients 130w
Maternity benefits, Manchester 706-7w
Severe disability premium, Invalid care allowances 130w
Social security, EC countries 595w
Transport Users' Consultative Committees, Greater Manchester 252-3w

Morris, Rt Hon John
Questions
Maternity benefits, Aberavon 810w
Severe weather, Pensioners 507w

Morris, Mr Michael
Questions
Breast cancer, Screening 820w
Cancer, Nuclear power stations 721-2w
Capacitors, Polychlorinated biphenyl 421w
Coal fired power stations, Construction 641-2
Deportation, Tamils 913
Diesel fuel, Standards specifications 317w
Mailing lists, Mailing Preference Service 367w
Polychlorinated biphenyl, Electrical technology 314w
Sunday trading, Local authorities 432w
Tamils, Political refugees 770

Morrison, Mr Charles
Debates etc
Agricultural land, Land use (09.02.87) 76
Questions
Food surpluses, Charities 1051

Mortgage relief
Tax yields 179-80w

Mortgages
Supplementary benefits 154w

Motherwell
Maternity benefits 516w

Motor Cycle Noise Bill 1986/87
Debates etc
Money Res (16.02.87) 706, 719-22

Motor vehicle registration
Driver & Vehicle Licensing Centre 310w

Motor vehicle safety
Safety belts 45w

Motor vehicle testing
Public service vehicles 43w

Motor vehicles
Computer applications 735-6w
Greater London 7-8w
Import controls 633w
Prometheus project 735-6w
West Germany 527w, 633w

Motorcycles
Noise control (16.02.87) 706, 719-22

Motoring
Company cars 183w

Motorway service areas 43-4w
Lorry drivers 410w
M1 310w
Telephones 309-10w

Motorways
Housing compensation 248-9w
Road closures 155-6w
Warning signs 43w

Moynihan, Mr Colin
Questions
Berries & fruit, Agricultural production 791w

Mucodyne
Limited list prescribing 821w

Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin 636w
Government grants 636w

Multiple occupation
Fire prevention 2
Housing (13.02.87) 610-28
Local authority powers 2
Safety standards 1-2, 320w
Wales 1-3

Murphy, Mr Christopher
Debates etc
Council of Europe (13.02.87) 632-3
Questions
Chancellors School 309w
Drug abuse, Pompidou Group 215-6w
Employment, Welwyn 531w
Employment, Welwyn Hatfield 766w
Greenbelt, Hertfordshire 852w
Queen Elizabeth II Hospital, Welwyn Garden City 341w
Wheathampstead School 169w

Museums & galleries
Art works 480w
Arts finance 480w
Educational visits 474w
Fees & charges 442w
Northern Ireland 449
Photography 451w
Repairs & maintenance 476w

Musicians
Government assistance 479w
Young people 479w

MV Synetta 185w
Shipping accidents 185w

Myalgic encephalomyelitis 278-9w

Namibia
Church of England 400w
EC action 692w
Economic sanctions 692w
Foreign policy 401w, 459-60w

Human rights 401w, 460w
Newspaper press 460w
Official engagements 400w
Political parties 400w
Politics & government 460w
Refugees 403-4w, 459-60w
SWAPO 402w, 459-60w
UN Security Council 535w
USA 401w

National Assistance Act 1948
Questions
25-6w

National Audit Office
Defence expenditure 294w, 490w
Forestry 484w
Satellities 367w
Speaker's rulings & statements 09.02.87) 20-2
Tree planting 484w

National Council for Vocational Qualifications 528w

National Employer Liaison Committee 564w

National Farmers' Union 676w, 779w, 882w

National Farmers' Union of Scotland 262-3w
Agriculture 262-3w

National Federation of Voluntary Literacy Schemes 570w

National Girobank
Privatisation 748w

National income
Economic growth 544w
Italy 544w
Wales 226w

National Marriage Guidance Council 321w
Government grants 321w

National mobility scheme 664w
Council house transfers 664w

National Reye's Syndrome Foundation 598-9w

National security
Attorney-General 1w, 155w, 407-8w
Cooper, Frank 294w
Defence expenditure 294w
Defence procurement 105-6w
Director of Public Prosecutions 407-8w
Disclosure of information 1w, 260w, 294w, 407-8w, 606w, 764w, 773w, 777-8w, 873w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 164w
Inquiries 772w
Kitson, Frank 606w, 764w, 777-8w, 873w
Lord Advocate 446-8w, 773w
Magazine press 1w
Ministry of Defence 184w
Prime Minister's Office 522w
Prosecutions 234w
Rothschild, Lord 605w
Satellites 1w, 230w, 461w
Television programmes 8-9w, (10.02.87) 262, 268w, 322w, 435w, 445-8w, 457w, 522w, 546w, 606w, 617-8w, 771-2w, 794-6w

National Service
Teachers' pensions 370w

National Union of Farmers
Agricultural policy 882w

National Union of Journalists 795w

National Union of Students 261w
Scotland 261w

Nationalisation
Prostitution 297

NATO
Armoured fighting vehicles 184w
Mafia 329w
Military balance 488w

Natural radioactivity
Aberdeen 645
Housing problems 547-8w
Testing 547-8w

Nature Conservancy Council
Biology 550-1w
Civil service manpower 550w
Geology 550-1w
Graduates 549w
Sites of special scientific interest 551-2w
Tree planting 541w

Nature conservation
Property development 157w
Town & country planning 421w

Navy
Aircrew 489w
Drug abuse 306w, 777w
Drug crimes 366-7w
Drug offences 367w
Weapons 488-9w

Nazi war crimes
Mengele, Joseph 896
Poland 896

Neale, Mr Gerrard
Questions
Farm capital grant scheme 788w

Neasden hospital 721w
Heath service staff 285w, 721w
Housing 721w

***Needham, Mr Richard,** Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland*
Debates etc
Planning permission, Saintfield, South Down (10.02.87) 288-92
Questions
Council house waiting lists, Northern Ireland 77w
Devolution, Northern Ireland 451
Exceptional needs payments, Administrative delays 225w
Exceptional needs payments, Northern Ireland 224w
Handicapped children, Northern Ireland 78-80w
Handicapped, Northern Ireland Office 77-8w
Health service staff, Manpower 75-6w
Hospital beds, Northern Ireland 76-8w
Hospital closures, Northern Ireland 76w
Hospitals, Northern Ireland 75w
Islam, Northern Ireland 368-9w
Northern Ireland government 450-1
Rates & rating, Prosecutions 75w
Severe weather payments, Northern Ireland 175-6w

Negligence
Armed forces casualties (13.02.87) 567-609

Neighbourhood Energy Action 140w, 419w, 466-7w, 553-4w
Essex 466-7w
Housing insulation 380w, 419w, 953-4w

Neighbourhood watch schemes 373w

Nellist, Mr Dave
Debates etc
Business statement (19.02.87) 1080
Private notice question intervention (18.02.87) 911-2
Private notice question point of order (18.02.87) 915
Rover Group (19.02.87) 1065
Social Fund (Maternity & Funeral Expenses) Bill, Rem stages (09.02.87) 83-8, 90-1, 97, 109-10
Tamils (17.02.87) 875-6
Questions
Area museum councils, Government grants 383w
Chothia, Yasmin, Members' correspondence 459w
Common agricultural policy 785w
Conductive education, Research finance 574w
Deportation, Tamils 909-10
Maternity benefits, Coventry 207-8w
Occupational pensions, Social security benefits rules 154
Unemployment, Northern Ireland 441-2

Nelson, Mr Anthony
Debates etc
Banking Bill, Rep & 3R (19.02.87) 1094-7, 1110-1, 1125-9, 1146-7
Questions
Financial institutions, Self-regulatory systems 165w

Netherlands
Pigmeat 42w

New earnings survey 428w
Disclosure of information 428w
Gas supply industry 428w

New Statesman 446w

New towns
Finance 740-1w
Manufacturing industries 267w
Scotland 267w, (18.02.87) 1031-40
Wealth 740-1w

New workers' scheme 608w

New York 623w

New Zealand
Sheep meat 1042

Newbury
A34 411w

Newcastle
Maternity benefits 352w, 394-5w

Newcastle under Lyme
Maternity benefits 865-6w
Social security reform 866w

Newcastle upon Tyne
Maternity benefits 861-2w

Newcourt Christian School 744w
School closures 744w

Newham
Helicopters 218w
Maternity benefits 276-7w, 344-5w, 812-3w
Racial conflict 215w

Newport
Maternity benefits 354w, 590w

Newry
Educational finance 450

News International 5w, 216-8w, 373-4w, 478w
Complaints against police 217w
Demonstrations 216-7w, 373w, 436w
Lorries 5w
Ministers' correspondence 478w
Police equipment 373w
Police records 217-8w
Public libraries 478w
Public order policing 216-7w, 436w
Riot control weapons 373-4w

News International
Demonstrations 373-4w

Newspaper press
Namibia 460w

***Newton, Mr Tony,** Minister of State for Health*
Questions
Abortion 153w, 195w, 718w
Abortion, Foreign patients 362-3w
Abortion, Minors 147
Abortion, NHS 497-500w
Abortion, Young people 719w
AIDS 397w
AIDS, Blood tests 129w
AIDS, Community care 191-2w
AIDS, Contraceptives 710-1w
AIDS, Death 192w
AIDS, Departmental leaflets 191w
AIDS, Ethnic minorities 129-30w
AIDS, Expenditure 597-8w
AIDS, Government grants 512w
AIDS, Haemophilia 283w, 512-3w
AIDS, Health education 191w, 397w
AIDS, Infectious diseases 512w
AIDS, Joint financing 512w

AIDS, Medical research 512w
AIDS, Medical treatments 512w
AIDS, Notifiable diseases 512w
AIDS, Nurses 512w
AIDS, Testing 512w
AIDS, West Midlands 283w
AIDS, World Health Organisation 362w
Ambulance services, Whitley Councils 399w
Basingstoke Hospital, Hospital waiting lists 200w
Blood, Imports 510w
Blood products laboratory, Construction 510w
Bradford Health Authority, Hospital closures 597w
Cancer, Diagnosis 857-8w
Cancer hazards, Nuclear power stations 506-8w
Cancer, Nuclear power stations 721-2w
Cervical cancer, Screening 399w
Community care, Health services finance 149-50
Contraceptives, Prescriptions 202w
Diabetes, Disposable syringes 397w
District health authorities, Expenditure 139w
Doctors' list of patients 823w
Drug abuse, Disposable syringes 512w
Family doctors, Computer applications 500w
Family doctors, Merseyside 502-4w
Family Planning Association, Government grants to voluntary organisations 720w
Family planning clinics, Minors 209w
Family practitioner committees, Complaints 211w
Handicapped, Doctors' surgeries 279-80w
Health service staff 132w
Health service staff, Employment agencies 866-7w
Hospital beds, Computer applications 198w
Hospital consultants, Pay 857w
Hospital waiting lists, Leeds 200w
Hospital waiting lists, Regional health authorities 199w
Hospitals, Advertising 200w
Hospitals, Capital investment 502w
Hospitals, Inner city areas 194w
Leukaemia, Nuclear power stations 154w
Limited list prescribing 821-2w
Management consultants, Dept of Health & Social Security 714-8w
Maternity benefits, Basildon 863w
Mental health community care 150
Mental health community care, Health services finance 150-1
Mucodyne, Limited list prescribing 821w
NHS, Urban areas 192w
NHS charges, Foreign patients 711-4w
NHS finance, Inner London boroughs 201w
North West Regional Health Authority, Computers in National Health Service 505w
Nurses, Housing 137w
Nurses, Managers 155
Nurses, Manpower 152-3, 198-9w
Nurses, Recruitment 198w
Nurses, Vacancies 152-3
Occupational therapy, Hospital waiting lists 211w
Occupational therapy, Recruitment 211w
Perivale Hospital, Members' correspondence 808w
Personal social services, Capital investment 857w
Prescription charges, Pre-payment certificates 820w
Radiotherapy, Southend Hospital 199w
Regional health authorities, Expenditure 139w
Registration of births deaths & marriages 585w
Royal Liverpool Hospital, Hospital waiting lists 510w
Spectacles, Handicapped 718w
Spectacles, Optical charges 718w
Speech therapists, Equal pay 155, 566 (corrigendum)
Speech therapists, Pay 154-5, 197w
Terrence Higgins Trust, Government grants 512w
Terrence Higgins Trust, Telephone numbers 512w
Trent Regional Health Authority, Official engagements 200w

Newton Towers 116w

NHS
Abortion 497-500w
Capital investment 449-50w, 456-7w
Cottage hospitals 199w
Hospital beds 202-4w
Hospitals 101w
Income 711-4w
Land acquisition 61-2w, 136-7w
Management consultants 386w
Planning permission 136-7w
Property transfer 83-4w, 137w, 198w
Scotland 61-2w
Urban areas 192w
Wales 82w
West Midlands (19.02.87) 1159-64

NHS & private practice 196-7w
East Hertfordshire Health Authority 501-2w

NHS charges
Foreign patients 711-4w, 750w
Wales 750w

NHS complaints 507w

NHS finance
AIDS 597-8w
Expenditure 96w
Inner London boroughs 201w
Merit awards 145
Scotland 456-7w
Wales 96-8w, 449-50w

NHS pensions
Nurses 107-8w

Nicaragua
Bilateral aid 172w
EC aid 172w
USA 905-6

Nicholls, Mr Patrick
Debates etc
Public expenditure (18.02.87) 940, 942
Questions
Business statement 466
Overseas trade, Spain 214w

Nigeria
Visas 537w

Nitrogen
Fertilisers 783w

Nkandi, Victor 460w

Noise control
Motorcycles (16.02.87) 706, 719-22

Non-domestic rates
Private sector 5

Non-scheduled offences 406w, 462w, 725-6w, 773-6w

Non-statutory training organisations 534-5w
Concrete 534w
Manpower Services Commission 534w

Norfolk & Suffolk Broads Bill 1986/87
House of Commons Select Committee (17.02.87) 887
House of Commons Select Committees (10.02.87) 286

Norman Shaw building
Parliamentary papers 473w, 604w
Reprography 473w

Norris, Mr Steve
Debates etc
Access to Personal Files Bill, 2R (20.02.87) 1171-83, 1189, 1212
Business statement (19.02.87) 1080
Education (Nutrition Requirements) Bill, 2R (20.02.87) 1229
Rover Group (19.02.87) 1066

North East London Polytechnic 169w
Capital investment 169w

North Sea
Environment protection 668-9w
Fish conservation 786w

North Sea oil
Manpower 650

North Wales Hospital
Hospital closures 7-8

North West Arts Association 475w

North West Leicestershire 466w
Coal mining 466w

North West region
Arts 475w
Bus services 378w
Car ownership 47w
Educational finance 757
Further education 757-8
Government assistance to industry 626w
Homelessness 127w
House prices 126w
Medical records 139-40w
Nuclear power 466w
Owner occupied housing 126-7w
Personal income 54w
Regional aid 627w
Roads 47w
Screening 285-6w
Skillcentres 389w
Unemployment 49-52w
Vocational training 253-4w
Water pollution 112w

North Western Regional Health Authority 504-5w, 720w
Procurement 504-5w
Government grants 505w

North York Moors National Park 116w

North Yorkshire Moors National Park
Access to countryside 116w

Northern College of Education 457-8w
Educational administration 457-8w

Northern Ireland government
Devolution 445

Northern Ireland
Accidents 450
Armed forces deployment 451
Assaults on police 732-3w
Bail 406w
Building industry 442, 449, 452
Council house waiting lists 77w
Courts 452-3
Detection rates 447-8
Devolution 451
Educational finance 79w, 453
Energy efficiency 647
European Regional Development Fund 841w
Evidence 463w, 726-7w
Exceptional needs payments 224-5w
Firearms 464w, 731-2w
Forestry 443
GCE A level 453
Handicapped children 78-80w
Handicapped pupils 177w
Health service staff 75-6w
Hospital beds 75-8w
Hospital closures 76w
Hospitals 75w
Housing construction 405-6w
Injuries 406-7w
Islam 368-9w
Juries 452-3
Life imprisonment 547w, 734w, 775w
Magistrates 2w
Museums & galleries 449
Planning permission (10.02.87) 287-92
Plastic bullets 406-7w, 464w, 731w
Police brutality 225w
Police informers 463w, 726-7w

Political parties 331-2w
Prison population 447-8, 463-5w, 774-6w
Prison staff 448
Prisoners' transfers 433w, 456w
Public expenditure 448-50
Rates & rating 75w
Road tax 722-3w
Scheduled offences 462w, 725-6w
Security 463w, 727-32w
Severe weather payments 175-6w
Special educational needs 78w, 177w
Teachers 368w, 465w
Terrorism (10.02.87) 263-86, 433w, 463w, 727-32w, 773-4w
Unemployment 441-3
Youth services 546-7w

Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978
Questions
773-4w

Northern Ireland government 444, 450-1

Northern Ireland Health & Social Services Boards 78-80w

Northern Ireland Office
Cash limits 79w
Handicapped 77-8w
Management consultants 723-5w
Orders & regulations 546w

Northern Ireland Universities Research Working Party
Educational finance 453

Northern region
EC grants & loans 663-4w
Heating allowances 138w
Members 1055
Nurses 198-9w
Severe weather payments 138w

Norway
Fish conservation 393w

Notifiable diseases
AIDS 512w
Food poisoning 483-4w, 680w
Meningitis 284w
Psittacosis 823w

Nottinghamshire
Labour Party 458

Nuclear accidents
Emergency planning 326-7w
Government 303w
Ministers 303w
Nuclear power stations 430w
Sizewell Inquiry 469w
USSR 387w, 469w, 646
Weather 634w

Nuclear fuel reprocessing
Euratom 316w

Nuclear fuel reprocessing
Capital investment 470-1w
Energy research 837w
Euratom 316w
Plutonium 316w

Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive
Compulsory purchase 548w

Nuclear Installations Inspectorate 472w
Consultants 301-2w
Emergency planning 301w

Nuclear power
Electricity generation 643-4
Energy costs 645
France 645
North West region 466w
Operating costs 167w

Nuclear power stations
Ambulance services 318-9w, 326-7w
Cancer 721-2w
Cancer hazards 506-8w, 646, 1055, 1057-8
Civil servants' visits abroad 10w
Construction 9w
Disclosure of information 317w
Electricity generation 639-40
Emergency planning 303w, 317-9w, 322w, 326-7w, 634w, 636w
Energy costs 639
Leukaemia 154w, 644, 646
Licensing 471w
Nuclear accidents 430w
Nuclear safety 317-8w, 641, 643-4
Police 322w
Pollution monitoring 327w
Radiation hazards 154w, 426w
Radioactive waste disposal 415-6w, 548w
Sizewell B 167w
Transport of radioactive materials 430w

Nuclear reactors
Plutonium 470w

Nuclear safety
Expenditure 301w
Manpower 301-2w
Nuclear power stations 317-8w, 641, 643-4
Pressurised water reactors 213-4w
Sizewell B 469w

Nuclear test ban
Arms control treaties 696w
Five Continents Group 230w
USA 229-30w

Nuclear weapons
Bombs 367w

Nuclear weapons deployment 873-4w
Local education authorities 184w
Publicity 184w

Nuclear power
Employment 466w

Nugee Committee see Flats Management Committee of Inquiry

Numeracy 584-5w
Adult education 569w
Social security claims 279w
Training 254w
Unemployment 254w, 768-9w

Nursery education
Age participation rates 653-6w
Belfast 446-7
Gaelic language 447

Nusery schools 573w
Age participation rates 656w
Part-time education 573w

Nurses
AIDS 512w
Armed forces 107-10w
Glasgow Royal Infirmary 611w
Housing 137w
Managers 155
Manpower 107-10w, 152-3, 198-9w, 720w
Merit awards 145
NHS pensions 107-8w
Northern region 198-9w
Pay 108-9w
Pay settlements 110w
Recruitment 152-3, 198w
South Manchester Health Authority 720w
Unfair dismissal 512w
Vacancies 152-3

Nurses' homes 109-11w, 721w

Nursing homes
Scotland (12.02.87) 475

Nutrition
School meals (20.02.87) 1224-9

Nutrition & health
Children 137-8w
Soya beans 137-8w

Objects in lieu of tax
Art works 735w
Publicity 479-80w

O'Brien, Mr William
Debates etc
Housing (10.02.87) 242-3
Questions
Education, Industry 570w
Food poisoning, European Economic Community 587-8w
Mental health community care, Local government finance 194-5w
Rhubarb, Imports 791w

Occupational deafness
Industrial disablement benefits 148-9

Occupational pensions
Social security benefits rules 154
Unemployment benefits 154

Occupational therapy
Hospital waiting lists 211w
Recruitment 211w

Occupied territories 228w

OECD countries
Skilled workers 161-2w

Offences against children
Video recordings 1056

Office floorspace 818w
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices 818w

Office of Arts & Libraries
Local government functions 480-1w

Office workers
Health service staff 450w

Offices
Members' secretaries 16-7

Official engagements
Habib, Philip 230w
Namibia 400w
Peres, Shimon 693w
SWAPO 403w
Trent Regional Health Authority 200w
Turkey 695w
University Grants Committee 574w
USSR 690-1w

Official secrets
Trident 870-1w

Official Secrets Act 1911
Law reform 557w, 617w
Search warrants 617w
Questions
1w, 557w, 773w

Official Secrets Acts
Prosecutions 260w
Questions
8-9w, 260w, 407-8w, 446-7w, 606w

Official stationery 17

Offset arrangements 685w

Offshore fixed platforms 838w

Offshore structures
Demolition (11.02.87) 369-408 (566, 638 corrigenda)

Ogorodnikov, Alexander (12.02.87) 558, (19.02.87) 1149
Public petitions (12.02.87) 558, (19.02.87) 1149

Oil exports 524w

Oil imports 524w

Oil industry
Manpower 650
Scotland 266w

Oil storage
Fees & charges 841-3w
Licensing 841-3w

Old persons pensions
Age addition 521w

Older workers
Men 254w

Oldham
Maternity benefits 203w, 394w

O'Neill, Mr Martin J
Debates etc
Dockyard Services Orders 1986 (09.02.87) 117-8
Questions
Aircrew, Navy 489w

Armed forces civilians, Scotland 872w
Armed forces deployment, Scotland 872w
Bofors gun, Defence contracts 488-9w
Bofors gun, Warships 488w
Bofors gun, Ammunition 681w
Defence industries, Scotland 872w
Defence procurement, Scotland 872w
Guinness, Scotland 267w
Maternity benefits, Clackmannan 704-5w
Ministry of Defence, Scotland 872w
Prison accommodation, Scotland 294
Property Services Agency, Ministry of Defence 856w
Torpedoes, Spearfish 489w
Torpedoes, Tigerfish 489w

Onslow, Mr Cranley
Questions
Land use, Rural areas 162

Open University
Fees & charges 579-80w
Graduates 580w
Instalment credit 580w
Student numbers 579-80w
Summer schools 579-80w

Operating costs
Nuclear power 167w

Opinion surveys
Dept of the Environment 247w
Government departments 247w

Opposition days
Handicapped (17.02.87) 788-828
Housing (10.02.87) 175-261
Women (17.02.87) 829-74

Opposition parties
Finance 60w

Optical charges
Spectacles 718w

Oral questions
Speaker's rulings & statements (09.02.87) 23-4, (10.02.87) 160, 170, (12.02.87) 459-60, 471, 474, (16.02.87) 657-8

Orange badge scheme 249-52w
Greater London 249w

Orchestras
Finance 477w

Orders & regulations
Lorries 310-1w
Northern Ireland Office 546w
Speaker's rulings & statements (11.02.87) 409, 417
Wales 91w

Organ donors 819-20w

Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Questions
Coal, Imports 472w
Coal fired power stations, Construction 640
Layfield, Frank, Ministers' correspondence 646

Ottaway, Mr Richard
Debates etc
Housing (10.02.87) 210-3

Outgoers' scheme
Dairy farming 384w
Taxation 384w

Oval
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices 866w

Ove Arup 240w
Spoil heaps 240w

Overloading offences 44-5w
Lorries 44-5w

Overseas aid 408w
Africa 408w
Gambia 908
Palestine 377w
Refugees 409w, 830-1w
Senegal 908

Overseas Development Administration
Public Accounts Committee 528w

Overseas students 831-2w

Overseas trade
Brazil 893-4
EC Presidency 214w
South Africa 165w
Spain 214w
Suriname 4-6w

Overtime 609w
Prison staff 638w

Owen, Rt Hon David
Debates etc
Dockyard Services orders 1986 (09.02.87) 121-3
Questions
Brain drain 456
Strategic defence initiative, ABM Treaty 898

Own resources 37w, 877-8w
European Court of Justice 877w

Owner occupied housing
Exceptional needs payments 520w
North West region 126-7w
South East region 126-7w

Ownership
Cars 310w

Packaging
Food surpluses 784w

Paediatrics 81w

Page, Sir John
Debates etc
Crown Proceedings (Armed Forces) Bill, 2R (13.02.87) 569
Questions
Food surpluses, Charities 783w

Page, Mr Richard
Debates etc
Access to Personal Files Bill, 2R (20.02.87) 1175, 1188, 1190, 1215-7
Rover Group (19.02.87) 1065
Social Fund (Maternity & Funeral Expenses) Bill, Rem stages (09.02.87) 107-8
Questions
Deportation, Tamils 912-3

Pakistan
Refugees 228w

Palestine
Overseas aid 377w
Refugee camps 409w
Refugees 830-1w

Paper
House of Commons 17-8

Paper industry
Irvine 264w, 300, 541w

Paramilitary forces
Death 456w
Scotland 456w
Ulster Defence Regiment 493w

Parental contributions
Student grants 566-7w

Parental leave (11.02.87) 317-9

Parental Leave Bill 1986/87
Debates etc
1R (11.02.87) 317-9

Parents' rights
Abortion 147

Parish councils
Elections 549w

Park, Mr George
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.02.87) 544-6
Housing (10.02.87) 229, 232
Rover Group (19.02.87) 1063-4
Questions
Maternity benefits, Coventry 150w

Park Vista 113w
English Heritage 113w
Listed buildings 113w

Parkhurst Prison 771w

Parking
Handicapped drivers 249-52w

Parking offences
Bus lanes 174w
Fees & charges 7-8w

Parliamentary constituencies
Urban programme 849-52w

Parliamentary Constituencies (Scotland) (Miscellaneous Changes) Order 1987
Debates etc
(17.02.87) 782

Parliamentary Contributory Pension Fund 328w

Parliamentary papers
Norman Shaw building 473w, 604w
Vote Office 473w

Parliamentary privilege
Speaker's rulings & statements (09.02.87) 20-2, (10.02.87) 262, (11.02.87) 311, (12.02.87) 472

Parole
Rape 7w

Parrot Corporation 846w
Factories 846w
Per capita costs 846w

Parry, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 (Continuance) Order 1987 (10.02.87) 271
Questions
Council house waiting lists, Northern Ireland 77w
Government grants to local authorities, Flooding 116w
Hospital waiting lists, Regional health authorities 199w
Sports Council, Government grants 116w
Turkey, Human rights 11w
Turkey, Trials 11w

Part-time education
Nursery schools 573w
Tuition fees 570w

Party conferences
Travelling expenses 234w

Passenger transport executives
Redundancy pay 379w

Passports
Computers in government departments 218-9w

Patchett, Mr Terry
Questions
British Coal Corporation, Barnsley 467-8w
Central America, EC Foreign Affairs Council 694w
Export controls, South Africa 165w
Maternity benefits, Barnsley 360-1w

Patents
Laird (Anglesey) 525w

Patients
Wales 137w

Patten, Mr Chris, Minister of State for Overseas Development
Questions
Africa, Overseas aid 408w
Developing countries, Publicity 409-10w
Development aid 408w
Food aid from EC 408-9w
Overseas aid, Palestine 377w
Palestine, Refugee camps 409w
Public Accounts Committee, Overseas Development Administration 528w
St Helena, Ferries 527w

Patten, Mr John, Minister of State for the Environment (Housing, Urban Affairs & Construction)
Debates etc
Housing (10.02.87) 202, 205, 211, 215, 242, 246, 251-8
Questions
Council house rents 741w
Council house sales 669-70w
Derelict land grants, Birmingham 238w, 739-40w
Derelict land grants, Contracts 238w
Derelict land grants, Labour only subcontracting 238-9w
Derelict land grants, Lancashire 739w
Derelict land grants, Saxon Developments 116-7w
Derelict land grants, West Midlands 238w, 740w
Energy conservation, Factories 126w
Flats, Leasehold housing 311w
Glass, Safety standards 311-2w
Government grants to local authorities 662w
Homesteading schemes 418w
House prices, Housing stock 116w
Households 117w
Housing insulation, Draught-proofing materials 419w
Housing insulation, Neighbourhood Energy Action 380w, 419w
Housing management, Higher education 315w
Housing subsidies, Housing finance 553w
Insulation, Government grants 553-4w
Land acquisition, Canary Wharf 382w
Land registration, Vacant land 243-6w
London Docklands, Expenditure 127-8w
London Docklands Development Corporation, Public appointments 312w
New towns, Wealth 740-1w
Small businesses, Tenancy agreements 156w
Spectrum Centre, Property transfer 157w
Trafford Park Development Corporation, Public appointments 552w
Urban development corporations, Expenditure 127w
Urban development grants 737-8w
Urban development grants, Employment opportunities 548w
Urban development grants, Housing association grants 738w
Urban development grants, Private sector 737w
Urban housing renewal unit, Local authorities 661-2w
Urban programme, Government grants to local authorities 552w
Urban programme, Parliamentary constituencies 849-52w
Vacant land registers, Land ownership & tenure 246-8w

Pattie, Rt Hon Geoffrey, Minister of State for Information Technology
Questions
Aerospace industry, USA 875-6w
British National Space Centre 439-40w
Government assistance to industry, Airbuses 747w
Helicopters, Aerospace industry 438-9w
Laird (Anglesey), Patents 525w
National Girobank, Privatisation 748w
Rolls-Royce Aeroengines 437-8w
Rolls-Royce Aeroengines, Capital investment 438w
Rolls-Royce Aeroengines, Government assistance to industry 438w
Rolls-Royce Aeroengines, Loans 437w
Satellites, International Telecommunications Union 629w
Science & technology, Government grants 368w, 441w

Pavitt, Mr Laurie
Debates etc
Housing (10.02.87) 177, 199, 201-2
Housing (Houses in Multiple Occupation) Bill, 2R (13.02.87) 621, 629, 632
Women (17.02.87) 868
Questions
Dentists, Medical equipment 721w
Hearing aids, Licensing 3w
Heart diseases, Costs 364w
Hepatitis, Vaccination 867w
Maternity benefits, Brent 707w
Neasden Hospital, Health service staff 285w, 721w
Nurses, Manpower 152

Pawsey, Mr J F
Questions
British Rail, Railway timetables 46w
Car hire, Licensing 310w
Crime prevention, Housing 321-2w
Crime prevention, Security equipment 321w
Dental charges exemptions 144
Pupil-teacher ratios, Pay 753-4
Water resources, Mining 114w

Pay
Advisory Committee on Pesticides 604w
Charitable donations 422w, 545w
Clergy 12-4
Hospital consultants 857w
Manufacturing industries 544w
Ministers of religion 1w
Nurses 108-9w
Prison staff 638w
Pupil-teacher ratios 753-4
Speech therapists 154-5, 197w
Teachers 568w, 573w
University finance 745w
University teachers 745w

Pay beds 160w

Pay settlements
Fire services 110w
Nurses 110w
Tax rates & bands 331-2w

"Paying for Local Government Consultation Paper" 613-4w
Scotland 613-4w

Payne, Cynthia 407w
Trials 407w

Peace negotiations
Central America 694w, 904-5
Cyprus 695-6w
Middle East 228w, 399-400w, 693-4w

Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.02.87) 485-6, 511
Questions
Landlord & tenant, West Yorkshire 2w
Manufacturing industries, Yorkshire & Humberside 54w

Peckham
Maternity benefits 863-5w

Pendle
Board & lodging charges 709w
Housing investment programmes 664-5w

Pendle Borough Council 664-5w

Pendry, Mr Tom
Questions
Maternity benefits, Tameside 346w
Ports, Security 537-8w
St Nicholas School, School closures 744w

Pension funds
Profits 508-9w

Pensioners
Butter 482w
Food surpluses 784w, 823-4w
Heating allowances 201w
Lancashire 594-5w
Severe weather 507w
Severe weather payments 398-9w
Social security recipients 192-3w

Pensions
Farmers 601w
Inflation 456
Private education 573-4w
Teachers 573-4w

People's Liberation Army of Namibia 459w

People's Right to Fuel Bill 1986/87
Debates etc
1R (18.02.87) 925-6

Per capita costs
Parrot Corporation 846w
Primary education 745-7w
Public libraries 653-4
Secondary education 220-1w

Peres, Shimon 693w
Official engagements 693w

Perez, Fernando 231-2w, 234w
Kidnapping 231-2w, 234w

Perivale Hospital 808w
Members' correspondence 808w

Persian Gulf
Foreign policy 692w

Personal income
Income tax 824-6w
North West region 54w
South East region 54w
Tax allowances 182-3w
Tobacco duties 422w

Personal loans
Interest rates 626-7w

Personal property
Police custody 8w

Personal records
Disclosure of information (20.02.87) 1165-223

Personal social services
Capital investment 857w
Local government expenditure 268w

Pest control
Animal cruelty 113w
Animal welfare 113w

Pesticides
Agricultural products 790-1w
Agricultural research 483w, 679w
Agriculture 787w
Developing countries 666-7w
Research 483w, 679w

Peterborough
Maternity benefits 704w

Peterhead Prison 260w, 615w
Construction 260w
Inquiries 615w

Petrochemicals
International trade 630-3w

Petroleum
International trade 630-3w

Petroleum Bill 1986/87
Debates etc
Rep & 3R (11.02.87) 369-408 (566, 638 corrigenda)

Petroleum revenue tax 29-30w
Tax yields 878w

Pharmaceutical services 97-8w

Pharmacia Ltd 413w
Radioactive waste disposal 413w

Phoenix vehicles 101w

Photochemical oxidants 112w, 670w

Photochemical Oxidants Review Group 112w, 670w

Photochemical pollutants 112w, 670w
Air pollution 670w

Photographs
Police records 217w

Photography
Museums & galleries 451w
Wales 451w

Physical education
College closures 264w

PICKUP
Scotland 299

Pigment
Imports 42w, 485-6w
Netherlands 42w
Prices 485-6w

Pike, Mr Peter
Debates etc
Business statement (19.02.87) 1078
Hospital closures, Private Members' motions (09.02.87) 69
Housing (10.02.87) 234-6
Housing (Houses in Multiple Occupation) Bill, 2R (13.02.87) 611
Local Government Bill, Scope of Bill (18.02.87) 920-1
Questions
Arts, North West region 475w
Board & lodging charges, Burnley 709w
Cancer hazards, Nuclear power stations 1055
Common agricultural policy, EC budget 393w
Community care, Health services finance 149-50
Council housing, Housing standards 235-8w
Decapol, Water 415w
Derelict land grants, Lancashire 739w
Difficult to let properties, Local authorities 156w
Educational finance, Lancashire 27w
Housing investment programmes, Burnley 664-5w
Information technology centres, Lancashire 391w
M63, Road construction 624w
Maternity benefits, Burnley 353w, 516-7w
Motorway service areas 43w
Motorways, Warning signs 43w
Neighbourhood watch schemes 373w
Pensioners, Lancashire 594-5w
Pre-school education 369w
Prescription charges, Pre-payment certificates 820w
Prime Minister official engagements 160w, 303w, 523w
Regional aid, North West region 627w
Retirement age, Lancashire 594w
Secondary education, Per capita costs 220-1w
Settle-Carlisle railway, Railway closures 378w
Social security recipients, Burnley 269-10w
South Africa, Political prisoners 687-8w
Trident, Official secrets 870-1w
Urban housing renewal unit, Local authorities 661-2w
Urban programme, Government grants to local authorities 552w
Water pollution, North West region 112w

Planning appeals
Darren colliery 450w
Garngoch colliery 450-1w
Heritage coast 239w
Kittery Court 239w
Wales 448w

Planning inquiries
Costs 737w
Departmental circulars 737w

Planning permission
Agricultural land 168-9, 418w, 1048
Canary Wharf 111w
Greenbelt 162, 168
Industrial development 113w
NHS 136-7w
Northern Ireland (10.02.87) 287-92
Power stations 635w
Saintfield (10.02.87) 287-92
Tillingham Hall 552-3w

Plastic bullets
Complaints against police 464w
Injuries 464w, 731w
Northern Ireland 406-7w, 464w, 731w

Play
Children 111w
Departmental initiatives 111w

Play Board 111w, 550w
Government grants 550w

Play facilities 124-5w

Play groups
Wales 636w

Plugs & Sockets Etc (Safety) Regulations 1987
Debates etc
(09.02.87) 26

Plutonium
Exports 633w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 316w
Nuclear reactors 470w

Poaching
Duke of Argyll 257w
Prosecutions 258w
Scotland 258w

Points of order
Speaker's rulings & statements (12.02.87) 459-60, 471, 474, (13.02.87) 632, (16.02.87) 657, (17.02.87) 875-6, (18.02.87) 915, 927, (19.02.87) 1073

Poisoning
Wild animals 268w, 333w

Poland
BBC external services 895-6
Foreign policy 697w
Human rights 896
Nazi war crimes 896
Political prisoners 896

Polaris
Costs 871w
Defence expenditure 871w
Defence procurement 871w

Police
Domestic violence 324w, 389w
Economic League 868w
Manpower 618-22w
Ministerial responsibility 618-22w
Nuclear power stations 322w
Road traffic control 174-5w
Scotland 186w
Working hours 186w

Police attention
Bennet, C 874-5w

Police brutality
Northern Ireland 225w
Police custody 225w

Police cells 642-3w
Prisoners 642-3w

Police Complaints Authority (Information) Bill 1986/87
Debates etc
2R order read (13.02.87) 631, (20.02 87) 1230

Police custody
Delaney, Michael 867w
Personal property 8w
Police brutality 225w
Prisoners 643w

Police detention 432w, 874-5w
Terrorism 432w

Police discipline
Witnesses 320w

Police equipment
News International 373w

Police firearms
Police patrolling 218w

Police housing 109-11w

Police informers
Northern Ireland 463w, 726-7w
Prisoners on remand 406w

Police interrogation
Tape recorded evidence 259w

Police misconduct
Compensation 218w

Police national computer
Consultants 321w

Police patrolling
Helicopters 218w
Police firearms 218w

Police raids
BBC 457w

Police records
Economic League 868w
Computers (20.02.87) 1233-40
News International 217-8w
Photographs 217w

Police right of search
BBC 8-9w, 230w, 260w, 268w, 322w, 435w, 445-7w, 606w, 771w, 795-6w
Director of Public Prosecutions 371w
Law Officers (11.02.87) 312-6
Lord Advocate 446w
Members' correspondence 260w
Procurator fiscal service 388w
Standing Order No 20 applications (11.02.87) 312-6

Police rights of search
BBC 259-60w
Procurators fiscal 259-60w

Police vehicles
Death 556-7w
Road accidents 556-7w, 771w

"Policies & Priorities for Health Services in Wales" 82w

Political broadcasting
Satellite broadcasting 6w

Political impartiality
Public libraries 479w

Political parties
Finance 60w
Namibia 400w
Northern Ireland 331-2w

Political prisoners
Poland 896
South Africa 687-8w
USSR (12.02.87) 558, (19.02.87) 1149

Political refugees
Immigration applications 371-2w
Tamils 769-74

Politics & government
Namibia 460w

Pollock, Mr Alexander
Debates etc
Housing, Scotland (11.02.87) 421-2
Questions
Common fisheries policy 788w
Forestry, Scotland 300-1
National Farmers' Union of Scotland, Agriculture 262w
Paper industry, Irvine 541w
Procurator fiscal service, Finance 307-8

Pollution control
Acid rain 112w
Government grants 112w

Pollution monitoring
Nuclear power stations 327w
Radioactivity 387w, 470w, 540w

Polychlorinated biphenyl
Capacitors 421w
Electrical technology 314w

Pompidou Group 215-6w
Drug abuse 215-6w

Population
Dundee 387w
Elderly 193w
Ethnic minorities 212w
Tayside 387w

Port of Fosdyke Bill (HL) 1985/86
Debates etc
3R* (11.02.87) 293

Porter, Mr Barry
Debates etc
Crown Proceedings (Armed Forces) Bill, 2R (13.02.87) 571, 574, 589, 593-4, 596-600
Early day motions, Leader of the Opposition (19.02.87) 1084
Housing (Houses in Multiple Occupation) Bill, 2R (13.02.87) 611, 620, 622, 627-8

Ports
Security 537-8w
Warships 366w

Portsmouth
Action for jobs 768w
Maternity benefits 709w

Postal deliveries
Rural areas 747w

Post-neonatal mortality
Scotland 69-76w

Potassium iodate 613w
Schools 613w
Scotland 613w

Potato crisps 267w

Powell, Rt Hon J Enoch
Debates etc
Planning permission, Saintfield, South Down (10.02.87) 287-8, 291-2
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 (Continuance) Order 1987 (10.02.87) 277

Powell, Mr Ray
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.02.87) 487-8
Questions
Hypothermia, Wales 11

Powell, Mr William
Debates etc
Broadcasting Bill (HL), 2R (16.02.87) 678-80

Power industry
Coal fired power stations 642
Redundancy 647-8

Power industry disconnections 468-9w, (18.02.87) 925-6

Power stations 635-6w
Capital investment 10w
Construction 647-8
Lignite 449
Planning permission 635w

Powley, Mr John
Debates etc
Access to Personal Files Bill, 2R (20.02.87) 1182
Broadcasting Bill (HL), 2R (16.02.87) 682-3, 687
Crown Proceedings (Armed Forces) Bill, 2R (13.02.87) 573, 587, 591-4
Housing (10.02.87) 185-6
Housing (Houses in Multiple Occupation) Bill, 2R (13.02.87) 620-3
Local Government (Empty Council Houses) Bill, 1R (17.02.87) 783-5
Questions
Electricity generation, Nuclear power stations 639-40
Sizewell B, Nuclear power stations 167w

Pregnancy 718w
Radon gas 115w

Premium bonds
Prize money 233w, 424-5w

Pre-payment certificates
Prescription charges 820w

Pre-school education 369w
Road safety education 155w
School population 653-6w

Prescott, Mr John
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.02.87) 477, 479, 484-5, 487, 491-502, 504, 522-4

Prescription charges
Pre-payment certificates 820w

Prescriptions
Contraceptives 202w, 710-1w
Wales 97-8w

Press advertising
Severe weather payments 138-9w

Pressurised water reactors 643-5
Nuclear safety 213-4w
USA 644

Preston
Maternity benefits 374w

Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984
Questions
5w

Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 (Continuance) Order 1987
Debates etc
(10.02.87) 263-86

Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Acts
Questions
432w, 463w

Preventive medicine 191w
AIDS 191w

Price, Sir David
Questions
Age addition, Old persons pensions 521w
Departmental forms 472w
Directors, Company law 160w
Electricity generation 10-2w
Fast reactors, Construction 9w
M3, Road construction 44w
Museums & galleries, Repairs & maintenance 476w
Parliamentary Contributory Pension Fund 328w
Student grants 566w

Price increases
Food prices 787w

Prices
Agricultural production 782w
Agricultural products 782w, 790w
Beef & veal 269w, 781w
Cereals 781-2w
Common agricultural policy 1041, 1043-5
Meat 539w
Pigmeat 485-6w
Sheep meat 782w, 1041-2

Pricing
Cars 633w

Primary education
Class sizes 12-24w, 644-54w
Per capita costs 745-7w
School buildings 29w
Village schools 574w

Prime Minister
House of Commons questions 161w

Prime Minister domestic visits
Fraserburgh 303w
Moodiesburn 521w
Wales 521w

Prime Minister official engagements 160w, 303w, 523w, 808w
Reagan, President 302w

Prime Minister visits abroad
Bain & Company 623w
USSR 159w, 691w

Prime Minister's Office 522w, 807w
National security 522w

Prime Minister's questions
Speaker's rulings & statements (12.02.87) 455, 457-8, (19.02.87) 1055

Prime Minister's visits abroad
USSR 522w

Prison accommodation
Capital investment 294
Scotland 186w, 293-5

Prison administration
Prison population 770-1w

Prison governors 638w, 770-1w
Fresh start 638w

Prison medical services
AIDS 373w
Sickle cell disease 639-40w
Social Services Select Committee 868w

Prison Officers Association
Fresh start 638w

Prison overcrowding
Remand centres 322-3w

Prison population 770w
Northern Ireland 447-8, 463-5w, 774-6w
Prison administration 770-1w

Prison riots
Prosecutions 257-8w
Scotland 257-8w

Prison sentences
Court of Appeal 157-8
Rape 7w, 766
Scotland 294-5

Prison staff
Conditions of employment 638w, 769w
Empty housing 643w
Fresh start 554-5w, 769w
Greater London 554w
Holloway Prison 554w
Inverness Prison 540w
Northern Ireland 448
Overtime 638w
Pay 638w
Training 554-5w

Prisoners
AIDS 325-6w, 372w
Alcoholism 614w
Blood donors 269w
Contraceptives 323w
Court cells 643w
Expenditure 642w
Hepatitis 769-70w
Mental illness 436w
Police cells 642-3w
Police custody 643w
Psychiatry 436w
Suicide 614w

Prisoners on remand 559w
Bail 559w
Police informers 406w
Probation & aftercare 560-1w
South east region 559w

Prisoners' release
Life imprisonment 775w

Prisoners' transfers
Northern Ireland 433w, 456w
Scotland 456w

Prisons
Crown immunity 555w
Fresh Start 372-3w
Land values 555-6w
Management 554w
Public order policing 554w
Public sector housing sales 174w
Youth custody 560-1w

Privacy
Scottish courts 185w

Private education
Pensions 573-4w
School population 369-70w

Private health services
Abortion 497-500w

Private investment
City technology colleges 571w

Private Members' Bills
Speaker's rulings & statements (13.02.87) 629-30

Private Members' Motions (11.02.87) 316, (18.02.87) 924
Hospital closures (09.02.87) 69
Radioactive waste disposal (09.02.87) 27-68

Private Members' time
Speaker's rulings & statements (09.02.87) 25-6

Private notice questions
Speaker's rulings & statements (10.02.87) 167, (17.02.87) 781-2, (18.02.87) 912

Private sector
Non-domestic rates 5
Urban development grants 737w
Urban planning 737w
Youth training scheme 610-1w

Private sector employment
Average earnings 533w

Private Security Bill 1986/87
Debates etc
2R order read (20.02.87) 1229

Privatisation 405w
British Airways 48w, 626w
British Gas Corporation 319w
Crown suppliers 667w
Dockyards (09.02.87) 117-34
Electricity supply industry 10w
Employment 329w
Income 825w
Jaguar Rover Australia 630w
Land registration 267-8w
National Girobank 748w

Privileges Select Committee (09.02.87) 134

Prize money 424-5w
Premium bonds 233w, 424-5w

Probation & aftercare
Government grants 560-1w
Prisoners on remand 560-1w

Probation hostels 322w

Proceeds of crime 640w
Fraud 640w

Proctor, Mr K Harvey
Debates etc
Petroleum Bill, Rep & 3R (11.02.87) 374-7, 386, 405-6
Questions
Ethnic minorities, Childbirth 212w
Ethnic minorities, Population 212w
Offshore fixed platforms 838w
Road tax, Northern Ireland 722-3w
Tillingham Hall, Planning permission 552-3w
United Nations, UK contributions 832w

Procurator fiscal
BBC 772w

Procurator fiscal service 388-9w
Finance 307-9
Police right of search 388w
Prosecutions 309
Search warrants 308

Procurators fiscal 8-9w, 259-60w, 445-7w, 606w, 617-8w, 772w
Ayr 259w
BBC 772w
Dornoch 259w
Kilmarnock 259w
Police rights of search 259-60w

Procurement
Crown Suppliers 667w
Dept of the Environment 667w
DROPS 104w
Government departments 233w
North West Regional Health Authority 504-5w

Production quotas
Agricultural products 288w, 486w
Cereals 750w, 780w
Dairy farming 337-8w, 486w
Milk 337-8w, 452w, 486w, 782-3w
South Wales 452w

Productivity
British Coal Corporation 469w
Civil service 655
Coal mining 642

Professional & Executive Recruitment
Take-up of employment 302w, 393w, 533w
Vacancies 533w

Professional qualifications
Industrial tribunals 408w

Profitability
British Rail 378w
Direct labour departments 669w

Prometheus project 735-6w
Motor vehicles 735-6w

Property development
Agricultural land 161-6, 169, 418w
Conservation areas 157w
Derelict land 166
Local government finance 167-8
Nature conservation 157w
Royal Opera House 652-3
Scottish courts 310
Sewers 82w
Tenant farmers 168
Water supply 82w

Property repayment services 667-8w
Accounting 668w
Civil service manpower 668w

Property Services Agency
Accounting 668w
Civil service dispersal 664w
Government contracts 667-8w
Ministry of Defence 856w

Property transfer
British Coal Corporation 552w
Calderstones School, Liverpool 369w
Liverpool University 27w
NHS 83-4w, 137w, 198w
Spectrum Centre 157w

Proscribed organisations
Ulster Defence Regiment 493w, 686w

Prosecutions
Child destruction 1w
Duke of Argyll 257w
National security 234w
Official Secrets Acts 260w
Poaching 258w
Prison riots 257-8w
Procurator fiscal service 309
Rates & rating 75w, 740w
Road tax 722-3w
Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 435-6w
Town Police Clauses Act 1847 639w

Prostitution
Nationalisation 297

Protection of Shareholders Bill 1986/87
Debates etc
2R order read (20.02.87) 1229

Protection of Trading Interests Act 1980 875-7w

Protheroe, Alan 685w
Territorial Army 685w

Psittacosis
Death 823w
Notifiable diseases 823w

Psychiatry
Prisoners 436w

Public access 416-7w

Public Accounts Committee
Government departments 532w

Public Accounts Committee
Dept of Education & Science 583w
Dept of Employment 532w
Dept of Energy 634w
Dept of the Environment 662-3w
Dept of Trade & Industry 523w
Dept of Transport 623w
Foreign & Commonwealth office 536w
Government departments 523w, 528w, 536w, 557w, 583w, 603w, 623w, 634w, 662-3w, 825w
Home office 557w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 603w
Ministry of Defence 870w
Overseas Development Administration 528w
Treasury 825w

Public administration
Civil service 655

Public appointments
Animal Procedures Committee 174w
BBC 456-7
Handicapped 3w, 77-8w, 280w, 327-8w
London Docklands Development Corporation 312w
Salmon Advisory Committee 166-7w
Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment 156w
Trafford Park Development Corporation 552w

Public bodies 3w, 77-8w, 412w, 419w, 483w

Public expenditure (18.02.87) 927-1006
Cost effectiveness 826-7w
Northern Ireland 448-50
Public sector employment 233w, 826w
Rural areas 307
Scotland 304-6
Travelling expenses 234w

"Public Expenditure White Paper" (18.02.87) 927-1006

Public inquiries
A1-M1 link 253w

Public land 339-40w

Public libraries 475w
Arts finance 653-4
Censorship 670-1w
Codes of practice 479w
Finance 474w
Library Association 474-5w
Local government expenditure 168-9w
News international 478w
Per capita costs 653-4
Political impartiality 479w

Public meetings
Trafalgar Square 738-9w

Public order policing
News International 216-7w, 436w
Prisons 554w
Wapping 869w

Public participation in planning
Sizewell B 645-6

Public petitions
Ogarodnikov, Alexander (12.02.87) 558, (19.02.87) 1149

Public sector
Energy efficiency 36w
Finance 545w
Youth training scheme 610w

Public sector employment
Average earnings 533w
Public expenditure 233w, 826w

Public sector housing sales
British Coal Corporation 213w, 240w
Prisons 174w

Public service vehicles 43w
Motor vehicle testing 43w

Publicity
Developing countries 409-10w
Food labelling 785w
Nuclear weapons deployment 184w
Objects in lieu of tax 479-80w
Right to buy 12
Severe weather payments 341w

Publishing
"Defence Open Government Document, 87/01" 869w

Pupil-teacher ratios 753
Essex 753
Pay 753-4

Pupils
Diplomatic service education allowances 697-8w
Further education 833-6w

Puppies
Animal welfare 320-1w

Queen Elizabeth II Hospital, Welwyn Garden City 341w

Quota of handicapped workers
Dept of Health & Social Security 192w

Racial attacks 215w

Racial conflict
Arrests 215w
Codes of practice 215w
Newham 215w

Racial harassment 215w

Radcliffe Report 561-3w
Subversion 561-3w

Radiation hazards
Health physics 426w
Housing 548w
Housing problems 114-5w
Nuclear power stations 154w, 426w
Radon gas 644
Sizewell B 645

Radice, Mr Giles
Questions
AIDS, Health education 752-3
Education, Local education authorities 761
Secondary education, Selective schools 755

Radioactive waste disposal 847-8w
Bradwell power station 849w
Chatham Dockyard 564-5w
Environment 412w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 602w
Nuclear power stations 415-6w, 548w
Pharmacia Ltd 413w
Private Members' motions (09.02.87) 27-68
Seas & oceans 412-3w

Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee 412w

Radioactive wastes 113-4w, 415w
Civil service manpower 602w

Radioactivity
Air pollution 415w
Animal feed 1052
Dried milk 42w
Dundee 796w
Hinkley Point 470w
Housing problems 741-2w
Members' correspondence 796w
Pollution monitoring 387w, 470w, 540w
Scotland 540w
Sheep 40w, 603w, 1051-2

Radiochemical Inspectorate 415-7w
Civil service manpower 415-7w

Radiophones
Licensing 2-3w

Radiotherapy 147-8, 199w
South East Thames Regional Health Authority 147-8
Southend Hospital 199w

Radon gas 114-6w, 413-6w, 548w, 741-2w
Building repairs 115-6w
Cornwall 115-6w
Housing problems 114-5w, 413-6w
Pregnancy 115w
Radiation hazards 644
Research 414w
Safety standards 413-4w
Somerset 114-5w, 414-6w
Truro 741-2w

RAF Binbrook 777w
Armed forces civilians 777w
Ministers' domestic visits 777w

RAF Mount Batten 491-2w
Armed forces training 491-2w

Raffan, Mr Keith
Debates etc
Adjournment debates (17.02.87) 778
Bypasses, Mold (16.02.87) 734-40
Police right of search, BBC (16.02.87) 743-9
Public expenditure (18.02.87) 941
Questions
Food inspection, Wales 10
Health education, Wales 3
Rate support grants, Wales 5

Railway closures 538w
Settle-Carlisle railway 378w, (11.02.87) 433-40

Railway electrification 379w

Railway network (16.02.87) 707-18
Wales 18

Railway timetables
British Rail 46w

Railway transport (16.02.87) 707-18
EC countries 624w
Government assistance to industry 624w

Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Debates etc
Housing (10.02.87) 195-9

Rajiah, J 461w
Death 461w
Spain 461w

Ramasamy, Rajendrau 374w
Members' correspondence 374w

Ramie
Import controls 439w

Randall, Mr Stuart
Questions
Falkland Islands, Fishing vessels 1043
Immigration, Humberside Airport 321w
Light dues, Fisheries 46w
Light dues, Hull 46w
Maternity benefits, Kingston upon Hull 350-1w
Maternity benefits, Luton 349-50w, 589w

Rape
Parole 7w
Prison sentences 7w, 766
Scotland 324-5w, 385-6w, 798w

Rapier missiles
Armed forces deployment 564w

Rate fund contributions (11.02.87) 409-32
Scotland (11.02.87) 409-32

Rate rebates
Housing insulation 649
Inner London boroughs 126w
Social security recipients 190-1w

Rate Support Grant (Scotland) Order 1987
Debates etc
(18.02.87) 1007-30

Rate support grants
Adur District Council 417w, 670w
Hove District Council 417w, 670w
Leeds City Council 157w
Local authorities in Scotland 189-90w
Local government finance 159w
Scotland (18.02.87) 1007-30
Slough 382w
Wales 5

Rates & rating
Agricultural land 1045-6
Crofting 263w
East Sussex 740w
Farm buildings 481w
Farm incomes 787w, 1045-6
Farms 1046
Inner London boroughs 126w
Liberal party 1045
Local government finance 159w
Northern Ireland 75w
Prosecutions 75w, 740w
Scotland (11.02.87) 320-68, 613-4w, (18.02.87) 1007-30
Sports centres 266w
University finance 575-6w
Wales 4

Rathbone, Mr Tim
Debates etc
Broadcasting Bill (HL), 2R (16.02.87) 664
Questions
Energy efficiency, Northern Ireland 647

Rating revaluations
Crofting 188w

Raynsford, Mr Nick
Debates etc
Housing (10.02.87) 187-8, 225-9, 254
Housing (Houses in Multiple Occupation) Bill, 2R (13.02.87) 620, 626-7
Questions
Average earnings 177-8w
Energy action areas, Government grants 646-7
Housing benefits, Social security reform 145-6
Housing insulation, Social security recipients 467w

Reagan, President 302w
Prime Minister official engagements 302w

Rear seat belts 45w

Recruitment
Civil servants 383w
Mathematics education 169-70w
Nurses 152-3, 198w
Occupational therapy 211w
Science education 169-70w

Recycling
House of Commons 17-8
House of Commons accommodation 18

Redbridge
Maternity benefits 698-9w, 701-2w

Redmond, Mr Martin
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.02.87) 524, 533-6
Questions
Arts centres, Regional arts 477w
Civil defence, South Yorkshire 488w
Maternity benefits, Don Valley 144w

Redundancy 132w
Health service staff 84-6w, 847-8w
Local government staff 420w
Manufacturing industries 54w, 187w, 264-5w, 457-8
Power industry 647-8
Royal ordnance factories 492w
Scotland 63w
Scott Lithgow 518w
Unemployment benefits 518w

Redundancy pay
Passenger transport executives 379w

Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Debates etc
Broadcasting Bill (HL), 2R (16.02.87) 671-2, 695

Rees, Rt Hon Peter
Debates etc
Public expenditure (18.02.87) 960-3

Referenda
Anglo-Irish Agreement 446, 450-1

Refrigeration
Fishing vessels 601-2w

Refugee camps 409w, 830-1w
Palestine 409w

Refugees
Afghanistan 228w
Chile 690w
Lebanon 537w
Namibia 403-4w, 459-60w
Overseas aid 409w, 830-1w
Pakistan 228w
Palestine 830-1w
SWAPO 401-4w

Tamils 909-14

Regional aid 528-7w
Dundee 791-2w
North West region 627w
Scotland 305

Regional arts
Arts centres 477w

Regional arts associations 232w, 477w
Arts finance 232w

Regional development grants
Scotland 261w
Small businesses 262w
Wales 213-4w

Regional health authorities
Expenditure 139w
Hospital waiting lists 199w
Surgery 210w

Regional planning & development
European Regional Development Fund 87w
Wales 765-6
Western Isles 296

Regional secure units 499w

Regional selective assistance 523w, 526-7w, 791-2w

Registered Establishments (Scotland) Bill 1986/87
Debates etc
(12.02.87) 475
2R* (20.02.87) 1232

Registration of births deaths & marriages 585w

Religion
Community programme 765w, 768w

Religious discrimination
USSR 830w

Remand centres
Prison overcrowding 322-3w

Remand in custody
Scheduled offences 462w, 725-6w
Terrorism 431-2w

Remotely piloted vehicles 101w

"Removal of Disused Offshore Platforms" 838w

***Renton, Mr Tim,** Minister of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs*
Questions
ABM Treaty, USA 873w
Albania, Diplomatic relations 907-8
Arms control, Chemical weapons 692-3w, 901
Arms control, Conventional weapons 693w
Arms control, International conferences 692w
Arms control treaties 873-4w, 899-900
Arms control treaties, Chemical weapons 900
Arms control treaties, Strategic defence initiative 901-2
Arms control treaties, Theatre nuclear weapons 900-1
Arms exports, Iran 693w
BBC, Police right of search 230w
Czechoslovakia, Foreign policy 690w
Eastern Europe, Human rights 689w
Egypt, Foreign policy 399-400w
Geneva Conventions 329w
Germanyuk, Ulyana, USSR 830w
Hong Kong 227w
Hong Kong, Annual reports 831w
Hong Kong, Ministers' visits abroad 692w
Indonesia, Hawk Jet trainer aircraft 831w
Iran-Iraq war, Tanker ships 229w
Jews, USSR 229w
Kampuchea, Human rights 690w
Lebanon, Refugees 537w
Middle East, Foreign policy 694w
Middle East, Peace negotiations 228w, 693-4w
Middle East, UN General Assembly 874w
Middle East Association, Ministerial speeches 230w
National security, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 164w
NATO, Mafia 329w
Nuclear test ban, Arms control treaties 696w
Nuclear test ban, Five Continents Group 230w
Nuclear test ban, USA 229-30w
Palestine, Refugees 830-1w
Peres, Shimon, Official engagements 693w
Persian Gulf, Foreign policy 692w
Poland, BBC external services 895-6
Poland, Foreign policy 697w
Poland, Human rights 896
Poland, Nazi war crimes 896
Republic of Ireland, Electronic surveillance 328w
Satellites, National security 461w
Strategic defence initiative, ABM Treaty 832w
USSR, Foreign policy 688w, 691w
USSR, Human rights 691-2w
USSR, Jews 691w
USSR, Ministers' visits abroad 691w
USSR, Official engagements 690-1w

Rents
Housing benefits 146, 194w

Repairs & maintenance
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices 819w
Military vehicles 184w
Museums & galleries 476w
School buildings 761-2
Severn bridge 378w

Reprography
Norman Shaw building 473w

Republic of Ireland 331w
Anglo-Irish Agreement 77w, 331w
Electronic surveillance 328w
Green pound 485w
Terrorism 446

Rescue services
Helicopters 625-6w
Scotland 625-6w

Research
Education Act 1981 170-1w
Fertility 186-7w
Grey seals 65w
Pesticides 483w, 679w
Radon gas 414w
Science & Technology Select Committee (HL) 572w
Seals 486w
Severn barrage 642-3
Tidal power 642-3
Universities 580-1w

Research finance
AIDS 512w
British Nuclear Fuels Ltd 837w
Conductive education 574w
Meningitis 224w, 283-4w
Road safety 410w
Science & technology research 370-1w
Science & technology research 657-9w

Residential care
Board & lodging charges 361-2w, 499-500w
Scotland (12.02.87) 475
Supplementary benefits 130-1, 361-2w, 499-500w

Residuary bodies 420w

Resignations
Holloway Prison 554w
Magistrates 2w

Restart programme 161w, (12.02.87) 476-558, 606-7w, 609w, 614w, 769w
Advertising 769w
Ashfield 609w
Civil service manpower 161w
Costs 769w
Edinburgh 614w
Employers' attitudes 769w
Greater London 606-7w
Interviews 609w
Merseyside 606-7w
Stoke-on-Trent 769w

Retail price index 787w

Retail trade
VAT 423-4w, 541-2w

Retirement age 284w
Lancashire 594w
State occupational pensions 593-4w

Retirement pensions
Severe disability premium 130w

Revaluation Rate Rebates (Scotland) Order 1986
Debates etc
(18.02.87) 1007-30

Reye's syndrome 598-601w
Analgesics 598-9w
Committee on the Safety of Medicines 598-9w
Drug research 599-600w
Young people 599w

Rhodes James, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.02.87) 502-4

Rhondda Valley 80w
Ministers' domestic visits 80w

Rhubarb
Imports 791w

Rhuddlan Borough Council 4

Rhyl
Doctors' list of patients 455w, 846-7w
Housing improvement 4

Rhymney Valley 80w
Housing starts 80w

Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Debates etc
Banking Bill, Rep & 3R (19.02.87) 1105, 1138-42
Companies (Audit Committees) Bill, 1R (10.02.87) 171

Richardson, Ms Jo
Debates etc
Social Fund (Maternity & Funeral Expenses) Bill, Rem stages (09.02.87) 96-8, 112-3
Women (17.02.87) 829-34, 837, 866
Questions
Arts, Employment 476w
House of Commons, Equality Exchange 804w
Maternity benefits, Barking & Dagenham 701w
Maternity benefits, Exceptional needs payments 590w
Maternity benefits, Greenwich 865w
Maternity benefits, Redbridge 698-9w, 701-2w
Severe weather payments, Administrative delays 193-4w
South Africa, Censorship 687w
Speech therapists, Equal pay 155, 566 (corrigendum)
Women, Dept of Health & Social Security 493-4w

***Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas,** Secretary of State for the Environment*
Debates etc
Housing (10.02.87) 183-92
Local Government Bill 1986/87, Ministerial statements (18.02.87) 916-24
Local Government Bill, 1R (18.02.87) 924
Questions
Higher civil servants, Dept of the Environment 856w
Land use, Rural areas 161-9
Local authorities, Debts 741w
Local government revenue 239-40w
Management consultants, Dept of the Environment 665-6w

Opinion surveys, Dept of the Environment 247w
Public Accounts Committee, Dept of the Environment 662-3w
Tillingham Hall, Planning permission 552-3w

Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Debates etc
Banking Bill, Rep & 3R (10.02.87) 1093

Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm, *Secretary of State for Scotland*
Debates etc
Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc (Scotland) Bill, Allocation of time motion (11.02.87) 359-63
Questions
Agricultural production, Scotland 307
AIDS, Medical research 297
AIDS, Scotland 296-8
BBC, Ministerial correspondence 794-5w
BBC, Police right of search 268w, 795-6w
Cash limits 458w
Caterpillar Tractors, Factory closures 262w
Chiropody 61w
Confederation of British Industry, Scotland 264w
Handicapped, Scottish Office 327-8w
Housing problems, Scotland 263w
Jordanhill College of Education, College closures 264w
Management consultants, Scottish Office 613w
National Farmers' Union of Scotland, Agriculture 262w
Paper industry, Irvine 541w
Police raids, BBC 457w
Potassium iodate, Scotland 613w
Prison accommodation, Scotland 293-5
Prostitution, Nationalisation 297
Radioactivity, Scotland 540w
Rape, Scotland 798w
Rural areas, Scotland 307
Scottish Development Agency, Government grants 457-8w, 616w
Scottish Office, Expenditure 615-6w
Young offenders, Scotland 538w
Young offenders, Social workers' training 538-9w

Right to buy
Publicity 12
Wheelchair housing 312w

Rights of way
West Glamorgan 451w

Riot control weapons
News International 373-4w

River Dee 451w, 846w
Bridges 846w
Road construction 451w, 846w
Road traffic 846w

River Elbe 613w
River pollution 613w

River pollution
River Elbe 613w

RMS St Helena 527w

Road accidents
A1 379w
Computer applications 139w
Lorries 5w
Police vehicles 556-7w, 771w

Road closures 155-6w
Motorways 155-6w

Road construction
A34 411w
A36 155w
Ayr 612w
M3 44w
M25 409w
M63 624w
River Dee 451w, 846w
Road traffic 451w
Tutbury bypass 378w

Road markings 247-8w
France 247-8w
Road safety 247-8w

Road mileage
Road works 155-6w

Road safety
Government grants to local authorities 252w
Research finance 410w
Road markings 247-8w

Road safety barriers
A38 45-6w

Road safety education
Pre-school education 155w

Road tax
Cars 840w
Costs 841w
Goods vehicles 840w
Northern Ireland 722-3w
Prosecutions 722-3w
Tax collection 841w
Tax evasion 841w

Road traffic
Ayr 612w
Dornoch road bridge 612w
Hampden Park 736w
River Dee 846w
Road construction 451w

Road traffic control
M6 45-6w
Police 174-5w

Road traffic offences
Information 868-9w

Road traffic police
Written questions 373w

Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984
Prosecutions 435-6w
Questions
435-6w

Road works
A22 736w
Fife 612w
Road mileage 155-6w

Roads
Capital investment 185-6w
Lorry drivers 411w
North West region 47w
Scotland 185-6w
South East region 47w

Roberts, Mr Allan
Debates etc
Housing (10.02.87) 185-6, 190-1, 196-7, 200-1, 216, 218-22, 224
Local Government Bill, Scope of Bill (18.02.87) 919
Questions
Land use, Rural areas 164
Maternity benefits, Bootle 149w
National Girobank, Privatisation 748w

Roberts, Mr Ernie
Questions
Maternity benefits, Hackney 147-8w

Roberts, Mr Wyn, *Under-Secretary of State for Wales*
Debates etc
Bypasses, Mold (16.02.87) 734, 737-41
Questions
Archaeology, Wales 297-8w
Bridges, River Dee 846w
Delegated legislation, Wales 455w
Education of children at home, South Glamorgan 80w
Educational publications, Educational finance 451-2w
Handicapped pupils, Special educational needs 92w
Historic Buildings Council for Wales, Annual report 300w
M4, Warning signs 451w
Milk, Production quotas 452w
Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin, Government grants 636w
Museums & galleries, Photography 451w
Railway network, Wales 18
Rights of way, West Glamorgan 451w
River Dee, Road construction 451w
Road traffic, River Dee 846w
Technical & vocational education initiative, Welsh language 295w
Voluntary projects programme, Wales 297w
Welsh language 80w
Welsh language, Government grants 5-7
Welsh language, Legislation 80-1w
Youth training scheme, Take-up of employment 81w
Youth training scheme, Wales 296w

Robertson, Mr George
Questions
Arms control, Chemical weapons 901
Arms exports, Iran 693w
Bombings, Kensington & Chelsea 432w
Le Pen, Jean-Marie, Lancaster House 125-6w

Robinson, Mr Mark, *Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales*
Debates etc
Hospitals, Machynlleth (16.02.87) 729-33
Questions
Council house sales, Wales 12
Dentistry, Costs 93-6w
Dentistry, Wales 95-6w
Dentists, Manpower 93-4w
Derelict land grants, Mid Glamorgan 452-4w
Derelict land grants, Wales 455w
Development plans, Wales 377w
Doctors' list of patients, Clwyd 455w
Doctors' list of patients, Rhyl 846-7w
Doctors' surgeries, Access to buildings 455w
Drugs, Expenditure 100-2w
Family doctors, Manpower 92-4w
Family doctors, Wales 99w
Handicapped, Day centres 455w
Handicapped children, Wales 91-2w
Health education, Smoking 3
Health education, Wales 3-4, 546w
Health service staff, Manpower 85-90w
Health service staff, Office workers 450w
Health service staff, Wales 84-6w, 847-8w
Heart diseases 81w
Homelessness, Wales 300-2w
Hospital beds, Wales 89-90w
Hospital closures, Wales 82-3w
Hospital consultants, Chest medicine 226-7w
Hospital length of stay, Wales 95w
Hospitals, Machynlleth 81-2w
Hospitals, NHS 101w
House renovation grants, Wales 79-80w
Housing improvement, Rhyl 4
Housing starts, Rhymney Valley 80w
Hypothermia, Wales 11
Insulation, Wales 8
Insulation grants, Wales 8
Loft insulation, Insulation grants 377w
Medical treatments, Costs 99-100w
Mental health services, Wales 7-8
Mental hospitals, Hospital closures 448w
Mental patients, Hospital discharges 447-9w
Mental patients, Long stay patients 89-91w
Migration, Wales 375-6w
Multiple occupation, Wales 1-3
NHS, Capital investment 449-50w
NHS, Property transfer 83-4w
NHS, Wales 82w
NHS charges, Wales 750w
NHS finance, Expenditure 96w
NHS finance, Wales 97-8w
Planning appeals, Darren colliery 450w
Planning appeals, Gurnos colliery 450-1w
Planning appeals, Wales 448w
Prescriptions, Wales 97-8w
Spectacles, Wales 98w

Water distribution, Wales 299-300w
Water supply, Property development 82w
Water supply, Wales 299w

Roe, Mrs Marion
Debates etc
Women (17.02.87) 845-7
Questions
Council house sales 669-70w
Elderly, Population 193w
Horticulture, Marketing 1053

Rogers, Mr Allan
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.02.87) 489-90, 505-6, 554
Questions
Central America, Peace negotiations 904
Health service staff, Manpower 75-6w
Hospital beds, Northern Ireland 76-8w
Hospital closures, Northern Ireland 70w
Hospital closures, Wales 82-3w
Hospitals, Northern Ireland 75w
Ministers' domestic visits, Rhondda Valley 80w
Nature Conservancy Council, Civil service manpower 550w
Nature Conservancy Council, Geology 550-1w
Nature Conservancy Council, Graduates 549w
Nature Conservancy Council, Sites of special scientific interest 551-2w
Selective schools 572w
Severe weather payments, Temperature 194w
Sites of special scientific interest, Geology 551w
Welsh language, Government grants 6

Rolling stock
British Rail Engineering 46w

Rolls-Royce Aeroengines 437-8w
Capital investment 438w
Government assistance to industry 438w
Investment income 438w
Loans 437w

Roman Catholic Church
Sex education 752

Rooker, Mr Jeff
Debates etc
Housing (10.02.87) 216, 245-51, 256
Questions
Building industry, Industrial health & safety 162w
Derelict land grants, Birmingham 238w, 739-40w
Derelict land grants, Contracts 238w
Derelict land grants, Labour only subcontracting 238-9w
Derelict land grants, Saxon Developments 116-7w
Derelict land grants, West Midlands 238w, 740w
Exceptional needs payments, Birmingham 154w
House prices, Housing stock 116w
Households 117w
Iran, Arms trade 160
Lorries, Overloading offences 44w
Weighing machines, West Midlands 44-5w, 840w

Ross, Mr Ernie
Debates etc
Petroleum Bill, Rep & 3R (11.02.87) 384, 393-4, 406
Questions
Aids for handicapped, Tayside 880w
Brain drain, Higher education 755-6
Domestic violence 388w
Domestic violence, Police 324w, 389w
Domestic violence, Scotland 323-4w
Family income supplements, Scotland 709-10w
Fisheries 781w
Food surpluses, Charities 325w
Food surpluses, Social security recipients 387w
Hospital waiting lists, Scotland 539w
Kestrel Marine Life, Tayside enterprise zone 798w
Legal aid, Scotland 259w
Maternity benefits, Dundee 342-3w, 351-2w, 818w
Middle East, Peace negotiations 228w
Oil industry, Scotland 266w
Population, Dundee 387w
Radioactivity, Members' correspondence 796w
Regional aid, Dundee 791-2w
Scottish Arts Council 478w
Social security recipients, Dundee 518-20w

Ross, Mr Stephen
Questions
Dairy farming, Food inspection 482w
Hickey, Vincent, Inquiries 771w

Rossendale
Maternity benefits 517w

Rossi, Sir Hugh
Debates etc
Housing (Houses in Multiple Occupation) Bill, 2R (13.02.87) 615-6
Radioactive waste disposal (09.02.87) 38-43, 49
Questions
Council house rents 741w
Khurt, A T L, Members' correspondence 866w

Rost, Mr Peter
Questions
Energy conservation, Factories 126w
Energy efficiency, Public sector 36w

Rosyth Dockyard (09.02.87) 117-34

Rothschild, Lord 605w
National security 605w

Rover Group 630w, (19.02.87) 1059-73
Corporate plans (19.02.87) 1059-73
Ministerial statements (19.02.87) 1059-73

Rowe, Mr Andrew
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.02.87) 505, 520
Questions
Channel Tunnel Bill Select Committee 379w
Local education authorities, Capital investment 761
Management & personnel Office 656-7
Objects in lieu of tax, Publicity 479-80w
Personal social services, Capital investment 857w
South East Thames Regional Health Authority, Radiotherapy 148
Supplementary benefits capital limits, Heating allowances 596-7w

Rowlands, Mr Ted
Debates etc
Petroleum Bill, Rep & 3R (11.02.87) 369-71, 373-4, 377-82, 385-9, 405
Questions
Insulation grants, Wales 8
Loft insulation, Insulation grants 647, 649
North Sea oil, Manpower 650

Royal Greenwich Observatory 742w

Royal Liverpool Hospital 509w
Hospital closures 509w
Hospital waiting lists 510w
Surgery 509w

Royal Naval Hospital Haslar 777w
Contract catering 777w

Royal Opera House
London Residuary Body 652-3
Property development 652-3

Royal Ordnance factories 492-3w
Blackburn 491w
Redundancy 492w

Royal Ulster Constabulary
Assaults on police 464w, 732-5w
Crime 465-6w
Inquiries 332w, 452
Stalker, John 452

Royal Yacht
Shipbuilding 565w

Rumbold, Mrs Angela, *Minister of State for Education & Science*
Debates etc
Education (Nutrition Requirements) Bill, 2R (20.02.87) 1226-7
Questions
Adult education, Further education colleges 836w
AIDS, Health education 751-3
Boarding schools, State education 657w
Boarding schools, Statistics 657-8w
City technology colleges, Construction costs 571w
City technology colleges, Lincoln 571w
City technology colleges, Private investment 571w
Class sizes, Local education authorities 646-54w
Conductive education, Research finance 574w
Curriculum 571w
Education, Ethnic minorities 570w
Education, Industry 570w
Education, Innovation 572w
Education support grants, Expenditure 838w
Educational finance 658w
Educational finance, Bradford 572w
Educational finance, Teachers 658w
Educational publications, Expenditure 568w
Educational standards, Lancashire 570-1w
Educational standards, Trade competitiveness 573w
Further education, Capital investment 836-7w
Further education, Pupils 833-6w
Further education, Tertiary colleges 572w
Further education, Young people 567-8w, 762-3
GCE A level, English education 569w
General Certificate of Secondary Education, Staffordshire 443w
General Certificate of Secondary Education, Teaching aids 224w
Grammar schools 569w
Handicapped pupils, Secondary education 573w
HM Inspectorate of Schools, Departmental publications 219w
International studies, Secondary education 443w
Language 584w
Local education authorities, Capital investment 569w, 761-2, 836w
London University, Education Act 1981 656-7w
Management consultants, Dept of Education & Science 656w
Mathematics education, Recruitment 169-70w
Nursery education, Age participation rates 653-6w
Nursery schools 573w
Nursery schools, Age participation rates 656w
Pre-school education 569w
Primary education, Per capita costs 745-7w
Public Accounts Committee, Dept of Education & Science 583w
School admission, Educational standards 573w
School buildings, Capital investment 567w
Sex education 445w
Sixth form colleges 574w
Special educational needs 583w
Special educational needs, Essex 568w
Special educational needs, School choice 584w
Special schools, School closures 582-3w
Teachers, Pensions 573-4w
Teachers, Vocational guidance 583w
Teachers' pensions, National Service 370w
Village schools, Primary education 574w

Rural areas
Agriculture 38-40w
Economic situation 81w
Government assistance to industry 38-40w
Land use 9-10, 158, 161-9, 307, 481w
Local government services 1046
Postal deliveries 747w
Public expenditure 307
School closures 446-5w
Scotland 307
Wales 81w

Rutland
Community health councils 151

Ryder, Mr Richard, an Assistant Whip
Debates etc
Public expenditure (18.02.87) 959

Sackville, Mr Tom
Debates etc
Breast cancer, Screening (17.02.87) 888-9
Housing (10.02.87) 216-8
Questions
Afghanistan, Foreign policy 536w
USSR, Human rights 904

Safety belts
Children 45w
Motor vehicle safety 45w

Safety glass 5w

Safety standards
Glass 311-2w
Mercury 1048
Multiple occupation 1-2, 328w
Radon gas 413-4w

St Anne's Hospital 284w

St Christopher's Hospice (19.02.87) 1150-8
Finance (19.02.87) 1150-8

St Helens
Ferries 527w
Merchant ships 527w

St Helens
Maternity benefits 207-9w

St Nicholas' School 744w
School closures 744w

Saintfield
Planning permission (10.02.87) 287-92

Sale
Hospital beds 284w

Sales methods
Time sharing 315-6w

Salmon Advisory Committee 166-7w
Public appointments 166-7w

Saltley School 444w
Building repairs 444w

Sandwell
Maternity benefits 342w, 351w

Satellite broadcasting
Political broadcasting 6w

Satellites
Defence expenditure 304w, 367w, 778w
International Frequency Registration Board 686w
International Telecommunications Union 106w, 368w, 441-2w, 629w, 686w
Magazine prices 155w, 164w, 184w
Ministry of Defence 491w
National Audit Office 367w
National security 1w, 230w, 461w
Skynet 4 686w
Technical assistance 461w
Television programmes 309

Saxon Developments 116-7w
Derelict land grants 116-7w

Sayeed, Mr Jonathan
Questions
Expo 88, Finance 405w
Tourism, Expo 88 533w

Scargill, Arthur
Margam Mine 18

Scheduled offences 406w, 462-3w, 725-6w, 763w, 773-6w
Northern Ireland 462w, 725-6w
Remand in custody 462w, 725-6w
Sentencing 726w

Scholarships
Expenditure 744w

School admission
Educational standards 573w

School buildings 170w, 443-4w
Building repairs 569w
Capital investment 444w, 567w
Educational finance 836w
Primary education 29w
Repairs & maintenance 761-2
Secondary education 27-9w
Special educational needs 567w

School choice
Special educational needs 584w

School closures
Newcourt Christian School 744w
Rural areas 444-5w
St Nicholas School 744w
Special schools 582-3w
Warwickshire 170w

School meals
Nutrition (20.02.87) 1224-9
Secondary education 25w

School population
Local education authorities 221-2w
Pre-school education 653-6w
Private education 369-70w
Special educational needs 25-6w
State education 369-70w

Schools
Birkenhead 12w
Curriculum 761
Education (No 2) Act 1986 760-1
Potassium iodate 613w

Science & technology
Government grants 368w, 441w

Science & technology research 1056-7
Research finance 370-1w, 657-9w
University of Wales 657-9w
Wales 659w

Science & Technology Select Committee (HL) 572w
Research 572w

Science education
Recruitment 169-70w

Scientists
Working conditions 757

Scope of debate (09.02.87) 93-4
Speaker's rulings & statements (11.02.87) 337, 342, 345, (12.02.87) 489-90, 498, 520, 522, 524, 553, (16.02.87) 665, 668-9, 676, 693-5, (18.02.87) 936, 1023

Scotland
Adult education 299
Agricultural production 307
Agriculture 282-3w
AIDS 296-8
Archaeology 796w
Armed forces civilians 872w
Armed forces deployment 872w
Arts 478w
British Telecom 189w
Cervical cancer 63-4w
Chiropodists 796w
Colleges of education 188w
Community charge 388w
Community programme 457w, 764-5w
Confederation of British Industry 264w
Council housing finance (11.02.87) 409-32
Defence industries 872w
Defence procurement 872w
Dog wardens 798w
Domestic violence 323-4w, 389w
Drug abuse 65w
Economic policy 305
Economic situation 264w
Educational finance 299
Employment opportunities 265w
European Regional Development Fund 879-80w
Family income supplements 709-10w
Farmers 66-7w
Fertility 186-7w
Fisheries 65-6w
Fishery protection 64-5w
Forestry 262w, 299-302
Guinness 267w
Handicapped 66-7w
Handicapped pupils 64w
Heating allowances 201w
Higher education 186w
Homelessness 63w
Hospital beds 63w
Hospital closures 62-3w
Hospital waiting lists 539w
Housing benefits 541w
Housing completions 187w
Housing finance 304-5, (18.02.87) 1031-40
Housing problems 263w
Housing support grants (11.02.87) 409-32
Insulation grants 387w
Investment 305
Jobclubs 792-4w
Land registration 267-8w
Land use 300-2
Legal aid 259w
Lithotripsy 263-4w
Livestock 539w
Local government finance 265w, 388w
Manpower Services Commission 795-7w
Manufacturing industries 264-5w
Marginal land 326w
Maternity benefits 346-7w, 352-3w, 516w
Members 305
Mental health community care 61w
Mental health services 61w, 326w
Ministry of Defence 856w, 872w
National Union of Students 261w
New towns 267w, (18.02.87) 1031-40
NHS 61-2w
NHS finance 456-7w
Nursing homes (12.02.87) 475
Oil industry 266w
Paramilitary forces 456w
"Paying for Local Government Consultation Paper" 613-4w
PICKUP 299
Poaching 258w
Police 186w
Post-neonatal mortality 69-76w
Potassium iodate 613w
Prison accommodation 186w, 293-5
Prison riots 257-8w
Prison sentences 294-5
Prisoners' transfers 456w
Public expenditure 304-6
Radioactivity 540w
Rape 324-5w, 385-6w, 798w
Rate fund contributions (11.02.87) 409-32
Rate support grants (18.02.87) 1007-30
Rates & rating (11.02.87) 320-68, 613-4w, (18.02.87) 1007-30
Redundancy 63w
Regional aid 305
Regional development grants 261w
Rescue services 625-6w
Residential care (12.02.87) 475
Roads 185-6w
Rural areas 307
Severe weather payments 303-4, 341w, 398-9w, 458-9w, 820-1w
Shipbuilding 261-2w
Small businesses 262w
Special educational needs 64w
Sports centres 266w
Standard of living 304
Student grants 261w
Tape recorded evidence 259w
Teacher training 67-8w
Transient people 258w
Tree planting 300
Unemployment 264w
University finance 567w
Urban programme 611w
Wealth 305-6

Weather 304
Whisky 393w
Wild animals 268w
Young offenders 538w

***Scott, Mr Nicholas,** Minister of State for Northern Ireland*
Questions
Accidents, Northern Ireland 450
Body searches, Maghaberry Prison 465w
Building industry, Northern Ireland 449
Cash limits, Northern Ireland Office 79w
Firearms, Northern Ireland 464w, 731-2w
Life imprisonment, Northern Ireland 547w, 734w, 775w
Management consultants, Northern Ireland Office 723-5w
Plastic bullets, Northern Ireland 464w, 731w
Police brutality, Northern Ireland 225w
Police informers, Northern Ireland 463w, 726-7w
Prison population, Northern Ireland 447-8, 463-5w, 774-6w
Prison staff, Northern Ireland 448
Public expenditure, Northern Ireland 448-50
Road tax, Northern Ireland 722-3w
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Assaults on police 464w, 732-3w
Scheduled offences, Northern Ireland 462w, 725-6w
Security, Northern Ireland 463w, 727-32w
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 463w, 773-4w
Ulster Defence Regiment, Crime 465-6w

Scott Lithgow 518w
Redundancy 518w

Scottish Arts Council 478w

Scottish courts
Glasgow 310
Juries 185w
Privacy 185w
Property development 310

Scottish Development Agency
Government grants 457-8w, 616w

Scottish Office
Agricultural land 166-7
Expenditure 615-6w
Handicapped 327-8w
Management consultants 613w
Ministers 305

Scottish Women's Aid 389w

Screening
Automation 399w
Baking industry 533-4w
Breast cancer 820w, (17.02.87) 888-92
Cervical cancer 63-4w, 285-6w, 399w
Industrial health & safety 533-4w
North West region 285-6w
Stonehouse 721w

Sea pollution
Western Isles 616w

Seabed operations vessels 680w

Seals
Fisheries 39-41w, 486w
Research 486w

Search warrants 8-9w, 230w, 259-60w, 268w, 307-8, 388w, 446-8w, 522w, 546w, 606w, 617-8w, 772w
BBC 307-10, 546w, 617-8w
Official Secrets Act 1911 617w
Procurator fiscal service 308
Sheriffs 618w

Seas & oceans
Radioactive waste disposal 412-3w

Secondary education
Class sizes 12-24w
Curriculum 755
Educational standards 309w
Handicapped pupils 573w
International studies 445w
Per capita costs 220-1w
School buildings 27-9w
School meals 25w
Selective schools 754-5
Sutton (09.02.87) 136-42
Trafford 309w

Secret Society 8-9w, 322w, 606w, 617-8w, 771-2w

Secretaries of State
Jopling, Michael 156, 159

Secure community home schools 598w

Securities & Investments Board 165w, 437w, 629-30w

Security
Airports 537-8w
House of Commons galleries 15-6
Northern Ireland 463w, 727-32w
Ports 537-8w

Security equipment
Crime prevention 321w
Housing 321w

Security recruitment
Subversion 561-3w

Sedgefield
Maternity benefits 349w

Sedgemore, Mr Brian
Questions
Arts Council 474w
Company investigations, Guinness 525-6w, 623w
Maternity benefits, Hackney 145w, 151w
South Africa, Arms embargoes 688w

Seeds
Certification 882w
Testing 882w

Seibeh, Aaron 459-60w

Selective schools 572w, 754
Grammar schools 754-5
Secondary education 754-5

Self-determination of states
UN Charter 830w

Self-employed 531-2w

Self-regulating organisations 436-7w
Financial services 436-7w

Self-regulatory system 165w, 545w

Self-regulatory systems
Bank of England 545w
Financial institutions 165w

Self-sufficiency
Common agricultural policy 482w

Sellafield
FACET 470-1w

Semiconductor devices
EC action (17.02.87) 887

Senegal
Gambia 908
Overseas aid 908

Sentencing
Scheduled offences 726w

Service industries
Wales 226w

Set-aside schemes 786w
Agricultural surpluses 786w
Food surpluses 1043-4

Settle-Carlisle railway
Railway closures 378w, (11.02.87) 433-40

Severe disability premium 130w
Invalid care allowances 130w
Retirement pensions 130w

Severe disablement allowance
Administrative delays 191w

Severe weather
Pensioners 507w

Severe weather payments 138-9w, 175-6w, 193-4w, 303, 340-2w, 398-9w, 458-9w, 507w, 820-1w
Administrative delays 193-4w
Advertising 138w
Government grants to local authorities 303
Local government expenditure 303-4
Northern Ireland 175-6w
Northern region 138w
Pensioners 398-9w
Press advertising 138-9w
Publicity 341w
Scotland 303-4w, 341w, 398-9w, 458-9w, 820-1w
Social security benefits rules 507w
Social security claims 138w
Social security recipients 820-1w
Supplementary benefits 193w, 341w
Temperature 138-9w, 175-6w 194w, 340-2w
Weather 340-2w

Severn barrage 167w, 642-3
Research 642-3

Severn bridge 378w
Repairs & maintenance 378w

Sewers
Property development 82w

Sex education 445w
Roman Catholic Church 752

Share ownership 405w
Shares 384w, 425w

Shares
British Airports Authority 311w
Share ownership 384w, 425w

***Shaw, Mr Giles,** Minister of State for Trade & Industry*
Questions
British Shipbuilders, External financing limits 524w
British Shipbuilders, Manpower 315w, 441-2w
European Regional Development Fund, Regional planning & development 876w
Government assistance to industry, Foreign companies in UK 523w
Government assistance to industry, North West region 626w
Jaguar Rover Australia, Privatisation 630w
Regional aid 526-7w
Regional aid, North West region 627w

Shaw, Sir Michael
Questions
Total allowable catches, Fisheries 790w

Sheep 786w
Compensation 40w, 1051-2
EC countries 845w
Exmoor 603w
Livestock 845w
Radioactivity 40w, 603w, 1051-2

Sheep meat
Food consumption 603w
Food surpluses 1042
New Zealand 1042
Prices 782w, 1041-2

Sheerman, Mr Barry
Questions
Accident & emergency departments, Computers in National Health Service 139w
Brain drain, Higher education 757
Drinking & driving, Law enforcement 6-7w
Education, Innovation 572w
Lorries, Transport of hazardous materials 310-1w
Railway closures 538w
Road safety, Research finance 410w
Road safety education, Pre-school education 155w
Secondary education, Selective schools 755

Sheffield
Maternity benefits 347w, 588-9w, 699-700w, 816-7w

Sheffield Polytechnic 315w

Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Questions
Arts 478w
Civil service retirement 654

Shell UK Oil 229w

Shellfish
Mercury 1048

Sheltered housing
Homelessness 201-2w
Social security recipients 201w

Shelton, Mr William
Questions
Direct labour departments, Profitability 669w

Shepherd, Mr Colin
Debates etc
Agricultural land, Land use (09.02.87) 75
Questions
Green pound 789w
Livestock, Green pound 1052-3

Shepherd, Mr Richard
Questions
Planning inquiries, Departmental circulars 737w
USSR, Human rights 691w

Sheriffs
Search warrants 618w

Sherman Theatre, Cardiff 168w, 477w
Arts finance 168w, 651-2

Shettleston
Maternity benefits 588w

Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Debates etc
Handicapped (17.02.87) 809-11
Questions
AIDS, Health education 191w
City technology colleges, Construction costs 571w
Dog licences 421w

Shipbuilding
Manpower 261-2w
Royal Yacht 565w
Scotland 261-2w

Shipping accidents
MV Synetta 185w

Shongolo, Ilpumbu 459-60w

Shops Act 1950
Questions
432w

Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Debates etc
Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc (Scotland) Bill, Allocation of time motion (11.02.87) 325-8
Hickmet, Richard, Members' conduct (20.02.87) 1232
Questions
News International, Complaints against police 217w
News International, Public order policing 216-7w
Rates & rating, Inner London boroughs 126w

Short, Ms Clare
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.02.87) 503
Oral question time intervention (12.02.87) 450
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 (Continuance) Order 1987 (10.02.87) 265, 270, 274-5, 278
Women (17.02.87) 829-30, 837-9, 856-8, 862, 867
Questions
Action for Community Employment, Government grants 446-7
Arts, Association of Metropolitan Authorities 168w
Availability for work 530-2w
Board & lodging charges, Social security benefits rules 196w
County courts, Judges 763w
Devolution, Northern Ireland 451
Employment 531-2w
Employment schemes, Costs 608w
Employment schemes, European Social Fund 425-6w
Job centres, Manpower 48w
Job training schemes 528w
Jobclubs 48w
Jobclubs, Job centres 49w
Maternity benefits, Birmingham 858w
Restart programme, Civil service manpower 161w
Restart programme, Greater London 606-7w
Restart programme, Interviews 609w
Secondary education, Selective schools 754
Trafalgar Square, Public meetings 738-9w
Youth Opportunities Programme, Unemployment 389-90w
Youth training scheme, Contracts of employment 528w

Short, Mrs Renee
Debates etc
Housing (10.02.87) 213-6
Questions
Area museum councils, Arts finance 480w
Hospitals, Advertising 200w
Maternity benefits, Birmingham 812w
Maternity benefits, Wolverhampton 343-4w
Nurses, Managers 155
Prison medical services, Social Services Select Committee 868w

Siberian gas pipeline 698w

Sickle cell disease 639-40w
Prison medical services 639-40w

Silkin, Rt Hon John
Questions
Maternity benefits, Lewisham 706w, 808-9w

Sims, Mr Roger
Questions
Hong Kong, Vietnamese refugees 894
Land use, Rural areas 168
Smoking related diseases, Tobacco advertising 153

Singapore
Unfair trading practices 525w, 565w

Single European Act 695w

Single homeless
Aberdeen 611-2w

Single people
Average earnings 181w
Homelessness 63w
Lancashire 594-5w

Sinn Fein
Welsh Language Society 6-7

Sir John Moore's Barracks 365w
Army 365w

Sites of special scientific interest
Costs 551w
Geology 551w
Nature Conservancy Council 551-2w

Sixth form colleges 574w

Sizewell B 9-10w, 167w, 318w, 412w, 469w, 639-40, 643-5
Capital investment 9w
Civil servants' visits abroad 10w
Computer software 469w
Costs 10w
Nuclear power stations 167w
Nuclear safety 469w
Public participation in planning 645-6
Radiation hazards 645

"Sizewell B Public Inquiry Report" 645

Sizewell Inquiry 54w, 318w, 412w, 469w, 645
Health & Safety Executive 54w
Nuclear accidents 469w

Skeet, Sir Trevor
Debates etc
Radioactive waste disposal (09.02.87) 35, 43, 48, 56-8
Questions
Bedford bypass 736w
British Gas Corporation, Privatisation 319w
Chatham dockyard, Radioactive waste disposal 564-5w
Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive, Compulsory purchase 548w
Nuclear power stations, Nuclear safety 644
Radioactive waste disposal 847-8w
Radioactive waste disposal, Bradwell power station 849w
Radioactive waste disposal, Environment 412w
Radioactive waste disposal, Nuclear power stations 548w
Radioactive waste disposal, Pharmacia Ltd 413w
Radioactive waste disposal, Seas & oceans 412-3w

Skillcentres
North West region 389w
Vocational training 253-4w

Skilled workers
Manpower 161-2w
OECD countries 161-2w
Vacancies 52w

Skinner, Mr Dennis
Debates etc
Adjournment debates (17.02.87) 777
Employment schemes (12.02.87) 480
Housing (Houses in Multiple Occupation) Bill, 2R (13.02.87) 629
Local Government Bill, Scope of Bill (18.02.87) 922
Parliamentary privilege (12.02.87) 472-3
Rover Group (19.02.87) 1071
Questions
Arts, Community development 480w
Business statement 464
Italy, Exchange rates 902
Land use, Rural areas 165

Skynet 4
Satellites 686w

Slough
Rate support grants 382w
Social security recipients 398w
Unemployment 390w

Small businesses
Budget 36w
Church Commissioners 14
Government assistance to industry 56-60w
Landlord & Tenant Act 1954 156w
Regional development grants 262w
Scotland 262w
Tenancy agreements 156w
VAT 37w, 423-4w

Smallholdings
Town & country planning 416w

Smith, Mr Chris
Debates etc
Access to Personal Files Bill, 2R (20.02.87) 1184-7
Broadcasting Bill (HL), 2R (16.02.87) 688-92
Questions
Central Electricity Generating Board, Disclosure of information 470w
Fossil fuelled power stations, Air pollution control 213w
Maternity benefits, Islington 813-4w, 858-9w
Nuclear accidents, Nuclear power stations 430w
Nuclear power stations, Emergency planning 634w
Prison medical services, Sickle cell disease 639-40w
Road accidents, Police vehicles 556-7w
Sizewell B, Capital investment 9w

Sizewell B, Civil servants' visits abroad 10w
Urban development grants 737-8w
Urban development grants, Housing association grants 738w
Urban development grants, Private sector 737w

Smith, Sir Dudley
Debates etc
Business statement (19.02.87) 1080
Rover Group (19.02.87) 1071
Questions
Death registration, AIDS 867w
Egypt, Foreign policy 399-400w
Ministers' visits abroad, Egypt 564w
School closures, Warwickshire 170w

Smith, Rt Hon John
Debates etc
Rover Group (19.02.87) 1060-1 1073
Questions
Maternity benefits, Edinburgh 702w
Maternity benefits, Monklands 702-3w

Smith, Mr Tim
Questions
Accountants, Civil service 671-2w
Accountants, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 676-7w
Accountants, Ministry of Defence 681-3w
Accountants, Treasury 672-4w
Food prices, Price increases 787w
Management consultants, Dept of Education & Science 656w
Management consultants, Dept of Employment 609-10w
Management consultants, Dept of Energy 634-5w
Management consultants, Dept of Health & Social Security 714-8w
Management consultants, Dept of the Environment 665-6w
Management consultants, Dept of Trade & Industry 628-9w
Management consultants, Dept of Transport 624-5w
Management consultants, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 697w
Management consultants, Home Office 641-2w
Management consultapts, Lord Advocate 616w
Management consultants, Lord Chancellor 605-6w
Management consultants, Northern Ireland Office 723-5w
Management consultants, Scottish Office 613w
Management consultants, Welsh Office 637w

Smoking
Health education 3

Smoking related diseases 153
Death 153-4
Tobacco advertising 153-4

Snape, Mr Peter
Debates etc
British Railways Bill, 2R (16.02.87) 714-6
Motor Cycle Noise Bill, Money res (16.02.87) 721
Questions
Railway transport, EC countries 624w

Soames, Mr Nicholas
Questions
Agricultural land, Rates & rating 1045
Arms control treaties 900
Economic policy 805-7w
Government achievements 799-805w
Mental patients 361w
Overseas aid, Palestine 377w
Salmon Advisory Committee, Public appointments 166-7w

Social & Community Planning Research 270-1w
Unemployed 270-1w

"Social & Economic Responses to Climatic Variability in the UK 212w
Dept of Health & Social Security 212w

Social costs
Heart diseases 364w

Social Fund (09.02.87) 81-116, 144-50w, 203-9w, 273-8w, 341-6w, 348-51w, 354-61w, 374w, 394-7w, 513-7w, 588-92w, 699-709w, 808-18w, 858-66w
Death grants (09.02.87) 81-116
Maternity benefits (09.02.87) 81-116, 700w

Social Fund (Maternity & Funeral Expenses) Bill 1986/87
Debates etc
Rem stages (09.02.87) 81-116

Social security
Dependants 509w
EC countries 595w
Maternity benefits 811w

Social Security Act 1980
Questions
130w

Social security adjudications 722w
Industrial disablement benefits 722w

Social security appeals
Birmingham 154w

Social security benefits 202w

Social security benefits overpayment (17.02.87) 877-86

Social security benefits rates 598w
Supplementary benefits 153w

Social security benefits rules
Board & lodging charges 146, 196w
Housing benefits 194w
Mobility allowance 282w
Occupational pensions 154
Severe weather payments 507w

Social security benefits uprating 202w

Social security claimants
Draught-proofing materials 419w

Social security claims
Literacy 279w
Numeracy 279w
Severe weather payments 138w

Social Security (Payments on Account Overpayments & Recovery) Regulations 1987
Debates etc
(17.02.87) 877-86

Social security recipients
Attendance allowance 130w, 281-2w, 398w
Burnley 269-10w
Dundee 518-20w
Family income supplements 270w
Food surpluses 387w
Heating allowances 596w, 598w
Housing benefits 194w, 541w
Housing insulation 467w
Intervention stocks 387w
Invalidity benefits 130w
Leeds 210w
Maternity benefits 146w, 272w, 274w, 276w, 357-8w, 592-3w, 862w
Mobility allowance 281-2w
Pensioners 192-30w
Rate rebates 190-1w
Severe weather payments 820-1w
Sheltered housing 201w
Slough 398w
Stretford 822w
Supplementary benefits 153w, 821-2w
Tayside 518-20w

Social security reform 144w, 145, 145w, 146, 146-53w, 203-9w, 271-8w, 341-61w, 374w, 394-7w, 513-7w, 588-92w, 698-709w, 808-18w, 858-66w
Housing benefits 145-6
Maternity benefits 144-53w, 203-9w, 271-8w, 341-61w, 374w, 394-7w, 513-7w, 588-92w, 698-709w, 808-18w, 858-66w
Newcastle under Lyme 866w

Social services
Handicapped 66-7w, 131w

Social Services Select Committee 868w
Prison medical services 868w

Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968
Questions
64w

Social workers' training
Young offenders 538-9w

Soley, Mr Clive
Debates etc
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 (Continuance) Order 1987 (10.02.87) 282-3
Questions
Lincoln Prison, Hepatitis 769-70w
Mental patients, Conjugal visits 499w
Police cells, Prisoners 642-3w
Public order policing, Wapping 869w

Somerset
Radon gas 114-5w, 414-6w

Sound Broadcasting Select Committee (17.02.87) 887

South Africa
Angola 688w
Arms control 535w
Arms embargoes 688w
Arms imports 626w
Barclays Bank 687w
Censorship 687w
Coal 472w, 640, 642, 687w
Coal fired power stations 642
Diplomatic relations 689w
Diplomatic service 688w
Economic sanctions 232w, 687w
Export controls 165w
Foreign policy 688-9w
Front line states 694-5w
Import controls 626w
Overseas trade 165w
Political prisoners 687-8w
UK companies abroad 4w, 687w
United Nations 535w

South East region
Car ownership 47w
Homelessness 127w
House prices 126w
Housing construction 663w
Owner occupied housing 126-7w
Personal income 54w
Prisoners on remand 559w
Roads 47w
Unemployment 49-52w

South East Thames Regional Health Authority 147-8
Radiotherapy 147-8

South Glamorgan
Education of children at home 80w

South Killingholme (09.02.87) 27-68

South Manchester Health Authority 720w
Nurses 720w

South of Scotland Electricity Board
Coal fired power stations 838-9w

South Ribble
Maternity benefits 274w

South Wales 452w
Production quotas 452w

South West (England) Development Agency Bill 1986/87
Debates etc
2R order read (13.02.87) 630

South West region
Development agencies 458
Manpower Services Commission 53w, 255-8w

South Yorkshire 488w
Civil defence 488w

Southend Hospital 199w
Radiotherapy 199w

Southern African Development Coordination Conference 694-5w

Sovereignty
Falkland Islands 459w

Soya bean meal 440w

Soya beans 137-8w, 440w
Imports 440w
Nutrition & health 137-8w

Spain
Overseas trade 214w
Rajiah, J 461w
Time sharing 315w

Speaker and his deputies, *For rulings & statements see separate heading Speaker's rulings & statements*
Debates etc
Amendts & new clauses (10.02.87) 175, (11.02.87) 374-5, 387, 398-401, (12.02.87) 476, (17.02.87) 788, 829, (18.02.87) 927, (19.02.87) 1085, 1110, 1117-8, 1120, 1123-6
Blood donors, Gloucester (09.02.87) 19
Disallowed questions (11.02.87) 301, (12.02.87) 458, (16.02.87) 640
Orders & regulations (09.02.87) 117, (11.02.87) 409
Private Members' Bills 2R order read (13.02.87) 630, (20.02.87) 1230
Procedure (09.02.87) 112, (10.02.87) 160, (12.02.87) 453, 480, (17.02.87) 763, (19.02.87) 1047, (11.02.87) 425

Speaker's rulings & statements (10.02.87) 169, (17.02.87) 786-7
Adjournment debates (09.02.87) 139, (11.02.87) 437, (16.02.87) 742-50, (17.02.87) 776-80
Amendments & new clauses (19.02.87) 1086, 1123
Calling of Members (17.02.87) 772, (18.02.87) 910, 923, (20.02.87) 1222
Chancellor of Duchy of Lancaster (17.02.87) 775
Deposited papers (12.02.87) 476
Early day motions (19.02.87) 1083-4
House of Commons debates (16.02.87) 660
House of Commons division of time (19.02.87) 1109-10
House of Commons galleries (12.02.87) 487-8, (19.02.87) 1065
Lord Advocate (09.02.87) 23
Members' conduct (10.02.87) 157, 159, 161, (11.02.87) 319, 424, 442, (12.02.87) 487-8, (18.02.87) 1019, 1022, (19.02.87) 1056, (20.02.87) 1232
Members' interventions (09.02.87) 139, (11.02.87) 414, 437, (18.02.87) 1009
Members' speeches (09.02.87) 36, 51, 124, (10.02.87) 216, 230, 232-3, 276, (12.02.87) 533, 546, (17.02.87) 853, 870-1, (20.02.87) 1179, 1222
Ministerial speeches (11.02.87) 325
Ministerial statements (09.02.87) 24-5, 74, 76, 80, (10.02.87) 170
National Audit Office (09.02.87) 20-2
Oral questions (09.02.87) 23-4, (10.02.87) 160, 170, (12.02.87) 459-60, 471, 474, (16.02.87) 657-8
Orders & regulations (11.02.87) 409, 417
Parliamentary privilege (09.02.87) 20-2, (10.02.87) 262, (11.02.87) 311, (12.02.87) 472
Points of order (12.02.87) 459-60, 471, 474, (13.02.87) 632, (16.02.87) 657, (17.02.87) 875-6, (18.02.87) 915, 927, (19.02.87) 1073
Prime Minister's questions (12.02.87) 455, 457-8, (19.02.87) 1055
Private Members' Bills (13.02.87) 629-30
Private Members' time (09.02.87) 25-6
Private notice questions (10.02.87) 167, (17.02.87) 781-2, (18.02.87) 912
Scope of debate (11.02.87) 337, 342, 345, (12.02.87) 489-90, 498, 520, 522, 524, 553, (16.02.87) 665, 668-9, 676, 693-5, (18.02.87) 936, 1023
Standing Order No 20 applications (11.02.87) 313-6
Supplementary questions (09.02.87) 11, (10.02.87) 154, (11.02.87) 305, (12.02.87) 457, (16.02.87) 657
Written questions (09.02.87) 25-6

Spearfish
Torpedoes 489w

Spearing, Mr Nigel
Debates etc
Agricultural land, Land use (09.02.87) 80
Business statement (19.02.87) 1079-80
Local Government Bill, Scope of Bill (18.02.87) 920
Rover Group (19.02.87) 1068
Questions
Ambulance services, Greater London 361w
Family practitioner committees, Complaints 211w
Land use, Rural areas 163
Maternity benefits, Newham 812-3w
North East London Polytechnic, Capital investment 169w

Special education
Immigrants 558-9w

Special educational needs 25-6w, 64w, 92w, 177w, 567-8w, 573w, 583-4w
Educational finance 573w
Essex 568w
Handicapped pupils 92w
Northern Ireland 78w, 177w
School buildings 567w
School choice 584w
School population 25-6w
Scotland 64w

Special health authorities
Health education 3-4

Special protection areas 421w

Special schools
School closures 582-3w

Spectacles
Handicapped 718w
Optical charges 718w
Wales 98w

Spectrum Centre 157w
Property transfer 157w

Speech therapists
Equal pay 155, 566 (corrigendum)
Pay 154-5, 197w

Speed governors 840w
Buses 840w

Speller, Mr Tony
Questions
Bees, Animal diseases 41w
Concessionary television licences, Elderly 1054
Electricity tariffs, France 168w
Farm incomes 1046
Sheep, Radioactivity 603w

Spencer, Mr Derek
Debates etc
Rover Group (19.02.87) 1072
Questions
Animal welfare 790w
Student grants 758
Visas, Indian subcontinent 696w

Spicer, Mr Michael, *Under-Secretary of State for Transport*
Questions
Air fares, EC action 623w
Airlines, Beirut Airport 686-7w
Airlines, Trade competitiveness 840w
Airports, Fees & charges 625w
Cars, Ownership 310w
Cherished number plates 252w
Helicopters, Western Isles 839w
Light dues, Fees & charges 311w
Light dues, Fisheries 46w
Light dues, Hull 46w
Lighthouses, Finance 380w
Ports, Security 537-8w
Rescue services, Scotland 625-6w
Road tax, Cars 840w
Road tax, Tax collection 841w
Road tax, Tax evasion 841w

Spoil heaps
Mining 240w
Ove Arup 240w

Sports centres
Rates & rating 266w
Scotland 266w

Sports Council
Government grants 116w

Springburn
British Rail Engineering 265w
Employment opportunities 265w

Squire, Mr Robin
Debates etc
Access to Personal Files Bill, 2R (20.02.87) 1179, 1191, 1217-20
Hedgerow Protection Bill, 2R order read (20.02.87) 1230
Housing (10.02.87) 222-5, 250
Local Government Bill, Scope of Bill (18.02.87) 918
Questions
Sixth form colleges 574w

Staffordshire
General Certificate of Secondary Education 443w

Stalker, John 452
Royal Ulster Constabulary 452

Stamp duties
Tax yields 38w

Stanbrook, Mr Ivor
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement 446
Birkbeck College, University finance 567w

Standard of living
Scotland 304

Standardisation
Measurement 482w

Standards specifications
Diesel fuel 317w

Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights 175w, 725w

Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment
Public appointments 156w

Standing Order No 20 applications (09.02.87) 19, (11.02.87) 312-6
Blood donors (09.02.87) 19
Police right of search (11.02.87) 312-6
Speaker's rulings & statements (11.02.87) 313-6

Standing Order No 143 (16.02.87) 750

Stanley, Rt Hon John, *Minister of State for the Armed Forces*
Questions
Armed forces deployment, Boddam Island 365w
Armed forces deployment, Kenya 870w
Armed forces deployment, USA 291-3w
Armoured fighting vehicles, NATO 184w
Army in Northern Ireland, Armed forces strength 493w
Belize, Military aid 698w
Bombs, Transport 367w
Civil defence, South Yorkshire 488w
Defence equipment, Cranes 183-4w
"Defence Open Government Document, 87/01", Publishing 869w
Falkland Islands, Defence 685-6w
Hercules aircraft, Communications 365w
"Keeping the Peace" 105w
Kitson, Frank, National security 777-8w
NATO, Military balance 488w
Nuclear weapons deployment, Publicity 184w
Ports, Warships 366w
RAF Binbrook 777w

Trident 870w
Trident, Official secrets 870-1w
Ulster Defence Regiment 869w
Ulster Defence Regiment, Armed forces strength 493w
Ulster Defence Regiment, Paramilitary forces 493w
Ulster Defence Regiment, Proscribed organisations 686w
Warships, Defence 869-70w
Warships, Iceland 185w

State education
Boarding schools 657w
School population 369-70w

State occupational pensions
Retirement age 593-4w

Statutory maternity pay 147-8w, 150-2w, 203-9w, 271-3w, 275-8w, 345-60w, 394-7w, 513-7w, 592w, 698-709w, 809-17w, 858-66w

Steel, Rt Hon David
Debates etc
Access to Personal Files Bill, 2R (20.02.87) 1171
Questions
Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel, Whitley councils 385w
Confederation of British Industry, Scotland 264w
Land use, Rural areas 158
Radiophones, Licensing 2-3w

Steen, Mr Anthony
Questions
Agricultural land, Land use 287w, 338-40w
Defence land, Land values 565w
Food surpluses, Charities 783w
Land registration, Vacant land 243-6w
Land use, Rural areas 163
New towns, Wealth 740-1w
Planning appeals, Kittery Court 239w
Vacant land registers, Land ownership & tenure 246-8w

Stefanus, Lukas 460w

Stern, Mr Michael
Questions
Aerospace industry, USA 875-6w
Airports, Fees & charges 625w
Objects in lieu of tax, Art works 735w
Occupational pensions, Social security benefits rules 154
School meals, Secondary education 25w
Severn barrage, Research 642-3
Visas, Eastern Europe 873w

Stevens, Mr Lewis
Debates etc
Access to Personal Files Bill, 2R (20.02.87) 1207-9
Crown Proceedings (Armed Forces) Bill, 2R (13.02.87) 582-5
Handicapped (17.02.87) 818-9
Questions
Food contamination, Mercury 1048
Poland, BBC external services 895-6
Tidal power, Energy research 468w

Stewart, Mr Allan
Debates etc
Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc (Scotland) Bill, Allocation of time motion (11.02.87) 328-33, 343, 347, 349, 358
Housing, Scotland (11.02.87) 419-20, 430
Rate Rebates & Rate Support Grant Scotland Orders (18.02.87) 1017-9, 1024
Questions
Dornoch road bridge, Construction costs 612w
Investment, Scotland 305
Property Services Agency, Civil service dispersal 664w
Road traffic, Ayr 612w
Road traffic, Dornoch road bridge 612w
Young offenders, Scotland 538w
Young offenders, Social workers' training 538-9w

Stewart, Mr Andy
Questions
Cereals, Food surpluses 779w

Stewart, Rt Hon Donald
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.02.87) 482-3
Radioactive waste disposal (09.02.87) 27
Questions
Potassium iodate, Scotland 613w
Radioactivity, Scotland 540w
Western Isles, Regional planning & development 296

Stewart, Mr Ian, Economic Secretary to the Treasury
Debates etc
Banking Bill, Rep & 3R (19.02.87) 1085, 1105-8, 1111, 1113-4, (10.02.87) 1119-20, 1122-5, 1142-6, 1148
Questions
Bank of England, Self-regulatory system 545w
Premium bonds, Prize money 424-5w
Prize money, Premium bonds 233w
Shares, Share ownership 384w
Stamp duties, Tax yields 38w

Stobhill Hospital 325w
Maternity services 325w

Stobill Hospital
Hospital closures 325w

Stockport
Maternity benefits 353w, 395w

Stoke-on-Trent 769w
Restart programme 769w

Stokes, Mr John
Debates etc
Business statement (19.02.87) 1076
Questions
Business statement 465
Church Commissioners, Inner city areas 13
Civil service personnel management, Careers development 654
Recycling, House of Commons 18
Tamils, Political refugees 774

Stonehouse
Screening 721w

Stott, Mr Roger
Questions
Drumcroon Arts Centre, Ministers' domestic visits 475w
Fisheries, Light dues 780w
Maternity benefits, Wigan 708-9w

Strabane
Enterprise zones 442
Unemployment 442

Straits of Hormuz 229w

Strang, Mr Gavin
Debates etc
Rover Group (19.02.87) 1069
Questions
Agricultural land, Planning permission 418w
AIDS, Death 192w
AIDS, Health education 752
Armed forces deployment, USA 291-3w
Arms control, Conventional weapons 693w
Drug abuse, Government assistance to voluntary organisations 65w
Land registration, Privatisation 267-8w
Maternity benefits, Edinburgh 355-6w
Milk, Production quotas 783w
North Sea, Environment protection 668-9w
Nuclear accidents, Government 303w
Nuclear power stations, Emergency planning 317w
Nuclear safety, Expenditure 301w
Nuclear safety, Manpower 301-2w
Nuclear test ban, Arms control treaties 696w
"Paying for Local Government Consultation Paper", Scotland 613-4w
Peterhead Prison, Inquiries 615w
Police, Nuclear power stations 322w
Prisoners, Alcoholism 614w
Restart programme, Edinburgh 614w
River Elbe, River pollution 613w
Sea pollution, Western Isles 616w
University Grants Committee, Official engagements 574w

Strategic defence initiative 897-8
ABM Treaty 764-6, 832w, 896-9, 1054
Arms control treaties 901-2
Camp David 160w
East West relations 161w
Europe 898-9
Technology transfer 160-1w

Strathclyde
Apprentices 187w
Community programme 843w
Manufacturing industries 187w

Strathclyde Regional Council 265-6w
Community charge 265-6w

Straw, Mr Jack
Debates etc
Local Government Bill, Scope of Bill (18.02.87) 922-3
Rover Group (19.02.87) 1067
Questions
Acute beds, Blackburn Hyndburn & Ribble Valley Health Authority 505w
Association of Metropolitan Authorities 476w
Contracts for services 856-7w
Crown Suppliers, Privatisation 667w
Crown Suppliers, Procurement 667w
Dept of the Environment, Procurement 667w
District Works Offices, Westminster, Consultants 669w
Land use, Rural areas 164
Medical records, North West region 139-40w
North West Regional Health Authority, Computers in National Health Service 504-5w
Property repayment services 667-8w
Property repayment services, Accounting 668w
Property repayment services, Civil service manpower 668w
Property Services Agency, Government contracts 668w
Royal ordnance factories 492-3w
Royal ordnance factories, Blackburn 491w
Royal ordnance factories, Redundancy 492w

Stretford
Maternity benefits 360w
Social security recipients 822w

Structure plans
Land use 158

Student counselling 169w
Further education 169w
Higher education 169w

Student grants 171w, 565-6w, 758-9, 833-4w
Committee of Vice-Chancellors & Principals 566w
Cost of living 759-60
Expenditure 744w
Parental contributions 566-7w
Scotland 261w

Student loans 171w, 758-60
USA 758-9

Student numbers
Higher education 570w
Mature students 582w
Open University 579-80w
Teacher training 67-8w
Tuition fees 757
Universities 576w, 581-2w

Students
Absent voting 374w
Health education 397w
Taxation 743w
Voting rights 374w

Subsidies
Dairy farming 338w

Subversion
Radcliffe Report 561-3w
Security recruitment 561-3w

Suckler cow premiums 42w, 269w, 484w, 1046
Administrative delays 269w

Suffolk
Areas of outstanding natural beauty 602-3w
Environmentally sensitive areas 602-3w

Suicide
Army 365w
Prisoners 614w

Sumberg, Mr David
Questions
Members, Northern region 1055
USSR, Jews 691w

Summer schools 579-80w
Open University 579-80w

Sunday trading
Local authorities 432w

Sunderland
Maternity benefits 272w, 344w

Supplementary benefits
Administrative delays 196w, 270w, 361w
Barnsley 821-2w
Brighton 270w
Exceptional needs payments 397-8w
Job training scheme 154w
Mortgages 154w
Residential care 150-1, 361-2w, 499-500w
Severe weather payments 193w, 341w
Social security benefits rates 153w
Social security recipients 153w, 821-2w
Walsall 821w
West Midlands 821w
Young people 196w

Supplementary benefits capital limits
Heating allowances 596-7w

Supplementary benefits disregards of income
Councillors' attendance allowances 363-4w

Supplementary questions
Speaker's rulings & statements (09.02.87) 11, (10.02.87) 154, (11.02.87) 305, (12.02.87) 457, (16.02.87) 657

Support & Housing Assistance for People with Disabilities 281w

Surgery
Regional health authorities 210w
Royal Liverpool Hospital 509w

Surinam
Overseas trade 4-6w

Surplus land 136-7w

Sutton
Secondary education (09.02.87) 136-42

Swansea
Maternity benefits 351w, 353-4w

SWAPO 401-4w
Diplomatic relations 401w
Human rights 402w
Namibia 402w, 459-60w
Official engagements 403w
Refugees 401-4w
United Nations 401-2w

Table Office
Computer applications 59-60w

Takeovers
Guinness 547w
House of Fraser 747w
Manchester Ship Canal Company 440w
Merchant banks 747-8w

Tameside
Maternity benefits 346w

Tamils 909-10
Deportation 909-14
Political refugees 769-74
Refugees 909-14

Tanker ships
Bombings 229w
Iran-Iraq war 229w

Tape recorded evidence
Police interrogation 259w
Scotland 259w

Tax allowances
Direct taxation 182-3w
Income tax 182w
Personal income 182-3w

Tax burden
Married men 827w

Tax collection
Road tax 841w

Tax evasion
Building industry 448-9, 452
Road tax 841w

Tax exemption certificates 238-9w, 405-6w

Tax rates & bands
Income tax 178w, 181-2w
Pay settlements 331-2w
Taxpayers 36-7w, 330w

Tax yields
Alcoholic drinks duties 674-6w
Deeds of covenant 36w
Income tax 178w, 182w
Maintenance 544w
Maintenance relief 829w
Mortgage relief 179-80w
Petroleum revenue tax 878w
Stamp duties 38w

Taxation
Agricultural land 779w
Economic policy 455-6
Exchange rates 543w
Film industry 330w
Outgoers' scheme 384w
Students 743w

Taxpayers
Tax rates & bands 36-7w, 330w

Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Questions
Islam, Northern Ireland 368-9w
Lancaster house, Conferences 314w
Ministers, Scottish Office 305

Taylor, Mr John Mark
Debates etc
Local Government Bill, Scope of Bill (18.02.87) 924
Rover Group (19.02.87) 1062
Questions
Abortion 718w
Abortion, Young people 719w
Business statement 462
Cervical cancer 824w
Cervical cancer, Age 718-20w
Common agricultural policy, Self-sufficiency 482w
Community health councils 151
EC budget contributions 672w
Family Planning Association, Government grants to voluntary organisations 720w
Forestry, Scotland 299-300
Italy, Import penetration 902
Jaguar Rover Australia, Privatisation 630w
Northern Ireland government 451
Prime Minister official engagements 160w, 808w
Sex education 445w
Trident 870w

Taylor, Mr Teddy
Questions
Afghanistan, Refugees 228w
Agricultural land, Land use 601w
Agricultural policy, National Farmers' Union 882w
Agricultural support systems, EC countries 786w
Business statement 465-6
Dried milk, Exports 42w
EC budget 798w
EC budget, European Council 159w, 521-2w
EC budget, UK repayments 827-8w
European Investment Bank 808w
European Investment Bank, EC grants & loans 828w
European Investment Bank, UK contributions 828w
Export rebates, Libyan Arab Republic 42w
Farm Buildings, Rates & rating 481w
Forestry, National Audit Office 484w
Fruit juices, Mafia 394w
Land use, Rural areas 164
Mafia, European Economic Community 323w
NATO, Mafia 329w
Pupil-teacher ratios 753
Radiotherapy, Southend Hospital 199w

Tayside
Aids for handicapped 880w
Population 387w
Social security recipients 518-20w

Tayside enterprise zone 798w
Kestrel Marine Life 798w

Teacher training
Scotland 67-8w
Student numbers 67-8w

Teachers
Church schools 13
Convictions 368w
Educational finance 658w
Housing problems 753
Industrial disputes 568w, 573w
Northern Ireland 368w, 465w
Pay 568w, 573w
Pensions 573-4w
Vocational guidance 583w

Teachers' pensions
National service 370w

Teaching aids
General Certificate of Secondary Education 224w

Technical & vocational education initiative 295w, (12.02.87) 476-558, 838w
Welsh language 295w

Technical assistance
Armoured fighting vehicles 304w
Satellites 461w

Technology transfer
Export controls 749-51w
Strategic defence initiative 160-1w
USSR 160-1w

Teignmouth Quay Company Bill 1985/86
Debates etc
2R order read (12.02.87) 441, (19.02.87) 1041

Telephone calls 294w
Cooper, Frank 294w

Telephone numbers
"Civil Defence Year Book, 1987" 473w
Terrence Higgins Trust 512w

Telephones
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices 819w
M1 309-10w
Motorway service areas 309-10w

Television licences
Crown immunity 216w
Income 216w

Television programmes
National security 8-9w, (10.02.87) 262, 268w, 322w, 435w, 445-8w, 457w, 522w, 546w, 606w, 617-8w, 771-2w, 794-6w
Satellites 309

Televisions
10 Downing Street 807w

Temperature
Severe weather payments 138-9w, 175-6w, 194w, 340-2w

Temporary employment 580-1w

10 Downing Street 807w
Televisions 807w

Ten minute rule Bills
Legislation 839w

Tenancy agreements
Small businesses 156w

Tenant farmers
Property development 168

Tenders 238w, 676-7w, 683w, 856-7w

Terlezki, Mr Stefan
Questions
Armoured fighting vessels, Industrial production 304w
Education of children at home, South Glamorgan 80w
Insulation, Wales 8
Western European Union 874w

Terminal care
Hospices (19.02.87) 1150-8

Terrence Higgins Trust
AIDS 512w
Government grants 512w
Telephone numbers 512w

Territorial Army
Protheroe, Alan 685w

Terrorism
Anglo-Irish Agreement 303w
Bail 431-2w
Crime prevention 5w
Death 433w
EC action 228w
Emergency powers (10.02.87) 263-86
IRA 765
Italy 902
Northern Ireland (10.02.87) 263-86, 433w, 463w, 727-32w, 773-4w
Police detention 432w
Remand in custody 431-2w
Republic of Ireland 446

Tertiary colleges
Further education 572w

Testing
AIDS 512w
Natural radioactivity 547-8w
Seeds 882w

Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret, Prime Minister, First Lord of the Treasury and Minister for the Civil Service
Questions
ABM Treaty, Strategic defence initiative 764-6, 1054
Afghanistan, Human rights 158
Age addition, Old persons' pensions 521w
Agricultural policy, National Union of Farmers 882w
Alcoholic drinks, Consumer expenditure 106w
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Terrorism 303w
Arms control, USA 455
Bain & Company, Prime Minister visits abroad 623w
BBC, Public appointments 456-7
Brain drain 456
Cancer hazards, Nuclear power stations 1055, 1057-8
Cash limits, Cabinet Office 405w
Channel tunnel, Investment 1058
Common agricultural policy 1055
Companies, Foreign investment in UK 1053
Concessionary television licences, Elderly 1054
Directors, Company law 160w
Disabled Persons (Services Consultation & Representation) Act 1986, Local government finance 156-7
EC budget 798w
EC budget, European Council 159w, 521-2w
EC budget, UK contributions 521-2w
Economic policy 805-7w
Economic situation, EC Presidency 807-8w
Electronic Data Systems, Training 454
Employment opportunities, Low pay 454-5
European Investment Bank 808w
Expo 88, Finance 405w
Export controls, USA 763
Falkland Islands, Drama 159-60
Fascism, Conservative Party 766
Food surpluses 767-8
Government achievements 799-805w
Government contracts, Electronic Data Systems 453-4
Guinness, Company investigations 623w
Handicapped 156
Housing construction, Northern Ireland 405-6w
Housing insulation, Exceptional needs payments 111w
Housing, Labour mobility 1056
Iran, Arms trade 160
Kinnock, Neil, Early day motions 1056
Labour Party, Nottinghamshire 458
Land use, Rural areas 158
Law officers 808w
Light dues, Fishing vessels 799w
Low pay, Employment opportunities 458
Manufacturing industries, Industrial production 764
Manufacturing industries, Redundancy 457-8
Members, Northern region 1055
National security, Prime Minister's Office 522w
Nuclear accidents, Government 303w
Nuclear power stations, Emergency planning 303w
Nurses, Manpower 107-10w
Nurses, NHS pensions 107-8w
Nurses, Pay 108-9w
Offences against children, Video recordings 1056
Pay beds 160w
Pay settlements, Nurses 110w
Pensions, Inflation 456
Play, Departmental initiatives 111w
Police, Ministerial responsibility 618-22w
Police housing 109-11w
Prime Minister, House of Commons questions 161w
Prime Minister domestic visits, Fraserburgh 303w
Prime Minister domestic visits, Moodiesburn 521w
Prime Minister domestic visits, Wales 521w
Prime Minister official engagements 160w, 303w, 523w, 808w
Prime Minister visits abroad, USSR 159w, 522w
Prison sentences, Court of Appeal 157-8
Privatisation 405w
Rape, Prison sentences 766
Reagan, President, Prime Minister official engagements 302w
Regional planning & development, Wales 765-6
Science & technology research 1056-7
Secretaries of State, Jopling, Michael 159
Strategic defence initiative, Camp David 160w
Strategic defence initiative, East West relations 161w
Strategic defence initiative, Technology transfer 160-1w
Taxation, Economic policy 455-6
Televisions, 10 Downing Street 807w
Terrorism, IRA 765
Travelling expenses, Public expenditure 234w
UK membership of EC 522w

Theatre nuclear weapons
Arms control treaties 900-1
USSR 900-1

Theatres
Local authorities 477w
University Grants Committee 652

Thomas, Mr D E
Debates etc
Agricultural land, Land use (09.02.87) 77-8
Questions
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service 227w
Arms exports, Employment opportunities 684w
Broadcasting, Ministerial responsibility 435w
Defence expenditure, Defence procurement 490-1w
Delegated legislation, Wales 455w
European Regional Development Fund, Wales 375w
Exports, Defence equipment 629w
Geneva Conventions 329w
Health education, Wales 3-4
"Historic Buildings Council for Wales Annual Report" 300w
House renovation grants 227w
Mental health services, Wales 7
Milk, Production quotas 452w
Nuclear power stations, Emergency planning 636w
Nuclear test ban, Five Continents Group 230w
Nuclear test ban, USA 229-30w
Orders & regulations, Wales 91w
Regional development grants, Wales 213-4w
Science & technology, Government grants 368w, 441w
Science & technology research, University of Wales 657-9w
Science & technology research, Wales 659w
Water distribution, Wales 299-300w
Water supply, Wales 299w
Welsh Development Agency, Industrial estates 375w

Thomas, Dr Roger
Questions
Beef & veal, Agricultural subsidies 785w
Health education, Smoking 3
Heart diseases 81w
Speech therapists, Pay 197w

Thompson, Mr Donald, Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture
Questions
Advisory Committee on Pesticides, Pay 604w
Agricultural land, Forestry 165-6w
Agricultural land, Land use 287w, 338-40w, 481w, 601w
Agricultural land, Taxation 779w
Agricultural products, Pesticides 790-1w
Agriculture, Conservation 1047-8
Agriculture improvement scheme 482-3w, 677-8w
Agriculture improvement scheme, Land drainage 483w
Animal feed, Radioactivity 1052
Animal husbandry 790w
Animal welfare 790w
Animal welfare, Expenditure 677w
Beer, Food additives 166w
Bees, Animal diseases 41w
Berries & fruit, Agricultural production 791w
Bovine tuberculosis, Badgers 338w
Cider, Food additives 166w
Environmentally sensitive areas, Berkshire 335w, 602-3w
Environmentally sensitive areas, Government grants 789w
Environmentally sensitive areas, Suffolk 602-3w
Export of live animals, Legislation 789w
Farm capital grant scheme 788w
Farm incomes 1046-7
Farmers, Pensions 601w
Farms, Change of use 881-2w
Fertilisers, Nitrogen 783w
Food additives, EC countries 881w
Food contamination, Mercury 1048
Food labelling, Publicity 785w
Food poisoning, Horses 483-4w, 678-80w
Food poisoning, Livestock 484w, 679w
Food prices, Price increases 787w
Green pound, Exchange rates 1046-7

Horses, Food poisoning 336-7w
Horticulture, Agricultural production 785-6w
Horticulture, Marketing 1053
Land drainage, Agricultural Development & Advisory Service 483w, 678w
Land drainage, Agricultural improvement scheme 483w
Livestock, Hormone treatments 791w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Radioactive waste disposal 602w
Pesticides, Agricultural research 483w, 679w
Pesticides, Agriculture 787w
Rhubarb, Imports 791w
Sheep, Radioactivity 603w, 1051-2
Shellfish, Mercury 1048
Westway, & Sons, Horse Hage 484w, 679-80w
Whisky, Scotland 393w
Wild animals, Poisoning 333w

Thompson, Mr Jack
Questions
Maternity benefits, Wansbeck 272w, 341-2w

Thompson, Mr Patrick
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.02.87) 485
Questions
Arts, Marketing 475w
Food labelling, Publicity 785w
Schools, Education (No 2) Act 1986 760-1
Student grants, Committee of Vice-Chancellors & Principals 566w

Thorne, Mr Neil
Debates etc
Ogorodnikov, Alexander, Public petitions (12.02.87) 558

Thorne, Mr Stan
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.02.87) 539-41
Questions
Family doctors, Merseyside 502-4w
Health centres 503w
Local education authorities, Capital investment 569w
Maternity benefits, Preston 374w
Maternity benefits, South Ribble 274w
Orchestras, Finance 477w
Speech therapists, Pay 197w

Thornton, Mr Malcolm
Questions
Exhaust emissions, Exhibitions 114w

Thurnham, Mr Peter
Debates etc
Employment policy, Labour Party (12.02.87) 476
Employment schemes (12.02.87) 490, 496
Handicapped (17.02.87) 813
Housing (10.02.87) 177
Questions
Board & lodging charges, Residential care 361-2w
Council housing, Electrical control equipment 549w
Further education, North West region 757
Government assistance to industry, Foreign companies in UK 523w
Invalidity benefits, Councillors' attendance allowances 363-4w
Litter 413w
Livestock, Farms 779w
Paper industry, Irvine 264w
Skillcentres, North West region 389w
Terrorism, EC action 228w
Vocational training, North West region 253-4w

Thurrock
Maternity benefits 358w

Tidal power
Energy research 468w
Research 642-3

Tigerfish
Torpedoes 489w

Tillingham hall 552-3w
Planning permission 552-3w

Time sharing 315-6w
Advertising Standards Authority 315-6w
Consumer protection 315-6w
Departmental leaflets 316w
Sales methods 315-6w
Spain 315w

Tinn, Mr James
Questions
Maternity benefits, Langbaurgh 356-7w

Tobacco
West Germany 524-5w

Tobacco advertising
Smoking related diseases 153-4

Tobacco duties 676w
EC countries 179-80w
Personal income 422w

Tobacco industry
Arts sponsorship 3, 478w

Tobacco Smoking (Public Places) Bill 1986/87
Debates etc
2R order read (13.02.87) 630

Tornado aircraft
Defence expenditure 873w
Early warning systems 564w

Torness power station 261w, 455-6w
Emergency planning 455-6w

Torpedoes
Defence procurement 489w
Spearfish 489w
Tigerfish 489w

Torture
Afghanistan 399w, 536w

Torvinstyle Properties 367w
Company investigations 367w

Total allowable catches
Fisheries 790w

Tourism
Arts finance 651
Expo 88 533w
Forestry 302

Tower Hamlets
Maternity benefits 348w

Town & country planning 112w
Agricultural land 388w
Ancient monuments 421w
Industrial planning 113w
Nature conservation 421w
Smallholdings 416w

Town & Country Planning (Compensation for Restrictions on Mineral Workings) (Scotland) Regulations 1987
Debates etc
(17.02.87) 782

Town & Country Planning General Development Order 1977
Questions
416w

Town Police Clauses Act 1847
Prosecutions 639w
Questions
639w

Townend, Mr John
Debates etc
Early day motions, Leader of the Opposition (19.02.87) 1073, 1083
Public expenditure (18.02.87) 952-5
Questions
Falkland Islands, Fishery agreements 1043
Fish conservation, Norway 393w

Townsend, Mr Cyril D
Questions
Strategic defence initiative 897

Tracey, Mr Richard, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Sport)
Debates etc
Housing (Houses in Multiple Occupation) Bill, 2R (13.02.87) 610, 623-6
Questions
Agricultural land, Planning permission 418w
Bed & breakfast accommodation, Local government expenditure 667w
British Coal Corporation, Public sector housing sales 240w
Building alterations, Housing & handicapped 240-1w
Caravan sites, Local authorities 241-2w
Council housing, Electrical control equipment 549w
Council housing, Empty housing 243w
Council housing, Housing standards 235-8w
Difficult to let properties, Local authorities 156w
Flats, Council housing 417w
Flats, Leasehold housing 158w
Football, Membership cards 117w
Greenbelt, Hertfordshire 852w
Homelessness 852w
Homelessness, North West region 127w
House prices, North West region 126w
Housing, British Coal Corporation 552w
Housing & handicapped, House renovation grants 313-4w
Housing improvement, Enveloping schemes 158-9w
Housing investment programmes, Burnley 664-5w
Housing investment programmes, Leeds City Council 158w
Inner cities initiatives, Lambeth 852-6w
Listed buildings, Park Vista 113w
Local government expenditure, Bed & breakfast accommodation 852w
Loft insulation, Birmingham 740w
Loft insulation, Insulation grants 380w
National mobility scheme, Council house transfers 664w
Owner occupied housing, North West region 126-7w
Planning appeals, Kittery Court 239w
Play Board, Government grants 550w
Play facilities 124-5w
Spoil heaps, Ove Arup 240w
Sports Council, Government grants 116w
Wheelchair housing, Housing construction 313w
Wheelchair housing, Right to buy 312w

Trade competitiveness
Airlines 840w
Educational standards 573w

Trading funds 544-5w, 829-30w
Civil service manpower 545w, 829-30w

Trafalgar Square 738-9w
Demonstrations 738-9w
Public meetings 738-9w

Traffic noise
M42 249w

Trafford
Secondary education 309w

Trafford Park Development Corporation 552w
Public appointments 552w

Training (12.02.87) 476-534, 534w, 535, 535w, 536-8
Area manpower boards 844w
Electronic Data Systems 454
Information technology 429w, 434w
Literacy 254w
Numeracy 254w
Prison staff 554-5w

Training allowances 162-3w, 429w
Job training scheme 162-3w, 429w

Transient people
Scotland 258w

Transplant surgery 128-9w
Computer applications 819-20w

Transport
Bombs 367w

Transport of hazardous materials
Lorries 310-1w

Transport of radioactive materials
Nuclear power stations 430w

Transport Users' Consultative Committees 252-3w
Greater Manchester 252-3w
Local Government Finance Bill 1986/87 252-3w

Travel-to-work areas
Blairgowrie 295-6

Travelling expenses
Party conferences 234w
Public expenditure 234w

Treasury
Accountants 672-4w
Data networks 33-4w
Legislation 181w
Public Accounts Committee 825w

Tree planting
Agricultural land 301-2
Caithness 541w
Conifers 385w
Countryside 165
National Audit Office 484w
Nature Conservancy Council 541w
Scotland 300
Tyrone 443

Trees
Air pollution 234-5w
Urban areas 413w

Trent Regional Health Authority 200w
Official engagements 200w

Trials
Costs 407w
Payne, Cynthia 407w
Turkey 11w

Trident 870w
Costs 871w
Defence expenditure 871-2w
Defence procurement 871w
Official secrets 870-1w

Trippier, Mr David, *Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment*
Debates etc
Employment schemes (12.02.87) 506, 527, 551-5
Questions
Building industry, Industrial health & safety 162w
Construction Industry Training Board, Income 534w
Health & Safety Executive, Sizewell Inquiry 54w
Hotels, Insurance 48w
Industrial health & safety, Screening 533-4w
Industrial training board levies, Construction Industry Training Board 254w
Information technology centres, Lancashire 391w
Non-statutory training organisations, Manpower Services Commission 534w
Nuclear safety, Expenditure 301w
Nuclear safety, Manpower 301-2w
Oil storage, Licensing 841-3w
Public sector employment, Average earnings 533w
Radiation hazards, Health physics 426w
Skillcentres, North West region 389w
Small businesses, Government assistance to industry 56-60w
Tourism, Expo 88 533w
Training, 534-5w
Training, Literacy 254w
Unemployment, Literacy 254w
Vocational training 528w
Youth opportunities programme, Unemployment 389-90w
Youth training scheme, Coal mining 392w
Youth training scheme, Contracts of employment 528w
Youth training scheme, Education 528w
Youth training scheme, Financial institutions 427-8w
Youth training scheme, Public sector 610w
Youth training scheme, Take-up of employment 426w

Tropical forests
Forest protection 3-4w

Truro
By election writs (17.02.87) 751
Radon gas 741-2w

Tuition fees
Part-time education 570w
Student numbers 757

Turkey
Foreign policy 695w
Human rights 11w
Official engagements 695w
Trials 11w

Turks & Caicos Islands 462w

Tutbury bypass 378w
Road construction 378w

Twinn, Dr Ian
Questions
Medical treatments, Chemical weapons 197w
Metropolitan Police, Costs 772w

Tyne Bridge 352w
Maternity benefits 394-5w

Tyrone
Tree planting 443

UK 2000 413w

UK companies abroad
South Africa 4w, 687w

UK contributions
European Investment Bank 828w
United Nations 832w

UK contributions to EC budget 37w, 521-2w, 785w
Food surpluses 422w
Intervention stocks 422w

Ulster Defence Regiment 869w
Armed forces strength 493w
Crime 465-6w
Paramilitary forces 493w
Proscribed organisations 493w, 686w

Ulster Unionists 444-5
Anglo-Irish Agreement 444-5

Unborn Children (Protection) Bill 1986/87
Debates etc
Order for resuming adjourned 2R read (20.02.87) 1229

Unemployed
Adult education 571-2w
Social & Community Planning Research 270-1w

Unemployment
Aberdeen 266w
Barnsley 768w
Black country 766-7w
Clwyd 15, 226w
Kensington & Chelsea 49-50w
Leeds 162w
Leyton 49-50w
Literacy 254w, 768-9w
Mid Glamorgan 226w, 637w
Mid-Worcestershire 765-6w
North West region 49-52w
Northern Ireland 441-3
Numeracy 254w, 768-9w
Scotland 264w
Slough 390w
South East region 49-52w
Strabane 442
Wales 15, 297-8w, 637w
West Midlands 766-7w
Youth opportunities programme 389-90w

Unemployment benefits
Appeals 392w
Birmingham 392w
Community programme 391w
Job training scheme 429w
Leeds 210-1w
Occupational pensions 154
Redundancy 518w

Unfair dismissal
Nurses 512w

Unfair trading practices
Singapore 525w, 565w

UNITA
Arms exports 697w

United Nations
South Africa 535w
SWAPO 401-2w
UK contributions 832w

UN agencies
UN finances 695w

UN Charter
Self-determination of states 830w

UN finances
UN agencies 695w

UN General Assembly
Middle East 874w

UN Security Council
Namibia 535w

Universities
Age participation rates 742-4w
Research 580-1w
Student numbers 576w, 581-2w

University College of North Wales 574-5w
University Grants Committee 574-5w

University finance (16.02.87) 1378-86
Birkbeck College 567w
Brain drain 756
Pay 745w
Rates & rating 575-6w
Scotland 567w
University Grants Committee 172w, 306-8w, 575w, 744-5w

University Grants Committee 172w, 306-8w, 445w, 574-5w, (16.02.87) 1378-86
Official engagements 574w
Theatres 652
University College of North Wales 574-5w
University finance 172w, 306-8w, 575w, 744-5w

University of East Anglia
Ministers' domestic visits 568w

University of Wales 657-9w
Science & technology research 657-9w

University teachers
Manpower 580-1w
Pay 745w

Upper waiting hall
Exhaust emissions 114w

Urban areas
NHS 192w
Trees 413w

Urban development corporations
Expenditure 127w

Urban development grants 548w, 737-8w
Costs 548w
Employment opportunities 548w
Housing association grants 738w
Private sector 737w

Urban housing renewal units 661-2w
Local authorities 661-2w

Urban planning
Housing associations 738w
Private sector 737w

Urban programme
Government grants to local authorities 552w
Parliamentary constituencies 849-52w
Scotland 611w
Voluntary organisations 611w

Urinary system disorders
Medical equipment 263-4w

US bases 291-3w

USA
ABM Treaty 873w, 898-9
Aerospace industry 875-6w
Armed forces deployment 291-3w
Arms control 455
Brain drain 755-6
Central America 690w
Computers 763
Defence 869w
Defence equipment 776w
EC external trade 630w
Export controls 749-51w, 763
Export licensing 630w
Namibia 401w
Nicaragua 905-6
Nuclear test ban 229-30w
Pressurised water reactors 644
Student loans 758-9

USSR
Afghanistan 227-8w
Arms control treaties 906-7
Butter 789w
EC external trade 1050
European Security Conference 691w
Foreign policy 688w, 691w
Germanyuk, Ulyana 830w
Human rights 691-2w, 903-4
Jews 229w, 691w
Ministers' visits abroad 691w
Nuclear accidents 387w, 469w, 646
Official engagements 690-1w
Political prisoners (12.02.87) 558, (19.02.87) 1149
Prime Minister visits abroad 159w, 522w, 691w
Religious discrimination 830w
Technology transfer 160-1w
Theatre nuclear weapons 900-1
Visas 691w

Vacancies
Nurses 152-3
Professional & Executive Recruitment 533w
Skilled workers 52w

Vacant land
Land registration 243-8w

Vacant land registers
Land ownership & tenure 246-8w

Vaccination
Hepatitis 867w
Meningitis 512w, 601w

van Straubenzee, Sir William
Questions
Church Commissioners, Inner city areas 12-3
Church Commissioners, Small businesses 14
Ministers of religion, Business expenses 13-4
Ministers of religion, Pay 1w

VAT
Mail order selling 37w, 423-4w, 541-2w
Retail trade 423-4w, 541-2w
Small businesses 37w, 423-4w

"VAT: Small Business Review" 423-4w

Victim support schemes 639w
Government grants 639w

Victoria Hospital, Burnley (09.02.87) 69

Video recordings
Inner London Education Authority 1056
Offences against children 1056

Vietnamese refugees
Hong Kong 894

Viggers, Mr Peter, *Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland*
Questions
Action for Community Employment, Government grants 446-7
European Regional Development Fund, Northern Ireland 841w
Forestry, Northern Ireland 443
Nursery education, Belfast 447
Unemployment, Northern Ireland 441-3
Unemployment, Strabane 442

Village schools
Primary education 574w

"Violence Against Women" 323-4w

Visas
Administrative delays 696w
Air travel 643-4w
Eastern Europe 873w
Garcia, R J 868w
Hai, Nguyen Von 772w
Heathrow 643-4w
Immigration appeals 537w
Indian subcontinent 696w
Nigeria 537w
USSR 691w

Vitamins
Bradford 593w

Vocational guidance
Manpower 583w
Teachers 583w

Vocational training 528w
Expenditure 253w
North West region 253-4w
Skillcentres 253-4w

Voluntary organisations
Literacy 570w
Urban programme 611w

Voluntary projects programme 297w, 795-7w
Wales 297w

Vote Office 473w, 604w
Parliamentary papers 473w

Voting rights
Students 374w

Vredeling directive 606w

Waddington, Rt Hon David, *Minister of State for the Home Department*
Debates etc
Access to Personal Files Bill, 2R (20.02.87) 1209-16
Hickmet, Richard, Members' conduct (20.02.87) 1231-2
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 (Continuance) Order 1987 (10.02.87) 283-4
Questions
Alcoholic drinks, Licensing 867-8w
Deportation 430-1w
Deportation, Acquittals 372w
Deportation, British Airways 323w, 374w
Deportation, Convictions 372w
Deportation, Tamils 909-14
Garcia, R J, Visas 868w
Hai, Nguyen Von, Visas 772w
Immigrants, Special education 558-9w
Immigration, Humberside Airport 321w
Immigration appeals, Administrative delays 641w
Immigration controls, Maladministration 644w
Licensed premises 319-20w
Licensing laws 215w
Political refugees, Immigration applications 371-2w
Ramasamy, Rajendrau, Members' correspondence 374w
Sunday trading, Local authorities 432w
Tamils, Political refugees 769-74
Visas, Air travel 643-4w

Wainwright, Mr Richard
Questions
Corporation tax 329w
Corporation tax, House of Commons questions 329w
Employment schemes, European Social Fund 391w
Hospitals, Inner city areas 194w
Youth organisations, Government grants 370w

Waldegrave, Mr William, *Minister of State for the Environment (Countryside & Local Government)*
Debates etc
Radioactive waste disposal (09.02.87) 38, 44, 48-9, 62-6
Radioactive wastes (16.02.87) 661
Questions
Access to countryside, North Yorkshire Moors National Park 116w
Acid rain, Pollution control 112w
Air pollution, Trees 234-5w
Ancient monuments, Town & country planning 421w
Animal cruelty, Pest control 113w
Atmospheric Effects Review Group 112w
Canary Wharf, Planning permission 111w
Capacitors, Polychlorinated biphenyl 421w
Conservation areas, Property development 157w
Decapol, Water 415w
Demonstrations, City of London Anti-Apartheid Group 113w
Dog licences 421w
Exhaust emissions, Exhibitions 114w
Heveningham hall 416-7w
Housing construction, South East region 663w
Litter 413w
Natural radioactivity, Housing problems 547-8w
Nature Conservancy Council, Civil service manpower 550w
Nature Conservancy Council, Geology 550-1w
Nature Conservancy Council, Graduates 549w
Nature Conservancy Council, Sites of special scientific interest 551-2w
North Sea, Environment protection 668-9w
Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive, Compulsory purchase 548w
Nuclear power stations, Radioactive waste disposal 415-6w
Pesticides, Developing countries 666-7w
Photochemical Oxidants Review Group 112w, 670w
Planning inquiries, Departmental circulars 737w
Polychlorinated biphenyl, Electrical technology 314w
Radioactive waste disposal 847-8w
Radioactive waste disposal, Bradwell power station 849w
Radioactive waste disposal, Environment 412w
Radioactive waste disposal, Nuclear power stations 548w
Radioactive waste disposal, Pharmacia Ltd 413w
Radioactive waste disposal, Seas & oceans 412-3w
Radioactive wastes 113-4w, 415w
Radiochemical Inspectorate, Civil service manpower 417w
Radon gas, Cornwall 115-6w
Radon gas, Housing problems 114-5w, 413-6w
Radon gas, Pregnancy 115w
Radon gas, Somerset 114-5w
Radon gas, Truro 741-2w
Sites of special scientific interest, Geology 551w
Smallholdings, Town & country planning 416w
Town & country planning 112w
Town & country planning, Industrial planning 113w
Trafalgar Square, Public meetings 738-9w

Trees, Urban areas 413w
Water pollution, North West region 112w
Water pollution, Water authorities 416w
Water resources, Mining 114w

Walden, Mr George, *Under-Secretary of State for Education & Science*
Questions
Adult education, Literacy 222-3w, 569w
Adult education, Unemployed 571-2w
Birkbeck College, University finance 567w
Brain drain, Higher education 568-9w, 755-7
Dorset Institute of Higher Education 572w
Further education, EC countries 576-8w
Further education, North West region 757-8
Further education, Student counselling 169w
Higher education 584w
Higher education, Age participation rates 742-4w
Literacy 584-5w
Literacy, Voluntary organisations 570w
Mature students, Student numbers 582w
Meningitis, Research finance 224w
Museums & galleries, Fees & charges 442w
North East London Polytechnic, Capital investment 169w
Open University, Instalment credit 580w
Open University, Student numbers 579-80w
Open University, Summer schools 579-80w
Property transfer, Liverpool University 27w
Research, Science & Technology, Select Committee (HL) 572w
Royal Greenwich Observatory 742w
Science & technology research, Research finance 370-1w
Science & technology research, University of Wales 657-9w
Science & technology research, Wales 659w
Student grants 171w, 565-6w, 758-9, 833-4w
Student grants, Committee of Vice-Chancellors & Principals 566w
Student grants, Cost of living 759-60
Student grants, Expenditure 744w
Student grants, Parental contributions 566-7w
Student numbers, Higher education 570w
Student numbers, Tuition fees 757
Tuition fees, Part-time education 570w
Universities, Student numbers 576w, 581-2w
University College of North Wales, University Grants Committee 574-5w
University finance, Pay 745w
University finance, Rates & rating 575-6w
University finance, Scotland 567w
University finance, University Grants Committee 306-8w, 744-5w
University Grants Committee 445w
University Grants Committee, Official engagements 574w
University Grants Committee, University finance 575w
University of East Anglia, Ministers' domestic visits 568w
University teachers, Manpower 580-1w

Wales
Agriculture 8-10, 295-6w, 750-63w
Archaeology 297-8w
Arts finance 670w
Attendance allowance 508w
Building industry 765-6
Cereals 750w
Chronically sick 137w
Community programme 764-5w
Council house sales 12
Dairy farming 8-9
Delegated legislation 455w
Dentistry 93-6w
Dentists 93-4w
Derelict land grants 452-5w
Development plans 377w
Doctors' surgeries 455w
Drugs 100-2w
Educational publications 451-2w
Employment schemes 298w
European Regional Development Fund 375w
Family doctors 92-4w, 99w
Food inspection 10
Government assistance to industry 213-4w
Handicapped 455w
Handicapped children 91-2w
Handicapped pupils 92w
Health education 3-4, 546w
Health service staff 84-90w, 450w, 847-8w
Homelessness 300-2w
Horticultural Development Council 295w
Hospital beds 82-3w, 89-90w
Hospital closures 82-3w
Hospital consultants 226-7w
Hospital length of stay 95w
Hospitals 101w
House renovation grants 79-80w
Hypothermia 11
Insulation 8
Insulation grants 8, 377w
Job centres 296-8w
Land use 9-10
Manpower Services Commission 298w
Manufacturing industries 226w
Maternity benefits 515w
Medical treatments 99-100w
Mental health services 7-8
Mental hospitals 448w
Mental patients 89-91w, 447-9w
Migration 375-6w
Mobility allowance 508w
Multiple occupation 1-3
National income 226w
NHS 82w
NHS charges 750w
NHS finance 96-8w, 449-50w
Orders & regulations 91w
Patients 137w
Photography 451w
Planning appeals 448w
Play groups 636w
Prescriptions 97-8w
Prime Minister domestic visits 521w
Railway network 18
Rate support grants 5
Rates & rating 4
Regional development grants 213-4w
Regional planning & development 765-6
Rural areas 81w
Science & technology research 659w
Service industries 226w
Spectacles 98w
Take-up of employment 302w, 393w
Unemployment 15, 297-8w, 637w
Voluntary projects programme 297w
Water distribution 299-300w
Water supply 299w
Youth training scheme 81w, 296w
Youth unemployment 297-8w

Walker, Mr Bill
Debates etc
Housing, Scotland (11.02.87) 418-9, 421, 423, 429
Rate Rebates & Rate Support Grant Scotland Orders (18.02.87) 1021
Questions
Agricultural land, Land use 778-9w
Airlines, Trade competitiveness 840w
Arms control treaties, Strategic defence initiative 901-2
Forestry, Scotland 302
Heating allowances, Social security recipients 596w
Housing benefits, Scotland 541w
Marginal land, Land use 326w
Pensioners, Heating allowances 201w
Procurator Fiscal Service, Finance 309
Prosecutions, Poaching 258w
Search warrants, BBC 546w
Travel-to-work areas, Blairgowrie 295-6

Walker, Rt Hon Peter, *Secretary of State for Energy*
Questions
Management consultants, Dept of Energy 634-5w
Public Accounts Committee, Dept of Energy 634w

Wall, Sir Patrick
Debates etc
Radioactive waste disposal (09.02.87) 30
Questions
Bennet, C, Zambia 874-5w

Wallace, Mr James
Debates etc
Rate Rebates & Rate Support Grant Scotland Orders (18.02.87) 1009-10
Questions
Adult education, Highlands of Scotland 298-9
Adult education, Literacy 569w
Ambulance services, Whitley Councils 399w
Anglo-Irish Agreement 332-3w
"Defence Open Government Document, 87/01", Publishing 869w
Fisheries, Government grants 789w
Light dues, Fees & charges 311w
Police right of search, BBC 8-9w
Police, Road traffic control 174-5w
Procurator Fiscal Service, Prosecutions 309
Road traffic police, Written questions 373w
Safety belts, Children 45w
Strategic defence initiative, ABM Treaty 896-7

Waller, Mr Gary
Questions
Nuclear power, Energy costs 645

Walsall
Supplementary benefits 821w

Walters, Mr Dennis
Questions
Middle East, Peace negotiations 693-4w

Walthamstow
Maternity benefits 272-3w, 589-90w

Wandsworth
Maternity benefits 704w

Wandsworth Prison 8w, 173w
Car parks 173w
Land use 8w

Wansbeck
Maternity benefits 272w, 341-2w

Wapping
Public order policing 869w

Wardell, Mr Gareth
Questions
Agricultural products, Pesticides 790-1w
Companies, Foreign investment in UK 1053
Fire services, Building repairs 215w
Fire services, Manpower 174w
Gas accidents, Fire services 173w
Insulation grants, Wales 8
M4, Warning signs 451w
Museums & galleries, Photography 451w
Planning appeals, Darren colliery 450w
Planning appeals, Garngoch colliery 450-1w
Planning appeals, Wales 448w
Public service vehicles, Motor vehicle testing 43w
Rights of way, West Glamorgan 451w
Sherman Theatre, Arts finance 651-2
Tobacco duties 676w

Wareing, Mr Robert N
Debates etc
Handicapped (17.02.87) 798, 800, 814-5
Housing (Houses in Multiple Occupation) Bill, 2R (13.02.87) 628, 630
Questions
Arts, Merseyside 476w
Brain drain, Higher education 568-9w
Cervical cancer, Screening 399w
Civil servants, Recruitment 383w
Exceptional needs payments, Members' correspondence 398w
Export controls, USA 763

Housing insulation, Neighbourhood Energy Action 380w, 419w
Insulation grants, Loft insulation 387w
Lighthouses, Finance 380w
Loft insulation, Insulation grants 377w, 380w
Maternity benefits, Liverpool 148w
School population, Private education 369-70w
"Social & Economic Responses to Climatic Variability in the UK", Dept of Health & Social Security 212w
Speech therapists, Pay 197w

"Warfare as a Whole" 606w, 777-8w

Warley
Maternity benefits 705-6w

Warning signs
M4 451w
Motorways 43w

Warren, Mr Kenneth
Debates etc
Rover Group (19.02.87) 1072-3
Questions
Defence equipment, USA 776w
Divorce law 605w
Food additives, EC countries 881w
Radon gas, Housing problems 414w
Seabed Operations Vessel 680w
South East Thames Regional Health Authority, Radiotherapy 147-8
Tornado aircraft, Early warning systems 564w

Warrington & Runcorn Development Corporation 157w

Warsaw Pact
Armoured fighting vehicles 184w
Conventional weapons 693w
Military balance 488w

Warships
Bofors gun 488w
Defence 869-70w
Iceland 185w
Ports 366w

Warwickshire
School closures 170w

Waste disposal
Darren colliery 450w
Electrical technology 314w

Water
Decapol 415w

Water authorities
Water pollution 416w

Water distribution
Wales 299-300w

Water pollution
North West region 112w
Water authorities 416w

Water resources
Forestry 114w
Mining 114w

Water supply
Fluoridation 510w
Government grants to local authorities 299w
Property development 82w
Wales 299w

Watson, Mr John
Debates etc
Settle-Carlisle railway (11.02.87) 437

Watts, Mr John
Debates etc
Public expenditure (18.02.87) 972, 988-90
Questions
Afghanistan 690w
British Airways, Privatisation 48w
Coal fired power stations, Coal mining 642
Exports 440w
Gas tariffs, Billing 468w
Supplementary benefits, Young people 196w
Tamils, Political refugees 772

Wealth
Expenditure 306
New towns 740-1w
Scotland 305-6

Weapons
Navy 488-9w

Weather
Board & lodging charges 196w
Electricity consumption 639
Electricity generation 639-40
Energy conservation 649
Government departments 212w
Nuclear accidents 634w
Scotland 304
Severe weather payments 340-2w

Weetch, Mr Ken
Debates etc
Banking Bill, Rep & 3R (10.02.87) 1093-4
Questions
Dental charges 143-4
Environmentally sensitive areas, Suffolk 602-3w
Fertilisers, Nitrogen 783w
Fraud, Proceeds of crime 640w
Local education authorities, Capital investment 762

Weighing machines
West Midlands 44-5w, 840w

Welfare milk
Bradford 593w

Wells, Mr Bowen
Debates etc
Rover Group (19.02.87) 1071-2
Questions
Falkland Islands, Fishing vessels 1043
Guatemala, Ministers' visits abroad 905
Tamils, Political refugees 773

Welsh, Mr Michael
Questions
Maternity benefits, Doncaster 273w

Welsh Development Agency
Industrial estates 375w
Manpower 375w

Welsh language 80w
Drama 651-2
Government grants 5-7
In-service training 295w
Legislation 80-1w
Technical & vocational education initiative 295w

Welsh Language Society
Sinn Fein 6-7

Welsh Office
Management consultants 637w

Welsh Water Authority 82w, 299w
Government grants 299w

Welwyn Garden City
Queen Elizabeth II Hospital 341w

Welwyn Hatfield
Employment 531w, 766w

Wentworth
Maternity benefits 273w, 276w

West Bank 228w

West Fife
Coal mine closures 263w

West Germany
Armed forces dependents 293w
General Motors 524w
Imports 524-5w, 527w
Motor vehicles 527w, 633w
Tobacco 524-5w

West Glamorgan
Rights of way 451w

West Hatch School 23-4w
Ministers' domestic visits 23-4w

West Midlands
AIDS 283w
Community programme 844-5w
Derelict land grants 238w, 740w
Employment 767-8w
Employment schemes 769w
NHS (19.02.87) 1159-64
Supplementary benefits 821w
Unemployment 766-7w
Weighing machines 44-5w, 840w
Youth training scheme 844-5w

West Midlands Regional Health Authority 198w, 283w

West Yorkshire
Landlord & tenant 2w

Western European Union (13.02.87) 632-8, 874w

Western Isles
EC grants & loans 296
Helicopters 839w
Maternity benefits 817w
Regional planning & development 296
Sea pollution 616w

Westway & Sons 679-80w
Horse Hage 484w, 679-80w

Wheathampstead School 169w

Wheelchair housing 312-3w
Housing construction 313w
Right to buy 312w

Wheelchairs 282w
Aids for handicapped 197w

Wheeler, Mr John
Questions
Council housing, Empty housing 243w
Flats, Leasehold housing 311w
Prisons, Land values 555-6w

Whisky
Scotland 393w

White, Mr James
Questions
Table Office, Computer applications 59-60w

Whitfield, Mr John
Questions
BBC, Public appointments 456-7
Food surpluses, Charities 783w

Whitley councils 385w
Ambulance services 399w
Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel 385w

Wigan
Maternity benefits 708-9w

Wiggin, Mr Jerry
Debates etc
Agricultural land, Land use (09.02.87) 77

Wigley, Mr Dafydd
Debates etc
Handicapped (17.02.87) 790, 799, 812, 816-8
Oral question time intervention (09.02.87) 6
Questions
Agriculture, Wales 8-9, 295-6w, 750-63w
Archaeology, Wales 297-8w
Arts finance, Wales 670w
Cerebral palsy, Children 140w
Chronically sick, Wales 137w
Dentistry, Costs 93-6w
Dentistry, Wales 95-6w
Dentists, Manpower 93-4w
Development plans, Wales 377w
Drugs, Expenditure 100-2w
European Regional Development Fund, Northern Ireland 841w
European Regional Development Fund, Regional planning & development 876w
European Regional Development Fund, Scotland 879-80w
Family doctors, Manpower 92-4w
Family doctors, Wales 99w

Handicapped pupils, Secondary education 573w
Health service staff, Manpower 85-90w
Health service staff, Office workers 450w
Homelessness, Wales 300-2w
Horticultural Development Council, Wales 295w
Hospital beds, Wales 90w
Hospital length of stay, Wales 95w
Hospitals, NHS 101w
Job centres, Wales 296-8w
Manpower Services Commission, Wales 298w
Medical treatments, Costs 99-100w
Migration, Wales 375-6w
NHS finance, Expenditure 96w
NHS finance, Wales 97-8w
Pension funds, Profits 508-9w
Prescriptions, Wales 97-8w
Prime Minister domestic visits, Wales 521w
Professional & Executive Recruitment, Take-up of employment 302w, 393w
Sheep, Compensation 40w
Spectacles, Wales 98w
Technical & vocational education initiative, Welsh language 295w
Unemployment, Wales 297-8w
Voluntary projects programme, Wales 297w
Welsh language, Government grants 6
Welsh language, Legislation 80-1w
Youth training scheme, Wales 296w

Wild animals
Criminal investigation 333w
Poisoning 268w, 333w
Scotland 268w

Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981
Questions
451w

Wilkinson, Mr John
Debates etc
Business statement (19.02.87) 1076
Questions
Arms control treaties, Theatre nuclear weapons 900-1
Belize, Armed forces deployment 905-6
Early warning systems, Boeing 106w
Tornado aircraft, Defence expenditure 873w

Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Debates etc
Adjournment debates (17.02.87) 780
Agricultural land (09.02.87) 25
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (17.02.87) 775
Hickmet, Richard, Members' conduct (20.02.87) 1231
Housing (Houses in Multiple Occupation) Bill, 2R (13.02.87) 610
Oral question time point of order (16.02.87) 658
Points of order (12.02.87) 473
Standing Order No 20 applications (11.02.87) 314-5

Wilson, Mr Gordon
Debates etc
Housing, Scotland (11.02.87) 426-7
Questions
AIDS, Blood tests 129w
AIDS, Scotland 297
Heating allowances, Social security recipients 598w
NHS, Management consultants 386w
Unemployment, Scotland 264w

Winnick, Mr David
Debates etc
Adjournment debates (17.02.87) 777-8
Hickmet, Richard, Members' conduct (20.02.87) 1232
Housing (10.02.87) 179, 198, 208, 217, 229, 233, 239-42
Oral question time point of order (16.02.87) 658-9
Standing Order No 20 applications (11.02.87) 315
Questions
Business statement 467
Civil service, Militant tendency 657
Community programme, West Midlands 844-5w
Deportation, Tamils 910
Economic League, Police 868w
Economic League, Police records 868w
Employment schemes, West Midlands 769w
Employment, West Midlands 767-8w
Lebanon, British residents abroad 686w
Palestine, Refugees 830-1w
Supplementary benefits, West Midlands 821w
Unemployment, West Midlands 766-7w
USSR, Human rights 904

Winterton, Mrs Ann
Debates etc
Rover Group (19.02.87) 1069
Questions
Car ownership, South East region 47w
Homelessness, North West region 127w
House prices, North West region 126w
Owner occupied housing, North West region 126-7w
Parliamentary papers, Norman Shaw building 473w, 604w
Personal income, North West region 54w
Roads, South East region 47w
Unemployment, North West region 49-52w

Winterton, Mr Nicholas
Questions
Abortion 153w
Agricultural land, Land use 779w
Alcoholic drinks duties, Tax yields 674-6w
Angola, Mbunambana, Ceila 462-3w
Land use, Rural areas 168-9
Manchester Ship Canal Company, Takeovers 440w
Namibia, Church of England 400w
Namibia, Foreign policy 401w, 460w
Namibia, Human rights 401w
Namibia, Newspaper press 460w
Namibia, Political parties 400w
Namibia, Politics & government 460w
Namibia, Refugees 459-60w
Namibia, SWAPO 459-60w
Namibia, USA 401w
SWAPO, Diplomatic relations 401w
SWAPO, Official engagements 403w
SWAPO, Refugees 401-4w

Witnesses
Police discipline 320w

Wolverhampton
Maternity benefits 343-4w

Women
Bradford 390w
Dept of Health & Social Security 493-6w
Employment 390w
Equal opportunities 493-6w
Job training scheme 162-3w
Opposition days (17.02.87) 829-74

Women's employment
Civil service 654-5

Women's National Commission 323-4w

Wood, Mr Timothy
Debates etc
Housing (10.02.87) 243-4
Housing (Houses in Multiple Occupation) Bill, 2R (13.02.87) 616-7

Woodall, Mr Alec
Questions
Maternity benefits, Hemsworth 514-5w
Maternity benefits, Keighley 515w

Woodcock, Mr Mike
Questions
Coal consumption, Concessionary coal 317w
Coal consumption, Yorkshire & Humberside 316-7w
Concessionary coal 384w

Workers' Educational Association
Government grants 299

Working conditions
Scientists 757

Working hours
Police 186w

Workington
Maternity benefits 277-8w

World Health Organisation
AIDS 362w

Worrall, Denis 689w

Worthing District Council 670w

Wrexham
Maternity benefits 146w, 151-2w

Wrigglesworth, Mr Ian
Debates etc
Banking Bill, Rep & 3R (19.02.87) 1097-8
Public expenditure (18.02.87) 947-52, 980
Rover Group (19.02.87) 1062
Questions
Civil servants' secondment 656
Electricity consumption 469w
Housing, Labour mobility 1056
Research, Science & Technology Select Committee (HL) 572w

Written questions
Administrative delays 239w
Costs 373w
London boroughs 239w
Road traffic police 373w
Speaker's rulings & statements (09.02.87) 25-6

Yeo, Mr Tim
Debates etc
Banking Bill, Rep & 3R (19.02.87) 1102-4, 1132-4
Questions
AIDS, Departmental leaflets 191w
Cereals, Food surpluses 780w
Charitable donations, Civil servants 422w
Hong Kong 227w
Pay, Charitable donations 545w
Postal deliveries, Rural areas 747w
Village schools, Primary education 574w

York City Council Bill (HL) 1985/86
Debates etc
2R order read (12.02.87) 441, (19.02.87) 1041

York University, Centre for Health Economics 131-2w

Yorkshire & Humberside
Coal consumption 316-7w
Manufacturing industries 54w

Young, Mr David
Questions
Burglary, Greater London 434w
Museums & galleries, Educational visits 474w
Payne, Cynthia, Trials 407w

Young offenders
Scotland 538w
Social workers' training 538-9w

Young people
Abortion 719w
Board & lodging charges 146
Community programme 427w, 610-1w
Deeds of covenant 183w
Further education 567-8w, 762-3
Handicapped 280-1w
Health education 751-3
Musicians 479w
Reye's syndrome 599w
Supplementary benefits 196w

Young, PRO 239w

Younger, Rt Hon George, Secretary of State for Defence
Questions
Cash limits, Ministry of Defence 105w
Cooper, Frank, Telephone calls 294w

Defence, USA 869w
National security, Cooper, Frank 294w

"Your Place in the Sun" 316w

Youth custody
Prisons 560-1w

Youth opportunities programme
Unemployment 389-90w

Youth organisations
Government grants 370w

Youth services
Education support grants 443w
Northern Ireland 546-7w

Youth training scheme
Civil service 672w
Coal mining 392w
Contracts of employment 528w
Education 528w
Electrical supply industry 392w
Financial institutions 427-8w
Information technology centres 391w
Leicester 163w
Private sector 610-1w
Public sector 610w
Take-up of employment 81w, 296w, 426-8w
Wales 81w, 296w
West Midlands 844-5w

Youth training scheme early leavers
East Midlands 163w

Youth treatment centres 598w

Youth unemployment
Wales 297-8w

Zambia
Bennet, C 874-5w